SCHOOL AS GHETTO

Systemic Overrepresentation of Roma in Special Education in Slovakia

Coordinators

Eben Friedman ❖ Mihai Surdu

Authors

Eben Friedman ❖ Elena Gallová Kriglerová ❖ Martina Kubánová ❖ Martin Slosiarik

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Preface

The case of *D.H. and Others vs. the Czech Republic* dramatically highlighted the disproportionate and inappropriate enrollment of Romani children in special education the Czech Republic. A key basis for the findings of the European Court of Human Rights in the case was the statistical evidence on what was happening to Romani children in the Ostrava District. A subsequent study by the European Roma Rights Centre and the Roma Education Fund provided information on the situation also in other regions of the Czech Republic. Since then the Government has announced its intention to address the over-representation of Roma in special education.

The present study provides, for the first time, a comprehensive picture of the over-representation of Roma in special education in Slovakia. The situation is as bad in Slovakia as in the Czech Republic – approximately 60 percent of children in special education in Slovakia are Roma. It is clear that the vast majority of these children do not belong in special education.

But this study goes much further in two respects. First, it also demonstrates that special education is a losing proposition for young people – they cannot get gainful employment – and for the state – the lack of gainful employment means fewer taxes and higher spending. Second, the study lays out the systemic features of special education in Slovakia which lead to the creation of ghettoes for Roma in special education. The recommendations in this report therefore are mainly directed towards the Government, so that these systemic features can be addressed.

This study, however, is not just relevant for those interested in the situation in Slovakia. It, and the companion study in Serbia being prepared by the Open Society Foundation, make clear that the misuse of the special education system is not confined to the Czech Republic. Nor is it simply Roma being assigned to special schools – special classes in nominally mainstream schools are as serious an issue. This study therefore provides a road map for decision-makers in all countries to assess the impact on Roma of their policies and practices in special education.

Toby Linden
Director
Roma Education Fund

Executive summary

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to quantify the representation of Roma in special education for children with mental disability in Slovakia and to analyze the factors accounting for this level of representation. In so doing, the study seeks to provide policy makers and civil society in Slovakia as well as relevant international organizations with a sound empirical basis for measures to address the situation in such a way as to reduce the gap in education outcomes between Roma and non-Roma.

Approach

This study is part of a set of three country studies intended to produce comparable data on the representation of Roma in special education. The study for the Czech Republic was completed in fall 2008, with publication of a country study for Serbia expected in fall 2009. Research objectives common to all three country studies include the following:

a. Estimating the number of Romani pupils enrolled in special education.
b. Mapping the education options of Romani pupils from compact, segregated Romani settlements.
c. Comparing the curricula used in standard and special education.
d. Juxtaposing the opportunities for further education and employment accessible to graduates of special education with those available to graduates of standard education.
e. Conducting a cost-effectiveness analysis comparing special and standard education from the standpoint of state expenditures.

In addition to addressing research objectives equally applicable to the other two countries included in the set of country studies, this study focuses on the structure of enrolment incentives offered to special schools and Romani parents, the complex of institutions with a role in maintaining the status quo in relation to special education, and the mechanisms used for assessment and reassessment of scholastic competence.

This study combines desk research with field research conducted on a larger scale than research published to date on special education in Slovakia. In particular, the field research draws on two overlapping samples, in order to combine quantitative and qualitative research on the situation of Roma in relation to special education in Slovakia. As the larger of the two samples is statistically representative, it enables conclusions to be drawn about the country as a whole.

Key findings

Of 23 countries in Central and Eastern Europe included in a 2005 study by UNICEF, Slovakia had the highest enrolment rate in basic special education programs in 2001, with enrolment rates in special education increasing between 1989 and 2001. As shown in the table below, approximately 60 percent of children in special education in Slovakia in the 2008-2009 school year are Roma.

Lower-bound estimates of the number of Romani pupils in special education

Type of school	Number of all pupils enrolled	Number of Romani pupils	Proportion of Romani pupils
Special primary schools	13,807	8,200	59.4%
Special classes in standard schools	5,590	4,795	85.8%
Special secondary schools	5,114	1,794	35.0%
Totals	24,511	14,789	60.3%

Source: Author's calculations based on director and teacher estimates from field research conducted for this study

The considerable differences between standard and special curricula severely limit the possibilities for (re-)integration of children from special schools and classes to standard education. Completion of special as opposed to standard primary education severely limits options for further education. Whereas the proportion of pupils attending special schools who are Roma is nearly 60 percent, among pupils continuing education in a special secondary school Roma represent closer to one third. Among pupils in special primary schools who completed mandatory education at grade nine, half were Roma. Among pupils in special primary schools completing mandatory education at a level lower than grade nine, Roma account for 80 percent.

Special education is not a good investment for either individual Romani children or for Slovakia. Romani graduates of special primary or secondary schools have extremely limited opportunities for finding stable employment. In 2002, for example, the unemployment rate among 15-24 year olds in Slovakia not in education or training was 37.7 percent, as compared with the EU-25 average of 20.1 percent for the same category of persons. Moreover, unemployment among persons with only primary education in Slovakia was 44.6 percent in 2007. Persons with incomplete primary education or who completed basic education in a practical school following graduation from a special primary school cannot be expected to provide a net financial benefit to the state through taxes and obligatory contributions in the course of their working life.

A complex of factors contribute to the continued overrepresentation of Roma in special education. Some of these factors are related to the procedures and mechanisms by which children enter and leave special education. No less important, however, are the motivations of relevant institutions and of Romani parents to enrol children in special schools and classes. Factors leading Romani parents to enrol their children in special education include not only the aspects of special schools and classes which make them attractive, but also various difficulties associated with the participation of Romani children in standard education. Additionally, some parents are simply not aware of the options available and of the differences among them.

Recommendations

Taking into account the current situation and the Slovak government's declared commitment to addressing it, the recommendations below reflect the need for specific targeted measures in order to reverse patterns of segregation of Roma in special education.

1. *Eliminate overrepresentation of Roma in special schools and classes.* The Slovak government should set a target of equalizing the respective proportions of Romani and non-Romani populations enrolled in special education by 2015. To this end, the Slovak government should publish and implement a plan of action, taking into account the recommendations which follow.

2. *Discontinue psychological testing as a mechanism for assigning children to special education in pre-school and the early years of primary school.* Children without immediately apparent signs of mental disability should be provided with standard pre-school preparation (see recommendation 7, below), then placed in standard classes of standard primary schools.

3. *Apply mechanisms for identifying and reversing inappropriate placement in special education.* Children in all categories of special education should be assessed annually using the tests developed by the Research Institute for Child Psychology and Psychology for ruling out mental disability. This should be an enforceable legal requirement. Children found not to have a mental disability should be transferred into standard classes in standard schools and provided with the support necessary to bridge the gap between reduced and standard curricula.

4. *Abolish special primary schools for children with mild mental disability.* Children in the first three grades of special primary schools in this category should be transferred immediately to standard, ethnically integrated classes of standard primary schools and provided with the pedagogical support necessary to bridge the gap between reduced and standard curricula. Pupils above grade three should be provided with intensive preparation for enrolment in standard

secondary education following completion of primary education in their current (special) schools, with an enhanced curriculum as well as legislation modified in order to allow access to standard secondary education.

5. *Distinguish explicitly and clearly between mental disability, social disadvantage, and ethnicity.* The Slovak government should state explicitly that mental disability and social disadvantage are distinct phenomena and that neither phenomenon is a component of Romani ethnicity. Subsequent policy measures should reflect the difference between the two in both design and implementation. The provisions of Slovakia's new School Law, which require that no child be placed in special education on the basis of social disadvantage or ethnicity, should be implemented.

6. *Promote and practice informed parental consent.* Consistent with Slovakia's new School Law, outreach programs should be launched to provide accurate and accessible information on school choices and their consequences, with particular emphasis on the longer-term educational and employment prospects for children entering special education. Clearly presented in this information should be the option of individual integration of children with special education needs in standard classes as an alternative to assignment to special schools and classes. To support this effort, annual surveys should be conducted with parents enrolling their children in special education to verify that they were provided with the information necessary to legitimate their consent.

7. *Ensure access to ethnically integrated standard pre-schools.* Taking into account that low pre-school enrolment among Romani children (approximately 4 percent) makes their integration into primary school more difficult, the Slovak government should increase enrolments of Romani children in pre-school education by either making this level of education compulsory for all children of pre-school age or by giving Romani and/or socially disadvantaged children priority in enrolment.

8. *Review and revise the school funding scheme.* Official policy should be introduced and implemented to provide a financial incentive for integration of Romani children in standard-curriculum classes in standard primary schools. The complexity of the current per-pupil normative system reduced in such a way as to both provide clear motivation for school directors to change their behavior and eliminate competition for students between schools administered by different levels of government. In addition, the material benefits provided for children from a socially disadvantaged environment should be made available to all students regardless of the concentration of children from a socially disadvantaged environment in a school.

9. *Restructure the system of advising centres.* The Slovak government should consider abolishing special pedagogical advising centres. Necessary personnel from these centres could be transferred to pedagogical-psychological advising

centres so that the latter type of centres can focus on helping children to integrate successfully in standard education. If special pedagogical advising centres are not closed, then they should be made independent of special schools in order to eliminate their incentive to assign children to special education, with their responsibilities in relation to pedagogical-psychological advising centres codified in legislation.

10. *Provide appropriate pre- and in-service training for education staff.* Teachers, pedagogues, and psychologists employed in schools should be provided with professional preparation for providing quality education to pupils from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Existing special pedagogues should be retrained as necessary to enable them to provide support to pupils transferring from special primary schools to standard classes in standard primary schools. University programs in special pedagogy should be reduced in size and refocused on mainstreaming.

11. *Collect and maintain ethnically disaggregated data in conformity with EU standards on data protection.* The current absence of official data poses a serious obstacle to the design of effective measures to improve the situation faced by Roma in the area of education (as well as in other areas). Test data disaggregated by ethnicity are indispensable for measuring the effects of education policies on Roma's scholastic achievement.

Introduction

1.1 Streaming and segregation in special education

> Membership in any national minority or ethnic group may not be used to the detriment of any individual.
>
> *Constitution of the Slovak Republic, Article 33.*[1]

The purpose of this study is to quantify the representation of Roma in special education for children with mental disability in Slovakia and to analyze the factors accounting for this level of representation.[2] In so doing, the study seeks to provide policy makers and civil society in Slovakia as well as relevant international organizations with a sound empirical basis for measures to address the situation in such a way as to reduce the gap in education outcomes between Roma and non-Roma.

A central characteristic of the Slovak education system is the early and rigid division of children into educational streams, with the initial division between standard and special primary education. Additionally, within standard education, the Slovak education system's division of children at age eleven is three years earlier than the average among the 30 OECD member countries, with only Austrian and German systems streaming earlier (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2007b). As OECD explains, "[s]treaming at an early age tends to increase the impact of socio-economic background on student performance [...]. The earlier students were stratified into separate institutions or programmes, the stronger was the impact which the school's average socio-economic background had on performance" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2007a; see also Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2008: 12). In this sense, the Slovak education system reinforces social inequalities, such that children from low-income families are more likely to end up with lower levels of educational attainment which in turn make it probable that the next generation of children will be raised in poverty, thus completing a vicious circle.

Spatial segregation of Roma in education may occur at several levels. The most immediately visible form operates at the level of the school as a whole, with schools attended only, or almost only, by Roma. Within schools, Roma may be separated from non-Roma at the level of entire buildings or sections of buildings belonging to an education institution in which both Roma and non-Roma are enrolled. Within-

[1] See Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky (1992).

[2] Unless otherwise stated, references to special education in this study (including but not limited to special schools, classes, and curricula) apply to special education for children with mental disability.

school segregation can also take place at the level of individual classrooms, or within the classroom. With the exception of segregation within the classroom, these forms of spatial segregation are sometimes combined with the placement of Roma in special schools and classes. As this study aims to make clear, the combination of spatial segregation between Roma and non-Roma with the placement of Roma in special education is a frequent occurrence in Slovakia, resulting in large numbers of *de facto* ethnically segregated special schools and classes.

Romani children are overrepresented in special education in most countries in Central and Eastern Europe, including (but not necessarily limited to) Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia (see, for example, Roma Education Fund 2007a-h). Of the 23 countries in Central and Eastern Europe included in UNICEF's 2005 study, *Children and Disability in Transition in CEE/CIS and Baltic States*, Slovakia had the highest enrolment rate in basic special education programs in 2001 (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre 2005: 19, Figure 1.8). The same study also demonstrated that Slovakia is among the nine countries (of the 23 included in the study) in which enrolment rates in special education increased in the period 1989-2001 (from slightly under three percent to approximately 3.75 percent).

Observing that special primary and secondary schools together account for 2.5 percent of the total population of children, pupils, and students in the country, in 2001 the Slovak Ministry of Education issued a call to reduce the number of children in special schools (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2001: 4, 15). While the Ministry's call does not mention ethnicity, a document issued three years later contains clearer recognition of the proportion of Roma in special education as a problem (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2004). While there is widespread agreement that Roma are overrepresented in special education in Slovakia, however, the figures in the bullet points below and in Table 1.1 demonstrate that estimates as to Roma's actual level of representation in special education vary widely.

- In the 2007-2008 school year, Roma accounted officially for a total of 5.3 percent of pupils in special primary schools and 1.6 percent of students in special secondary schools for pupils and students (respectively) with mental disability and/or behavioural disorders (Ústav informácií a prognóz školstva 2007).
- Among self-identified Roma in primary schools in Slovakia, 39 percent attended schools for the mentally disabled in the 2003-2004 school year (Roma Education Fund 2004: 19-20).
- Fieldwork conducted by the European Roma Rights Center (2004: 29-33) during the 2002-2003 school year in three districts in Eastern Slovakia found that Roma accounted for an average of approximately 84 percent in the thirteen special primary schools included in the study.
- Calculations made on the basis of official data on pupils' ethnicity from the

Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education indicate that the share of Romani children reported in special schools is nearly fourteen times greater than the share of Roma reported in standard schools (Roma Education Fund 2007h: 27)

Table 1.1 Enrolment in special schools and classes, 2008-2009 school year

	Form	Number of schools	Number of classes	Number of pupils (total)	Number of pupils (Roma)	% of Romani pupils
PRIMARY EDUCATION	Special primary schools for pupils with mental disability	179	1,812	15,014	1,014	6.8
	Special classes in standard primary schools	225	614	5,883	No data available	No data available
	Integrated pupils with special educational needs in standard classes of standard primary schools	No data available		3,657	No data available	No data available
	Total (primary)	**Unknown**	**Unknown**	**24,554**	**Unknown**	**Unknown**
SECONDARY EDUCATION	Special technical schools	33	356	3,347	No data available	No data available
	Practical schools	48	86	621	No data available	No data available
	Total (secondary)	**81**	**442**	**3,968**	**No data available**	**No data available**

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses in Education

1.2 Legislative framework

Notwithstanding the adoption of a new School Law in 2008 (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c), the structure of Slovakia's system of special education is best explained in terms of the School Law of 1984 (Sbírka zákonů Československé socialistické republiky 1984b). According to Section 3.2 of this law, special educational needs to be served by special schools include:

- Mental, auditory, visual, or bodily disability
- Sickness or poor health
- Reduced ability to communicate
- Autism
- Developmental disorders related to learning or behavior
- Severe mental disability
- Disorders of psychological or social development
- Intellectual gifts[3]

With regard to special primary schools for pupils with mental disability in particular, Section 29.4 of the 1984 School Law stipulates that this category of special school is intended for "pupils with intellectual deficits by reason of which they cannot be educated successfully in a primary school or in other special primary schools."

In addition to education in special primary schools, the 1984 School Law lists two other options for pupils with special educational needs (Sbírka zákonů Československé socialistické republiky 1984b, Sections 32a-c; cf. Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.94.1). The first of these is "integration in special classes" of standard primary and secondary schools, whereas the second is integration on an individual basis in standard classes of standard primary and secondary schools. In the latter case, teaching materials and methods are to be adapted to the needs of the pupil in question.

A public notice issued by the Slovak Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport in 1990 states that special classes in standard schools may be established not only for pupils with mental and physical disabilities, but also for pupils with developmental defects in learning and behavior (Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1990a, Paragraph 3a.2).[4] In similar fashion, a 2006 directive of the Ministry of Education

[3] While the School Law of 2008 drops intellectual gifts from the list of needs served by special education, the list is otherwise similar, including mental disability, auditory disability, visual disability, physical disability, reduced ability to communicate, "autism or other pervasive developmental disorders", sickness or poor health, combined deafness and blindness, developmental disorders related to learning, disorders related to activity and attention, multiple disabilities, and behavioural disorders (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.94.2).

[4] Julia White (2007: 227) has also observed the use of a special education curriculum in a nominally standard class of a standard primary school.

specifies that "specialized classes" in standard schools may include pupils from a socially disadvantaged environment who have not demonstrated school readiness after completing a zero grade, not mastered the subject-matter of the first year of primary education, or who were educated in a special school but in whom mental disability has not been established (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2006b, Article I.4)

In much the same way as special primary schools, special secondary schools are presented in the 1984 School Law as intended for pupils with special educational needs who cannot be educated in standard schools in a manner adapted to their disability or intellectual gift (Sbírka zákonů Československé socialistické republiky 1984b, Section 30.1). Whereas education in most types of special primary and secondary schools provides the same educational credentials as does education in the corresponding standard schools, the education received in special schools for pupils with mental disability constitutes the sole exception to this rule (Sbírka zákonů Československé socialistické republiky 1984b, Section 33.2).

At the level of secondary education, there are two options available to pupils classified as mentally disabled: special technical schools (*odborné učiliština*) and practical schools. The key difference between special technical schools and practical schools is the level of function expected of their respective graduates.[5] Special technical schools train mentally disabled pupils who have completed grade nine or the required number of years of schooling in a trade which they are expected after graduation to exercise independently, but directed by someone else (Sbírka zákonů Československé socialistické republiky 1984b, Section 32; cf. Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.100.5). Practical schools, on the other hand, are intended for mentally disabled graduates of special primary schools who were not accepted to or who failed out of special technical schools (Sbírka zákonů Československé socialistické republiky 1984b, Section 31.1; cf. Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.101.2). The training offered in practical schools aims at enabling graduates to complete simple tasks with supervision, thus preparing them for family life, self-sufficiency, and practical work in the home (Sbírka zákonů Československé socialistické republiky 1984b, Section 31.2).

[5] From 1991 to 2008, the distinction between these two types of special secondary schools referred to the system established that year for classifying special primary schools for pupils with mental disability: Whereas technical schools enrolled mentally disabled pupils capable of mastering the material taught in such schools, practical schools trained mentally disabled pupils educated by special education curriculum B or C (designed for pupils with moderate and severe mental disabilities, respectively) rather than by special education curriculum A (for pupils with mild mental disability) (Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1991, Section 18.1). This distinction between technical and practical schools in terms of the three-tier system of special primary education is absent in the School Law of 2008 (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c).

1.3 Research objectives and methodology

Designed by the Roma Education Fund in consultation with the European Roma Rights Center and the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program of the Open Society Institute, this study is part of a set of three country studies intended to produce comparable data on the overrepresentation of Roma in special education. Of the other two country studies in the set, this study's counterpart for the Czech Republic was completed in fall 2008 (see Bedard 2008), with completion of a country study for Serbia expected in fall 2009. Research objectives common to all three country studies include the following:

1. Estimating the number of Romani pupils enrolled in special education.
2. Mapping the education options of Romani pupils from compact, segregated Romani settlements.
3. Comparing the curricula used in standard and special education.
4. Juxtaposing the opportunities for further education and employment accessible to graduates of special education with those available to graduates of standard education.
5. Conducting a cost-effectiveness analysis comparing special and standard education from the standpoint of state expenditures.

In addition to addressing research objectives equally applicable to the other two countries included in the set of country studies, this study focuses on features of the education system in Slovakia which distinguish it from its counterparts in the Czech Republic and Serbia. Features in this category include the structure of enrolment incentives offered to special schools and Romani parents, the complex of institutions with a role in maintaining the *status quo* in relation to special education; and the mechanisms used for assessment and reassessment of scholastic competence. These national peculiarities are also taken into account in the recommendations directed at reversing the overrepresentation of Roma in special education in Slovakia.

This study combines desk research with field research on a larger scale than research published to date on special education in Slovakia (cf. Amnesty International 2008; European Roma Rights Center 2004). In particular, the field research conducted for this study draws on two overlapping samples, designed for the purpose of combining quantitative and qualitative research on the situation of Roma in relation to special education in Slovakia. Insofar as the larger of the two samples is statistically representative, it provides a basis for conclusions applying to the country as a whole.

The samples used for the study include similar proportions of public special primary schools for pupils with mental disability, special classes for pupils with mental disability in standard public primary schools, and public special secondary schools. The proportions of each type of school in the samples were determined by the proportions of the respective types within the total number of public special primary schools for pupils with mental disability, special classes for pupils with mental disability in standard public schools, and public special secondary schools in the Slovak Republic.

The absolute and relative numbers of these three forms of special education in Slovakia are shown in the table below.

Table 1.2 Schools and classes for children with mental disability

Form of special education	Number	%
Special primary schools	179	38
Special classes in standard primary schools	216	46
Special secondary schools	71	15
Total	**466**	**100**

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses in Education (2007-2008 school year)

For the questionnaire-based quantitative research, a sample consisting of a total of 99 of Slovakia's 466 special primary schools, special classes in standard primary schools, and special secondary schools was used. More specifically, the larger sample used for the field research consisted of 46 special classes in standard primary schools, 38 special primary schools, and fifteen special secondary schools located throughout the country. For schools and classes in this sample, questionnaires were administered to 99 directors, 136 teachers, and 114 parents of Romani children.[6]

With an eye to filling in details in the general picture sketched by the findings of the quantitative research, qualitative research in the form of interviews was conducted on a smaller sample, consisting of twelve special classes in standard primary schools, eleven special primary schools, and five special secondary schools, for a total of 28 units. As mentioned above, the schools and classes included in this sample were also included in the larger, statistically representative sample. For each school in this smaller sample, an interview was conducted with the school director and, where possible, one teaching assistant. Where possible, two parents of Romani children were interviewed in each special primary school: one parent of a child in grades one through four and one parent of a child in grades five through nine. Interviews were also conducted with a parent of a Romani child attending a special class in all but one of the standard primary schools included in this sample.

Additional data for this study come from focus groups, observation grids, and school reports. A total of five focus groups were held: two with employees of labour

[6] For details on the construction of both samples and on the numbers of questionnaires and interviews completed, please see Annex A.

offices (one in Banská Bystrica and one in Košice), plus one focus group each with employees of pedagogical-psychological advising centres and special pedagogical advising centres (both in Bratislava), as well as a focus group (in Spišská Nová Ves) with Romani graduates of special secondary schools. Observation grids on the location of and conditions in Romani settlements were completed in 46 settlements inhabited by pupils attending schools included in the larger research sample. Finally, field researchers wrote a total of 53 reports containing detailed observations on the schools in the larger sample corresponding to the Romani settlements for which observation grids were completed, plus an additional seven schools from the larger sample.

1.4 Structure of the study

The remainder of this study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 completes the groundwork begun in this chapter for the analysis in later chapters by presenting a general picture of the situation of Roma in relation to special education in Slovakia from the field research conducted for this study, including estimates of the total enrolment of Roma in special education, geographic distribution of institutions providing special education relative to Romani settlements, and factors affecting the quality of education offered in special schools and classes. Chapter 3 offers a look at the effects of the situation presented in Chapter 2 from the standpoint of the individual (in terms of options for secondary education and prospects for employment) and the state (in terms of the cost-effectiveness of special education).

Chapters 4 and 5 examine factors contributing to the overrepresentation of Roma in special education in Slovakia. Focusing on the procedures and mechanisms by which children enter and leave special education, Chapter 4 includes a discussion of the applicability for Roma and the application in practice to Roma of the tools used to diagnose mental disability, also accounting for the rarity with which Romani children in special education are reassigned to standard education. Chapter 5 addresses factors operating at the levels of policy, relevant institutions, and Romani parents which help to preserve and reproduce the *status quo*. Drawing on the preceding chapters, Chapter 6 offers a set of recommendations aimed at eliminating the overrepresentation of Roma in special education in Slovakia.

Overview of the Situation

In order to complete the groundwork for the analysis in later chapters, this chapter presents a general picture of the situation of Roma in relation to special education in the Slovak Republic. Beginning by offering estimates on the enrolment of Roma in special primary schools, special classes in standard primary schools, and special secondary schools on the basis of the field research conducted for this study, the chapter next explores factors accounting for the varying concentration of Roma in these different forms of special education. This discussion is followed by a brief look at the geographic distribution of institutions providing special education relative to Romani settlements. Finally, the chapter examines factors affecting the quality of education in special schools and classes, including school infrastructure, curricula, and training of teaching staff.

> In the school system of the Slovak Republic, neither ethnically oriented schools nor schools segregated in any way from the main school system exist.
>
> *Report of the Slovak government to the Committee on the Rights of the Child*[7]

> In the Slovak Republic it is not possible to monitor the situation of Romani children in schools due to limits on the collection of statistical data according to ethnicity.
>
> *Concept on the Education of Romani Children and Pupils, Including the Development of Secondary and Higher Education*[8]

2.1 Estimating the number of Roma enrolled in special education in Slovakia

The representative survey conducted on special schools and classes in Slovakia in the framework of this study provides a basis for rough country-level estimates on the absolute numbers and relative proportions of Romani pupils enrolled in special primary schools, special classes in standard primary schools, and special secondary schools. In the 2007-2008 school year, there were 179 special primary schools in Slovakia, such that the survey sample of 38 special primary schools represents 21.22 percent of all special primary schools in Slovakia. Given that director and teacher estimates of the numbers

[7] Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006, Paragraph 86).
[8] Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky (2008: 2).

of Romani pupils in the special primary schools included in this sample range from 1,740 to 1,943 Romani pupils, the total number of Romani pupils in special primary schools in Slovakia can be estimated at between 8,200 and 9,150.

Estimates of the total numbers in special classes in standard schools and in special primary schools can be produced in the same manner. Insofar as the 46 standard primary schools with special classes included in the survey sample constitute 21.29 percent of all such schools in Slovakia, the approximate total number of Roma enrolled in special classes in standard primary schools throughout the country is 4,800. A similarly informed estimate of the total number of non-Romani pupils in special classes in standard primary schools in Slovakia is 790. In this light, the views of special classes in standard primary schools expressed by many Romani parents as well as by some directors and teaching assistants as classes for Roma are not far from reality.

The fifteen special secondary schools included in the survey sample amount to 21.12 percent of all special primary schools. Whereas directors' estimates of the number of Roma in the respective schools total 379, teachers participating in the survey provided higher estimates, reaching a total of 437 Romani students. Based on these estimates from special secondary schools included in this sample, the total absolute number of Romani pupils in special secondary schools in Slovakia can be estimated between 1,794 and 2,069.

Table 2.1 Lower-bound estimates of the number of Romani pupils in special education

Type of school	Number of all pupils enrolled	Number of Romani pupils	Proportion of Romani pupils
Special primary schools	13,807	8,200	59.4%
Special classes in standard schools	5,590	4,795	85.8%
Special secondary schools	5,114	1,794	35.0%
Totals	**24,511**	**14,789**	**60.3%**

Source: Author's calculations based on director and teacher estimates

2.2 Variations in the concentration of Roma

2.2.1 Special primary schools

Field research conducted on the representative sample of special schools and classes revealed considerable regional and urban-rural variations in the proportion of school populations for which Roma account. Whereas the proportion of Romani children in the overall sample was approximately 60 percent according to figures provided by directors of special primary schools, Roma accounted for 75.6 percent of the population of schools included in the survey sample in Eastern Slovakia, as compared with 41.9 percent in Western Slovakia. In similar fashion, Roma accounted for 76.2 percent of pupils in special schools located in rural, village environments and 51 percent of pupils in special schools located in cities (where 70 percent of special schools in the survey sample were located).

Teacher and parent responses painted a picture similar to that provided by school directors. Estimates from teachers indicated that Roma account for 77.9 percent of all pupils in the first four years of special primary education and 71.6 percent in the second four-year cycle. Among parents of children attending schools included in the survey sample, slightly over 60 percent (61 percent and 62.1 percent, respectively) reported that most of their children's class- and schoolmates are Roma.

Another important factor revealed by parents' responses in relation to the ethnic composition of school population are the types of settlements from which Romani pupils originate. As shown in the table below, Romani children living in integrated environments are much more likely to attend ethnically mixed schools than are pupils from concentrated, separated, or segregated settlements.

Table 2.2 Ethnic structure of special schools in different types of settlements

Ethnic structure of schoolmates	Types of settlement			
	Integrated	Concentrated	Separated	Segregated
Majority of schoolmates are Romani	57.2	8.3	8.3	15.4
Majority of schoolmates is non-Romani	28.6	91.7	83.3	69.2
The number of Romani and non-Romani is almost the same	14.2	0	8.4	15.4

Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with parents

Responses from parents of children attending schools included in the survey sample also provided support for the hypothesis that multi-child families with one child attending special school are likely to have more than one child in such a school, with an average of 2.02 children per family in the survey sample attending special school. Additionally, nearly half of the parents (49 percent) with more than one child reported that all of their children attend special school.

2.2.2 Special classes in standard primary schools

The overrepresentation of Roma in special classes in standard primary schools is even higher than in special primary schools, with school directors indicating that Roma account for nearly 86 percent of pupils enrolled in the special classes in the survey sample. Estimates by teachers of the special classes were still higher, at 89.9 percent. In the same set of schools, according to their directors, Roma constituted 40.6 percent of the total population and 35 percent of pupils attending standard classes. Of the 46 standard primary schools included in the survey sample, in only three did Roma constitute less than half of all pupils attending special classes; in nearly two thirds of these schools, Roma accounted for more than 90 percent of all pupils in special classes.

Table 2.3 Romani pupils in standard schools with special classes

	Total number of pupils	Number of Romani pupils	Proportion of Romani pupils
Total number of pupils in standard schools with special classes	11,042	4,487	40.4 %
Number of pupils in special classes	1,184	1,016	85.8 %
Number of pupils in standard classes	9,858	3,471	35.2 %

Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with directors of standard schools with special classes.

Whereas most of the special primary schools in the survey sample were located in cities, special classes tend to be established in rural areas, with more than two thirds of schools with special classes in the survey sample located in villages. As was the case with special schools, the proportion of Romani pupils in special classes in rural schools (97 percent) was much higher than in the urban ones (65 percent). Special classes in standard primary schools were concentrated in the Košice and Prešov regions of Eastern Slovakia, the two regions in Slovakia with the highest proportion of Roma. In

these regions, the proportion of Romani pupils in special classes was 88.3 percent, as compared with 76.8 percent in Slovakia's other regions.

Parents of Romani children are aware of the very high proportion of Romani children in special classes. Relative to the responses of school staff, which were generally based on school records, parents generally underestimated the proportion of Romani pupils in the school as a whole, but estimates about the ethnic composition of the classes attended by their children were quite accurate. In other words, Romani parents are well informed that majority of pupils in standard classes is non-Romani and that Roma constitute the majority of pupils in special classes.

Table 2.4 Ethnic structure of schools and special classes – parental views

	Majority of pupils is Romani	Majority of pupils is non-Romani	Number of Romani and non-Romani pupils is almost the same
Standard school with special classes	32.6%	48.8%	18.6 %
Special class	86%	7%	7%

Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with parents of children in special classes

The higher proportion of Roma in special classes than in special schools appears to stem from a combination of the geographic distribution of Roma relative to special primary schools on the one hand and the tendency for special classes to be established for children diagnosed with mild mental disability on the other. With regard to the first factor, whereas approximately two-thirds of Roma in Slovakia live in rural environments,[9] special primary schools are most frequently located in cities. The second factor relates to the fact that the official function of special schools is to educate not only pupils with mild mental disability, but also pupils with more serious mental disability, possibly in combination with physical disability. As will be discussed in more detail below, mild mental disability constitutes the most frequent diagnosis of Romani children streamed into special education. Moreover, interviews conducted in the course of the field research indicated that non-Romani pupils diagnosed with mild mental disability are more likely to be individually integrated, following an individualized study plan in standard classes.

[9] Author's calculation from dataset generated by sociographic mapping of Romani communities (see Jurasková, Kriglerová, and Rybová 2004).

Notwithstanding the higher proportion of Roma in special classes than in special schools, the probability of 'automatic' enrolment of siblings appears to be higher for families with children attending special schools than for families with children attending special classes in standard schools. Although parents all of whose children were enrolled in special education were rare (accounting for seventeen percent of respondents in this category), a tendency for parents with more than one school-age child to have more than one child in special education is apparent in relation to both special schools and special classes. Nevertheless, as shown in the table below, the frequency of at least one child from a given family attending special education while at least one other child in the same family attends standard education was higher among parents of children attending special classes in standard primary schools than among parents of children attending special primary schools.

Table 2.5 Attendance of standard and special primary education by different children in the same family

	Parents of children in special primary school	Parents of children in special classes in standard primary school
Children enrolled in special school/class	75%	57.3%
Children enrolled in standard school	25%	43.1%

Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with parents of children in special schools and special classes in standard school

2.2.3 Special secondary schools

The proportion of pupils in special secondary schools who are Roma included in the survey sample was 35 percent overall (40 percent in practical schools, 30 percent in special technical schools). This compares with special primary schools where Roma made up approximately 60 percent of the pupils and with special classes in standard primary schools (86 percent). This suggests that the proportion of Roma continuing their studies after completing special primary education is lower than for non-Romani pupils.

2.3 Special schools and Romani settlements

Standard schools are, on average, closer to Romani settlements than special schools providing the same level of education. This finding holds for pre-, primary and secondary schools. The average distance between settlements visited in the course of the field research and the nearest special primary school was approximately 3.9 kilometres,

with the most frequent distance approximately one kilometre. This compares with 1.3 kilometres for the average distance to the nearest standard primary school. Special pre-schools were located an average distance of approximately 5.1 kilometres from the Romani settlements visited in the course of the field research, compared to 1.3 kilometres to the nearest standard pre-school.

Table 2.6 Estimated distances of Romani settlements from schools

School type	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard deviation	Min.	Max.
Standard pre-school	1,267m	800m	1,000m	2,512m	0m	15,000m
Special pre-school	5,089m	2,000m	0m	8,068m	0m	25,000m
Standard primary school	1,254m	1,000m	1,000m	1,678m	0m	10,000m
Special primary school	3,934m	2,000m	1,000m	5,001m	0m	21,000m
Standard secondary school	6,923m	2,000m	1,000m	9,188m	0m	30,000m
Special secondary school	9,789m	3,250m	0m	12,276m	0m	35,000m

Source: Author's calculations based on field researcher observation grids

Research conducted in 2001 by the Bratislava-based Institute for Public Affairs on a representative sample of Romani settlements revealed a considerable difference in the frequency of enrolment in special schools by type of settlement: Whereas 30 percent of Roma from segregated settlements reported having at least one child attending special school, the corresponding figure for Roma from integrated environments was 5.3 percent (Kriglerová 2002: 755). The same study further notes that "[t]he problems in school of Romani children from an integrated environment do not differ significantly from the problems of non-Romani children" (Kriglerová 2002: 755).

2.4 School infrastructure

2.4.1 Special primary schools

The infrastructure of the special primary schools included in the survey sample was generally in good working condition, despite the fact that few of the schools were new. Rather than varying predictably by region or urban-rural location, the condition of school infrastructure appears to depend on both the funds that the individual schools have available and on the personal interest taken by directors and/or teachers. Additionally, larger schools in the survey sample tended have more equipment, with schools attended also by physically disabled pupils particularly well equipped. Smaller schools, on the other hand, often suffered from the lack of school grounds, specialized classrooms, playgrounds and cafeterias.

Among special primary schools included in the survey sample, the condition of infrastructure was most problematic in facilities located in or near Romani settlements. In these facilities, a lack of investment was apparent, with poor conditions for education including (but not limited to) classrooms of insufficient size.

2.4.2 Standard schools with special classes

Compared to special primary schools, standard primary schools usually have a larger number of pupils, with larger schools in general (regardless of type) having better facilities. Of the standard primary schools included in the survey sample, those in Western Slovakia had the best equipment, including specialized classrooms, computers, playgrounds and recreation rooms. Of the special classes in these schools in Western Slovakia, only one exhibited signs of segregation.

Outside of Western Slovakia, schools included in the survey sample were usually located in old buildings, with a minority completely reconstructed. Only approximately twenty percent were assessed as being very well equipped in relation to classrooms, teaching tools, and computers. Rural and smaller schools tended to be less well equipped.

As was observed in relation to special primary schools, the condition of facilities located in or near Romani settlements was problematic also for standard schools with special classes. Particularly striking were the several cases observed in which the facilities located in or near a Romani settlement were satellites of a standard primary school located further from the settlement, as in all of these cases the condition of infrastructure was considerably poorer at the satellite facility, where poor sanitary conditions were common, as were inadequate classroom equipment and teaching tools. Additionally, computer equipment, specialized classrooms, and laboratories were absent, and communication between school management and staff of satellite facilities was minimal.

Even in standard primary schools not located in close proximity to a Romani settlement, in a minority of cases the infrastructure in special classes was significantly lower than in standard classes in the same school. Moreover, physical barriers between special and standard classes were apparent in a minority of such schools, with forms of separation ranging from locking doors through iron bars to placement of special classes in the school basement, without adequate heat or lighting. In schools where such separation was observed, school directors interviewed generally referred to the physically separated parts of the school as "Romani". At one site, pupils were locked in a classroom without teacher supervision during breaks.

2.4.3 Special secondary schools

Overall, the condition of the special secondary schools included in the survey sample was better than that of the special primary schools and special classes in standard primary schools. While schools buildings were generally old, a high level of attention to the interior atmosphere was apparent in most of the special secondary schools. Special secondary schools have their own workrooms where students learn practical subjects, with computer classrooms standard and widely used.

2.5 Differences between special and standard curricula

Relative to instruction in standard primary schools, special primary schools deliver a reduced curriculum. Amnesty International (2007: 24) reports that education professionals described a four-year gap between special and standard curricula. Interviews with directors of special schools conducted for this study, on the other hand, generated information that the curriculum for pupils with mild mental disability covers approximately 60 percent of the curriculum taught in

> The purpose of education in special schools for mentally disabled children is to maximise their cognitive and physical development and to compensate for their mental deficiencies with the aim of preparing them for practical life. Special emphasis is given to their rational, sensory, emotional development.
>
> *Educational Programs for Pupils with Mental Disability*[10]

> While after first grade of standard school children can read and write all letters of alphabet, in special school it lasts three years in "A" variant and six years in "B" variant.
>
> *Director of special primary school*

> In standard school they learn to count to 20 in first grade, in special class it is only to 5.
>
> *Director of special primary school*

[10] Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky (2006d).

standard schools, with the two variants for greater degrees of mental disability (B and C) further reduced. In the lower grades, the main differences between standard and reduced curricula are in the core subjects reading, writing and mathematics, with other subjects largely eliminated. As a result, pupils in special primary schools complete grade nine at the level of grade seven with a smaller number of subjects. Special classes in standard schools follow the same curricula in special schools, according to the degree of pupils' diagnosed mental disability.

Not only do curricula in special education differ from the ones taught in standard education, but the emphasis in special education is also given mainly to practical aspects of learning, rather than to general knowledge. While the subjects taught in special and standard primary schools are nominally similar, the amount of knowledge achieved within particular subjects is different. Tables 2.7 and 2.8 below provide a comparison of taught subjects and the amount of time per week allocated to each subject. As can be seen from the tables, not only time allocations but also the grade in which particular subjects are offered varies according to curriculum type; biology, geography, and history are taught in special schools and classes from grade five, two years later than in standard schools and classes. Another significant difference is the six hours per week allocated for practical instruction ("industrial arts") in the last three years of special schools, as compared with a single hour per week for technical education in the same years of standard schools and classes.

Table 2.7 Curriculum for special primary schools for pupils with mental disability

Subject/Grade	Pr.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Slovak language	-	10	11	11	7	7	6	5	5	5
Language development, Knowledge development, Aspects of music education	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Preparation for writing and aspects of art	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sensory education and foundations of mathematical imagination	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Geography of Slovakia	-	-	-	-	2	3	3	-	-	-
Civic education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
History	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Geography	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Mathematics	-	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Biology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	1
Physics	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Chemistry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Music education	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1
Art	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	2	2	2
Practical instruction	2	3	3	3	4	4	5	6	6	6
Physical education	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Total (per week)	**20**	**20**	**22**	**22**	**23**	**25**	**28**	**28**	**28**	**29**

Source: Ministry of Education

Table 2.8 Curriculum for standard primary schools

Subject/Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Slovak language and literature	9	9	9	9	5	5	4	4	5
Foundations of learning (prvouka)	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Geography of Slovakia	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-
Mathematics	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
Biology	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
Foreign language	-	-	-	-	4	3	3	3	3
History	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	2	2
Geography	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2	1
Physics	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	1
Chemistry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3
Biology	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	2	1
Technical education (technická výchova)	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	1
Technical instruction (pracovné vyučovanie)	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Art	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Music education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Physical education	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
Ethics/religion	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total (per week)	**22**	**23**	**25**	**26**	**26**	**28**	**29**	**29**	**29**

Source: Ministry of Education

Unlike their counterparts who follow a standard curriculum, pupils in special primary schools and classes in Slovakia do not receive instruction in a foreign language. The explanation offered for this practice by several of the interviewed school directors is that mentally disabled pupils cannot realistically be expected to learn a foreign language. Given that a large proportion of Romani pupils speak Romanes as a first language and that the language of instruction in all schools included in the survey sample is either Slovak or Hungarian, this line of reasoning is problematic.

One advantage of special education over standard education is its emphasis on an individual approach to pupils. Whereas average class sizes in standard education are 25, the field research conducted in the framework of this study identified average class sizes of eight pupils in special primary schools and nine pupils in special classes in standard primary schools.

Notwithstanding the advantages of the individual approach employed in special education, the considerable differences between special and standard curricula severely limit the possibilities for (re-)integration from special schools and classes to standard education. A minority of the directors interviewed in the course of the field research volunteered that they cannot recall a single case of such transfer, with others noting that pupils transferred from special education into standard education generally fare poorly in the latter and are subsequently returned to the special school or class from which they were transferred. The cases of transfer mentioned by school directors tended to involve children in grade one or two or, in the case of non-Romani children, strong pressure from parents. A minority of the directors of standard schools also pointed spontaneously to the flexibility offered by special classes in such schools; as one director explained, "When we see that pupils have very good results in a special class, we place them in a standard class for several weeks or months. Then we can observe whether he/she is capable of attending standard class or not. If it looks like he/she is, we send him/her to a pedagogical-psychological advising centre for reassessment." As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, however, there is no effective guarantee of reassessment of children streamed into special education.

Data from the representative survey conducted for this study confirm directors' reports in interviews that cases of transfer from special to standard education are rare. Among schools in the survey sample, in the 2007-2008 school year only ten pupils were transferred from special to standard primary school (representing one child for approximately every three schools) and 19 pupils from special classes into standard classes (0.41 pupil per school). Extrapolating to all special schools and classes in Slovakia results in an estimate that less than 140 pupils were transferred from special education into standard education during the 2007-2008 school year. Combining this estimate with the lower-bound estimates of the number of Romani children attending special primary schools and special classes in standard primary schools presented in Chapter 2 (i.e., 8 200 and 4 795, respectively), the rate of transfer from special primary education to standard primary education can be estimated at 1.1 percent.

2.6 Training of teaching staff

Less than half (46.7 percent) of the teaching staff in special schools is "appropriately qualified" (without further definition) according to official figures (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2001: 8). Consistent with this statistic, among the explanatory factors for Roma's educational disadvantage enumerated in a government-commissioned research report from 2006 is the "not always most appropriate approach of pedagogues" (Metodicko-pedagogické centrum v Prešove 2006: 5). A more recent report from the State School Inspectorate notes an insufficient number of teachers trained in special education (Štátna školská inšpekcia 2008: 36). In interviews, directors of special schools often pointed to a lack of interest on the part of young university graduates from universities to teach in special schools, with some also expressing the view that younger teachers would be more flexible and capable of following new trends in education.

Beyond pre-service qualification, the quality of teaching depends also on opportunities for further education and training. Where such opportunities are not readily available, teachers are particularly likely to lack skills necessary to integrate children (Romani or non-Romani) with special needs in a standard classroom. Whereas approximately one third of the teachers completing questionnaires for this study reported having participated in in-service training focusing on special education, a minority of school directors pointed spontaneously to a need for more practically oriented training for teachers in special schools and classes.

Consequences of Special Education for Individual and State

This chapter offers a look at the effects of the situation presented in the preceding chapter. Beginning at the level of the individual enrolled in special primary education, the chapter first examines available options for secondary education and the factors weighing in parents' enrolment decisions at that level. Next addressed is the closely related issue of the employment prospects of graduates of special education. In the chapter's final section, the focus shifts to the level of the state, with the cost-effectiveness of special education addressed through a comparative probabilistic analysis of the period required for persons who complete various forms of education to provide a net financial benefit.

3.1 Transition from special primary education to secondary education

Depending on the severity of their diagnosed mental disability, graduates of special primary schools and special classes have at most two options for continuing their education: special technical schools and practical schools. Whereas the former are open only to pupils who have completed primary education according to the curriculum for pupils with mild mental disability, the latter are open in principle to all graduates of special primary education (see Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1991, Section 18.1; Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.99-100). Whereas a 2006 government report recommends that access to post-primary education be improved for graduates of special primary education (Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2006; see also Vláda Slovenskej republiky 2008b: 16), there has thus far been no visible action in this direction.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Slovak education system divides children into educational streams from an earlier age than most other OECD countries. Consistent with this, the only form of special education compatible with university-preparatory secondary education (including completion of the *maturita*) is individual integration in a standard class in a standard school (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2006a, Article 4.1). As will be explained below, the administrative possibility of individual integration is not generally realized where Romani pupils are concerned.

Close to half (46.5 percent) of pupils completing their education in special primary schools for the mentally disabled in the 2007-2008 school year did not make the transition into secondary education (Figure 3.1). Graduates of special

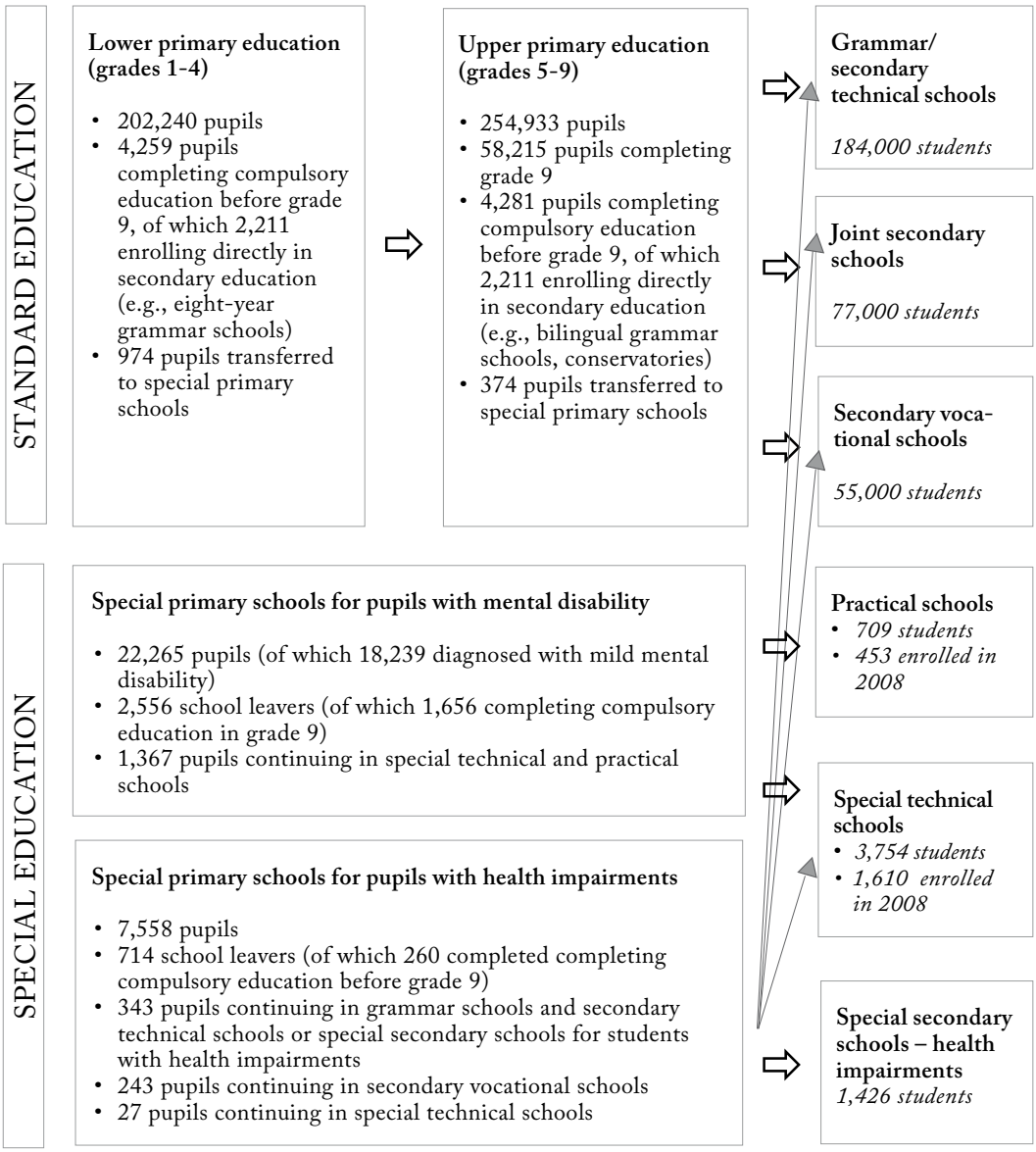
primary schools who continue into secondary education generally attend technical or practical schools, with only nineteen individual pupils continuing in secondary vocational schools.

The number of Romani graduates of special primary schools who continue their formal education is relatively low; according to the directors of special primary schools and standard primary schools with special classes included in the sample, whereas the proportion of pupils attending special schools who are Roma is nearly 60 percent, Roma account for only 35 percent of pupils continuing education in special secondary school. Among the reasons for the low transition rate is that mandatory education in Slovakia lasts ten years (or until the age of 16). As a result, pupils who repeat a grade in primary education generally complete mandatory education in grade nine or lower. Among pupils in special primary schools included in the representative sample who completed mandatory education at grade nine, half were Roma. Among pupils in special primary schools completing mandatory education at a level lower than grade nine, however, Roma account for 80 percent.

Romani parents of pupils in primary education in special schools and classes included in the research demonstrated knowledge about the availability of special technical schools but a lower level of awareness about the differences among the various types of secondary schools and about barriers for further education for pupils completing primary education in special schools and classes.[11] Among factors affecting their decision as to whether to send their children to secondary school, parents cited proximity as particularly important, with parents more likely to send their children to schools located near their place of residence. This is particularly relevant for families living in rural locations, where the rarity of special secondary schools (approximately 80 percent of special secondary schools are located in cities and towns) makes it less likely that Romani graduates of special primary education will access secondary education. Among a majority of Romani parents participating in interviews conducted in the framework of this study, a concern with proximity also plays an important role in making parents more willing to send boys to secondary schools than to do the same with girls. As one mother explained, "If I had a son, I would send him to secondary school. Not a girl. She would come home pregnant or something. It is better when she stays at home."

[11] Not clear from the field research conducted in the framework of this study is the extent to which Romani parents are aware of the differences between technical and practical schools.

Figure 3.1 Transition of pupils in the Slovak education system in 2008[12]



Source: Author's calculations based on the Statistical Yearbooks in Education for 2007 and 2008 produced by the Institute of Information and Prognoses in Education

[12] For standard secondary schools, the numbers of students are based on 2007 data and include both internal and external students.

In addition to proximity, family finances play an important role in parents' decisions about sending their children to secondary school. On the one hand, parents' expenses for their children attending special secondary school are usually much higher than for attending special primary school, including expenditures for travel, meals and, in some cases, accommodation. On the other hand, from the age of sixteen, children who have completed mandatory education but who are not attending school are potential beneficiaries of social benefits, which can contribute significantly to the family budget.[13] Making this option more attractive for some Romani families is the availability of financial ("activation") incentives from the state to recipients of social benefits who accept low-paid (approximately EUR 60 per month), short-term (maximum of six months) employment, usually organized by the municipalities. This situation effectively raises the opportunity costs of sending children to secondary school, leading many parents to forego secondary education for their children out of shorter-term considerations of economic well-being.

A majority of the Romani parents interviewed also expressed scepticism about the long-term benefits of completing secondary education. Taking into account high unemployment rates and discrimination on the labour market, parents frequently expressed the view that Roma are unlikely to find work. In the words of one Romani mother, "It is very complicated to find a job in general. One should have at least secondary education. My father has a vocational certificate plus several courses, and he is unemployed. And, especially if you are Roma you have bad luck."

Focus groups with Romani graduates of special secondary schools pointed to discriminatory treatment of Roma attending schools in this category. Although special technical schools in principle allow students to choose their own specialization, participants in the focus groups indicated that school authorities had made the choice for them. As a result, many finished secondary education specialized as gardeners, offering little possibility of finding work.

3.2 Access to employment

According to a study conducted for UNDP in 2005 on a representative sample of households in Romani settlements, unemployment among Romani men living in such settlements is 70 percent (Filadelfiová, Gerbery, and Škobla 2007: 72).[14] Moreover, approximately three quarters (75.9 percent) of the unemployed reported having been registered with an labour office for more than one year, while nearly half (48.8 percent)

[13] See Table B6 for details on the level of social benefits.

[14] While the unemployment rate among Romani women was closer to 50%, the difference in unemployment rates by gender is apparently the product of maternity leave, parental leave, and retirement, rather than high rates of employment among Romani women (Filadelfiová, Gerbery, and Škobla 2007: 72).

indicated that they had been registered for more than three years (Filadelfiová, Gerbery, and Škobla 2007: 75). It has also been estimated that Roma account for the majority of long-term unemployed in the Slovak Republic, with as much as 80 percent of Slovakia's Romani population dependent on the state's social welfare net (Loran 2002: 565-566).

The main threshold of educational attainment for success on Slovakia's labour market is passing the secondary end examination (*maturita*). As shown in Table 3.1, persons with completed the secondary end examination account for the majority (57.6 percent) of Slovakia's economically active population. Additionally, passing the end examination positively affects both employment chances (Table 3.2) and prospects for earning an average wage or higher (Table 3.3).

Table 3.1 Economically active population by level of education attained as of 2007 (in thousands)

	Number	Percent
1 Basic education	191.1	7.2%
2 Vocational without maturita	863	32.6%
3 Secondary technical without maturita	68.7	2.6%
4 Vocational with maturita	134.7	5.1%
5 Completed secondary general education (with maturita)	111.9	4.2%
6 Completed secondary technical education (with maturita)	877.7	33.1%
7 Post-secondary technical	19.9	0.8%
8 First stage of tertiary education	21	0.8%
9 Second stage of tertiary education	355.1	13.4%
10 Third stage of tertiary education	5.9	0.2%
Without education	0.1	0.0%
Total	**2,649.20**	**100.0%**

Source: Statistical Office of SR – Slovstat online public database

Unemployment among persons who complete at most primary education is much higher than the national average of eleven percent (100 percent among persons with no education and 44.6 percent for persons with only primary education) (Table 3.2). Moreover, these groups together accounted for only 7.2 percent of the economically active population in 2007. Whereas unemployment among persons with completed secondary education without end examination was slightly above ten percent in 2007, for all segments of the population with completed secondary end examination the rate of unemployment was below ten percent. Placing the Slovak case in comparative

perspective, the unemployment rate among 15-24 year olds in Slovakia not in education or training in 2002 was 37.7 percent, as compared with the EU-25 average of 20.1 percent for the same category of persons (EURYDICE 2005).

Table 3.2 Unemployment in Slovakia by level of educational attainment in 2007

	Number of unemployed people in thousands (Labour Force Survey data)	Unemployment rate in the respective group of education attained in %
1 Basic education	85.2	44.6
2 Vocational without maturita	106.4	12.3
3 Secondary technical without maturita	7.5	10.9
4 Vocational with maturita	11.0	8.2
5 Completed secondary general education (with maturita)	10.2	9.2
6 Completed secondary technical education (with maturita)	55.4	6.3
7 Post-secondary technical	1.5	7.8
8 First stage of tertiary education	0.8	3.9
9 Second stage of tertiary education	13.3	3.8
10 Third stage of tertiary education	0.2	3.7
Without education	0.3	100
Total	**291.9**	**11.0**

Source: Statistical Office of SR – Slovstat online public database based on the Labour Force Survey

Table 3.3 Average nominal gross monthly wage of employees by level of education in Euro

	2005	2006	2007	% of the monthly average in 2007	Taxes and contributions paid from the gross wage in 2007
0 Unknown education	580.96	616.86			
1 Basic education	411.77	420.15	461.53	64.2%	216.36
2 Vocational without maturita	486.41	514.6	557.92	77.6%	264.92
3 Secondary technical without maturita	467.24	498.44	545.48	75.9%	252.41
4 Vocational with maturita	565.77	611.06	664.44	92.4%	316.47
5 Completed secondary general education (with maturita)	600.00	633.2	667.46	92.8%	338.78
6 Completed secondary technical education (with maturita)	605.70	634.7	691.69	96.2%	342.40
7 Post-secondary technical	580.85	662.32	731.43	101.7%	326.13
8 First stage of tertiary education	738.99	856.83	826.86	115.0%	429.13
9 Second stage of tertiary education	980.80	1,064.83	1,171.11	162.9%	585.11
10 Third stage of tertiary education	951.24	1,159.23	1,233.39	171.6%	566.72
Total	**614.22**	**656.36**	**718.91**	**100.0%**	**348.10**

Source: Statistical Office of SR – Wage survey, authors calculations in the two last columns

"Without improving the educational situation of Roma, it is very difficult to improve their employment rate, which in turn is a key prerequisite for improving the overall socio-economic situation of the Roma community" (Salner 2005c: 11). Roma in general are disadvantaged on the labour market by a combination of their level of education and the geographic distribution of unemployment, even without taking into

account the possibility of discrimination in employment (see, for example, Svetová banka 2002; Vašečka 2003). A study conducted for UNDP in 2005 on a representative sample of households in Romani settlements found that approximately two-thirds of Romani parents living in such settlements had not completed secondary education (Filadelfiová, Gerbery, and Škobla 2007: 62-63). Eighty percent lacked any employment qualification, with 15 percent in possession of an apprenticeship certificate and fewer than 2 percent having completed the *maturita* end examination.

Table 3.4 Educational attainment of Romani parents

Level of education	Mother %	Father %
Incomplete primary (standard school)	14.4	15.8
Special primary school	15.3	9.9
Standard primary school	47.7	41.6
Vocational	17.2	28.7
Upper secondary with *maturita*	5.4	4.0
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with parents of children in special education (special schools, special classes in standard schools, special secondary schools – calculated together)

The only form of special education to produce graduates qualified for skilled work is special technical school, with the vocational certificate awarded to graduates of special technical schools allowing them to work only under the supervision of more highly skilled workers. Moreover, as mentioned in section 3.1, the specializations of Romani graduates from special technical school are often poorly suited to the demands of the labour market. For graduates of practical schools, the only formally available employment opportunities are in special workplaces established for persons with mental disability (*chránené dielne*).

From the point of view of graduates from special secondary schools, completion of this kind of secondary education did not help them to find a job. Of the eight Romani graduates of special secondary schools who participated in a focus group organized in preparing this study, none has ever been regularly employed, and those with seasonal or informal employment reported not working in the area in which they specialized in secondary school. Moreover, all eight graduates reported experiencing discrimination from prospective employers.

Discrimination against Roma on the labour market was frequently cited also by employees of labour offices who participated in focus groups. According to some participants, employers are reluctant to employ even Roma with standard vocational or higher education. Moreover, the jobs offered by labour offices to graduates of special secondary schools usually do not correspond to the graduates' educational profile, with one Romani graduate of a special technical school explaining in a focus group that the job opportunities provided him by labour offices were the same as those offered to his relatives who had completed only primary education.

3.3 Cost-effectiveness of special education

From the standpoint of the state, investments in the current system of special education in Slovakia are unlikely to pay off. This section demonstrates this to be the case by calculating hypothetical payback periods for five educational paths which do not extend beyond secondary education. The method used for this purpose, discounted payback period calculation, is commonly used in business and finance. Its aim is to describe a planned investment project and compare its expenditures and revenues over time, taking into account the time value of money. The result of the calculation – the payback period – is the expected number of years required to recover the original investment by summing up the future discounted cash flows.

Slovakia's legal framework for education provides the basis for sketching five educational paths terminating with the completion of secondary education or lower:

Path A: Completion of compulsory education with incomplete primary education.
Path B: Completion of basic education in practical school following education in standard or special primary school.[15]
Path C: Completion of lower secondary education (ISCED 2C) in special technical school or a two-year program of a secondary vocational school following completion of standard or special primary school.
Path D: Completion of secondary education in secondary vocational school with non-*maturita* end examination (ISCED 3C) following completion of standard primary school.
Path E: Completion of secondary education with *maturita* end examination (ISCED 3A and 4A) following completion of standard primary school.[16]

[15] Although practical schools are defined in law as intended for mentally disabled graduates of special primary schools who were not accepted to or who failed out of technical schools, an unknown number of such schools also admit students who have not completed primary education.

[16] Upon successful completion of this type of end examination (zaverečná skúška), a vocational education certificate (výučný list) is awarded.

Slovakia's system of financing primary and secondary education is mostly based on a per-pupil formula. While the table below summarizes per-pupil financing for the country's various types of schools, application of the per-pupil formula in practice is much more complex. Beyond the parameters included in the table, a range of additional factors is taken into account, including but not limited to the level of health impairments at special schools, the language of instruction and bilingualism, the number of individually integrated students in standard schools, the number of pupils in zero grades, and the proportions between internal and external forms of education. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, the complexity of this formula operates in such a way as to create incentives for recruiting children into special schools and classes irrespective of children's educational needs.

Table 3.5 Per-pupil formula-based financial contributions for schools in 2008 (in Slovak crowns)

Category of schools	Wages	Operation – minimum level	Operation – maximum level	Total contribution – minimum level	Total contribution – maximum level	Average per-pupil contribution
Primary schools	22,217	5,682	6,842	27,899	29,059	28,479
Grammar schools	26,999	5,858	7,018	32,857	34,017	33,437
Grammar schools with sport programs	48,145	8,258	9,418	56,403	57,563	56,983
Secondary technical schools	34,685	6,141	7,301	40,826	41,986	41,406
Business academies	28,173	5,902	7,062	34,075	35,235	34,655
Secondary health-care schools	46,021	6,558	7,718	52,579	53,739	53,159
Secondary technical schools with artistic programs	53,147	6,820	7,980	59,967	61,127	60,547
Conservatories	101,246	8,592	9,752	109,838	110,998	110,418
Secondary vocational schools and vocational schools	40,418	7,163	8,323	47,581	48,741	48,161
Centres for technical training	15,714	5,443	6,603	21,157	22,317	21,737
Special primary schools	36,817	7,841	9,001	44,658	45,818	45,238
Grammar schools and secondary technical schools – special (not for mental disability)	55,542	7,720	8,880	63,262	64,422	63,842
Secondary vocational schools – special	67,114	8,146	9,306	75,260	76,420	75,840
Special technical schools and practical schools	76,630	8,496	9,656	85,126	86,286	85,706

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the Ministry of Education

Calculating the discounted payback period of the five educational paths involves taking into account the average costs of education for a given school type plus average subsidies to students from low-income families, as well as the costs and revenues that result (later) from the individual's employment status.[17] The possibility that a person is unemployed is assigned a probability *x*, with receipt of average social welfare benefits and associated subsidies (e.g., for healthcare, public employment, housing, and disability) calculated accordingly.[18] In similar fashion, contributions by an employed person to public budgets via personal income tax, health insurance, and social insurance contributions are calculated and assigned the inverse probability (1-*x*). A simplified net cash flow of budgets is subsequently projected through age 60 and discounted to arrive at the payback period in years. In the context of this study, the payback period thus provides an estimate of the period of time that can be expected to elapse until the investment in a given educational path pays back to the public budgets in the form of taxes and obligatory contributions.

Education costs are calculated based on the 2007 average annual per-pupil formula for a given type of school. Abstracted from the calculation are the various forms of additional financing that schools commonly receive (e.g. zero grades, individually integrated pupils, teaching assistants), as are the capital costs that are not assigned on a per-pupil basis. Also not taken into account are costs or other effects of pre-primary education. It is further assumed that no repetition of grades will occur outside of Path A.

In the table below, the payback period has been calculated based on two different interest rates: the 2.3 percent annual rate characteristic of fifteen-year state bonds after deducting for inflation and a hypothetical annual rate of four percent. Left out of the calculation are real wage increases (which could be expected to reduce the discount interest rate and shorten the payback periods) and probabilistic costs to the state associated with incarceration.[19] Also not taken into account for the sake of simplicity are regional variations in wages and differences in unemployment by age group.

From the average gross monthly wages by respective level of education attained, the following in-flows to public budgets are calculated: health insurance (fourteen percent of the gross wage), social insurance contributions (34.6 percent of the gross wage), and income tax (nineteen percent of the gross wage after health and social insurance

[17] Given this study's focus on Roma, the inclusion of subsidies for students from low-income families in calculating the payback period is justified by the finding of research conducted for UNDP that 72.7 percent of Romani households in Romani settlements received some form of income related to material need, as compared with approximately one quarter of nearby non-Romani households (Filadelfiová, Gerbery, and Škobla 2007: 48-49).

[18] Average data taken from the Report on the social situation in 2007 by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, http://www.employment.gov.sk/new/index.php?SMC=1&id=14295.

[19] Taking incarceration costs into account would likely increase the payback period for Paths A, B, and C relative to Paths D and E (see Generálne riaditeľstvo Zboru väzenskej a justičnej stráže 2009).

contributions). Important in-flows to public budgets not taken into account for lack of available data include value-added and excise taxes.[20]

Table 3.6 Overview of discounted payback periods of five educational paths

Education paths and respective payback period	Standard schools	Special schools
A: Completion of compulsory education with incomplete primary education	10 years at primary school	10 years at special primary school
Payback period for Path A	Will not pay back during working life	Will not pay back during working life
B: Completion of basic education in practical school following completion of standard or special primary school	9 years at primary school 3 years at practical school	9 years at special primary school 3 years at practical school
Payback period for Path B	between 29 years (2.3% p.a.) and 37 years (4% p.a.)	Will not pay back during working life
C: Completion of lower secondary education (ISCED 2C) in special technical school or secondary vocational school following completion of standard or special primary school	9 years at primary school 2 years at secondary vocational school	9 years at special primary school 3 years at special technical school
Payback period for Path C	18 years (2.3% p.a.) – 19 years (4% p.a.)	24 years (2.3% p.a.) – 28 years (4% p.a.)
D: Completion of secondary education in secondary vocational school with non-*maturita* end examination (ISCED 3C) following completion of standard primary school	9 years at primary school 3 years at secondary vocational school	*Path not available to graduates of special primary schools*
Payback period for Path D	20 years (2.3% p.a.) – 21 years (4% p.a.)	
E: Completion of secondary education with *maturita* end examination (ISCED 3A and 4A) following completion of standard primary school	9 years at primary school 4 years at grammar school/ secondary technical school	*Path not available to graduates of special primary schools*
Payback period for Path E	19 years (2.3% p.a.) – 20 years (4% p.a.)	

[20] Were value-added and excise taxes to be included in the calculation, the gap between payback periods for Paths A and B, on the one hand, and Paths C, D, and E, on the other, would presumably be wider still.

As shown in the table above, the payback periods for two of the three educational paths with the highest concentrations of Roma (based on the findings presented in section 2.1) extend beyond age 60. In other words, persons with incomplete primary education or who completed basic education in a practical school following graduation from a special primary school cannot be expected to provide a net financial benefit to the state in the course of their working life. While types of schools rather than types of classes constitute the basis for constructing the educational paths presented in this section, it can be expected that the educational paths of persons who attended special classes in standard primary schools do not differ significantly from the educational paths of their counterparts following the same curriculum in special primary schools.

Unlike Paths A and B, all other educational paths have payback periods which bring a net gain on the initial investment.[21] From the standpoint of cost-effectiveness for the state, the main challenge is therefore to reduce the numbers of persons taking Paths A and B in favour of higher levels of education. The significant difference in the payback periods of Paths C, D, and E relative to Paths A and B points to room for additional investments to this end.

[21] The payback period for Path C is shorter than that for Path D because the same unemployment probability and average wage were used in the calculations for both categories of vocational education. The reason for this is the lack of data available that could distinguish between the lower vocational qualification received via Path C and the higher vocational qualification from Path D.

Assessment and Re-assessment

This chapter and the chapter which follows it examine factors contributing to the overrepresentation of Roma in special education in Slovakia, as described in Chapter 2. The focus of this chapter is the procedures and mechanisms by which children enter and leave special education. Whereas the chapter's first section treats the overall processes by which children in general and Roma in particular are enrolled in special education, the second section consists in a discussion of the applicability for Roma and the application in practice to Roma of the tools used to diagnose mental disability. The chapter's final section relates the practices discussed in the two preceding sections to the rarity with which Romani children in special education are reassigned to standard education.

> In the emotional area, deprived Romani children are more labile, neurotic, timid, or on the contrary aggressive, explosive.
>
> *Evaluation of Research on the Position of the Romani Child and Pupil in the Education System of the Slovak Republic*[22]

4.1 Entry into special education

A public notice issued by the Slovak Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport in 1991 stipulates that decisions on enrolment and transfer into a special primary school are to be made by the director of the special school into which a child is to be enrolled or transferred on the basis of the proposal of an expert commission, over which the director of the special school presides and the members of which the director of the special school appoints (Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1991, Section 14.2; cf. Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1990b, Section 16.1). The expert commission is to consist of a special pedagogue, a psychologist, and other experts, such as a doctor and/or a representative of a special pedagogical advising centre (SPP) or a pedagogical-psychological advising centre (PPP).[23] Also necessary since 1991 for the enrolment or transfer of a child into a special school is the consent of the child's guardian.[24] While the decision on enrolment or transfer is made by the

[22] Metodické centrum Prešov (2002: 6).

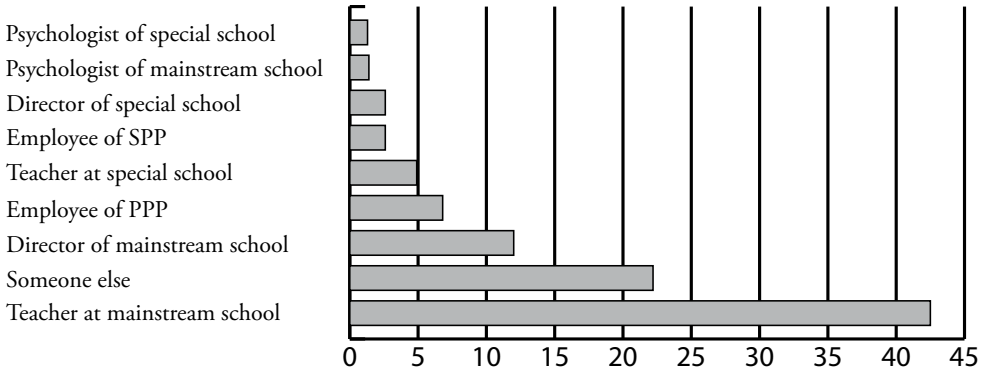
[23] In similar fashion, decisions on enrolment into technical and practical schools are made by the director of the relevant special secondary school on the basis of the proposal of an admissions commission consisting of teaching staff from the special secondary school, a psychologist, and a doctor, as well as the director of the special secondary school (Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1991, Section 18.4).

[24] The School Law of 2008 adds the nuance of "informed consent", defined in the Law as written consent with awareness of the consequences of consenting (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.2.y).

director of the special school in question, until the 2008-2009 school year the initial proposal for enrolment could come from the legal guardian, the school attended by the child, a special pedagogical advising centre, a pedagogical-psychological advising centre, a healthcare institution, or a state organ responsible for families and children (Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1991, Section 14.3). The 2008 School Law, which annuls the 1991 public notice, does not contain a provision for expert commissions, requiring beginning with the 2008-2009 school year a written request from the child's legal guardian and a written statement from an educational advising institution (not further defined) on the basis of (unspecified) diagnostic tests (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2008; Article I.61.1; see also Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008a, Paragraph 7). Additionally, the 2008 School Law requires the director of the special school to inform the child's legal guardian of all education options available to the child being considered for enrolment (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.61.1).

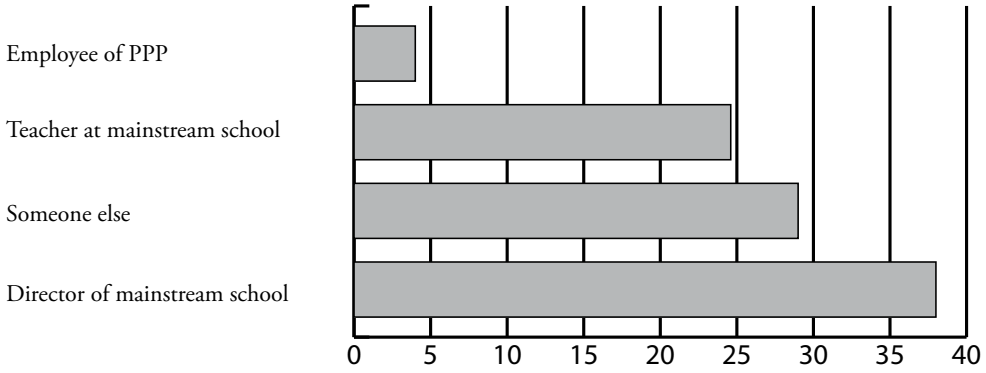
As shown in the graphs below, questionnaires administered to Romani parents yielded the finding that staff in standard schools account for the majority of recommendations that Romani children be enrolled in special schools and classes. Directors of the primary schools (both special and standard) included in the research, on the other hand, stressed the importance of parental consent in the procedures for enrolling children in special education, citing it as evidence for the appropriateness of placement decisions. Moreover, a majority of both school directors and Romani parents interviewed indicated that the initial impetus for placement of children in special education comes from Romani parents; as some questionnaire respondents explained, parental initiative accounts for many of the responses "someone else" in the graphs. Directors also noted that non-Romani parents are more likely to disagree than are Romani parents with recommendations that their children be enrolled in a special school or class, with individual integration in standard classes the most frequent outcome of such objections.

Graph 4.1 Who first suggested that your children should be enrolled in this special school?



Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with parents of Romani children enrolled in special primary schools

Graph 4.2 Who first suggested that your children should be enrolled in this special class?



Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with parents of Romani children enrolled in special classes

Directors of the special primary schools and standard primary schools with special classes included in the research indicated that once a recommendation has been made that a child be enrolled in special education, the usual next step is for the child to be assessed by a psychologist in a pedagogical-psychological advising centre. To the extent that the assessment finds mental disability, the child is then sent to a special pedagogical advising centre for diagnosis by a special pedagogue. The special pedagogue then makes a recommendation to the commission described above on the type of education most suitable for the child.

Table 4.1 Assessment practices as reported by school directors

	Special schools		Standard schools with special classes	
	Indicated	Not indicated	Indicated	Not indicated
Assessment in PPP	**71.1%**	28.9%	**91.3%**	8.7%
Assessment in SPP	**86.1%**	13.9%	**80.4%**	19.6%
Assessment by individual psychologist	**7.9%**	92.1%	**2.2%**	97.8%

Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with directors of special schools and standard schools with special classes

According to Jana Tomatová (2004a: 35), the most frequent solution for non-Romani children determined not to be ready for school at age six and the least frequent solution for similarly assessed Romani children is deferral of school attendance for a year.[25] The pedagogical soundness of this distinction between Romani and non-Romani children depends on the degree to which the needs of Romani children assessed as not school ready are addressed by the arrangements in place for their pre-school preparation.

Since 1991, preparatory grades may be established in special primary schools for children with mild mental disability (Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1991, Section 8.6).[26] As is the case with the numbered grades in special schools for pupils with mental disability, preparatory grades are intended for children with a

[25] The legal possibility of deferral first appears in a 1990 public notice of the Slovak Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1990a). The relevant provision (Article I.2.2) states that if a child proves insufficiently mature (physically or mentally) in the course of the first year of primary school, deferral can be arranged on recommendation of the school director to the people's council, following discussion with the child's guardian and taking into account the opinion of the district pedagogical-psychological advising centre. A 2005 directive of the Ministry of Education, however, recommends against this course of action for children from a socially disadvantaged environment (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2005, Article 4.1).

[26] The same public notice divides special primary schools for pupils with mental disability into three types. Whereas the mental disability of pupils in type-A special primary schools is light, types-B and -C special primary schools are to serve children with moderate and severe mental disability, respectively (Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1991, Section 8; see also Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.97.5).

mental disability.[27] In practice, however, preparatory grades may be established for Romani children without a mental or physical disability (see, for example, Nadácia Milana Šimečku 2007: 14). While in principle preparatory grades may prepare children for either standard or special primary school, in practice they tend to serve as the beginning of a career in special education, as reassignment is rarely considered (Nadácia Milana Šimečku 2007: 14). Here, it is important to distinguish between preparatory grades and zero grades. Zero grades divide the material corresponding to the curriculum for the first year of standard primary school into two years, and so prepare children for entry into standard primary school classes. In contrast, preparatory grades deliver simplified material, with the result that entry into special education usually follows, whether immediately or after a short time in standard classes.

Zero grades were integrated into the Slovak state education system in 2002, drawing on the apparent successes of projects implemented in the civic sector (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2002, Article IV.6.2).[28] As parts of their respective standard primary schools, zero grades were created for children who have reached age six by 1 September of a given year but who are not school-ready, come from a "socially disadvantaged environment," and, due to their social and linguistic environment, are not expected to master the subject-matter of the first year of (standard) primary school in a single school year (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2002, Article IV.6.2; see also Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.19.6). In the law which introduces zero grades, enrolment in a zero grade is presented as an alternative to deferring school enrolment for a year (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2002, Article IV.34.1; see also Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.19.4). Decisions on enrolment in a zero grade require the consent of the child's legal guardian, and may be either requested by the legal guardian or recommended by a paediatrician, educational advising centre (without specification of type), or the director of the child's pre-school (if the child has attended pre-school).

The Slovak government's *Midterm Concept for Development of the Romani National Minority* calls for a re-evaluation of the appropriateness of enrolling children from a socially disadvantaged environment in the preparatory grades of special primary schools (Vláda Slovenskej republiky 2008b: 10). The School Law of 2008 takes the *Midterm Concept* a step further, prohibiting the assignment children from a socially disadvantaged environment to pre-school classes for children with special educational needs exclusively on the basis of the social environment from which they originate (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.28.9). Although increasingly

[27] The 2008 School Law indicates that preparatory grades exist for children who have reached age six, are not school-ready, and are not expected to be able to master the subject-matter of the first year of primary school (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.97.3).

[28] The same law established the position of teacher's assistant, defined as "a pedagogical employee who carries out the educational process in schools and pre-schools and participates in the creation of conditions indispensable for overcoming in particular linguistic, health, and social barriers" (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2002, Article IV.50b.1).

touted by the Slovak government as the solution to the problems faced by Roma in education, zero grades have their own set of problems related to segregation and quality of education (see, for example, Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2006; EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program 2007: 404; cf. White 2007: 344-345), as well as to the appropriateness of educating in a school environment children who have been assessed as not yet ready for school (Tomatová 2004b: 80).

In the 1999-2000 school year, the last year for which ethnically disaggregated data are available, 60 percent of the children with failing grades in standard primary schools were Roma (Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2006). Moreover, between grades one and two, approximately twenty percent of Romani children initially enrolled in standard primary education leave for special education; the corresponding figure for Slovakia's general population is less than one percent (Roma Education Fund 2007h: 33-34; cf. Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2008: 6).[29] Among the likely reasons for these high rates of failure in primary education are the Slovak education system's *de facto* reliance on parents to provide knowledge and assistance necessary for completing school assignments, with low rates of educational attainment among Romani adults and the poor material conditions of many Romani households contributing to a situation in which this expectation is not realistic (Tomatová 2004b: 7).[30]

Children are not usually streamed into special education before starting primary school. Overall, only 21 percent of parents with children in some form of special education indicated that all of their children had been placed in special education from the beginning of their educational career. Moreover, only a minority (26.7 percent) of pupils in special primary schools began education in a special primary school. This suggests that standard primary schools are flexible in their initial enrolment practices. As explained below, however, while transfer from standard to special education is common, re-transfer in the other direction is rare.

[29] A 2006 directive of the Ministry of Education specifies that a child may be transferred into a special class of a standard primary school on the recommendation of the child's (class) teacher and the educational counselor (výchovný poradca) following a statement by a pedagogical-psychological advising centre and after discussion with the child's legal guardian (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2006b, Article I.3).

[30] Amnesty International (2008: 21-22) also reports cases in which primary school pupils effectively 'cracked' diagnostic instruments in order to be allowed to attend special school.

Table 4.2 Did your children currently enrolled in special education previously attend classes with standard curriculum in a standard school?

	Parents of pupils in special classes %	Parents of pupils in special schools %	Parents of pupils in special secondary schools %	Proportion of all pupils in special education %
Yes, all of them	67.4	40.0	46.5	50.8
Yes, some of them	14.0	33.3	53.5	28.1
No	18.6	26.7	0	21.0

Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with parents of pupils in special schools, special classes, and special secondary schools

According to the directors of the primary schools (both special and standard), the typical procedure is for Romani children to be enrolled into the zero or first grade of standard primary school, with formal assessment conducted if teachers express the view that the child is not able to absorb the subject matter. Most of the Romani pupils from the survey sample were enrolled in special education in the lower grades, with nearly two thirds of children attending special classes in standard primary schools placed in grades one through three. The proportion of children attending special primary schools transferred in the first three years of primary education is higher, at 85.9 percent.

Table 4.3 Grade of enrolment in special education

Grade	Special schools %	Special classes %
1.	67.6	42.6
2.	16.6	23.5
3.	1.7	10.3
4.	5.8	4.4
5.	4.9	10.3
6.	2.5	5.9
7.	0.0	3.0
8.	0.9	0.0

Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with parents of children attending special primary schools and standard primary schools with special classes

A minority of school directors reported that the identification of pupils for psychological assessment is carried out as part of the mandatory enrolment procedure, which takes place every year in January and February. In these cases, a special pedagogue (from a special pedagogical advising centre or a special school) or a psychologist (from a pedagogical-psychological advising centre) is present at enrolment. Children identified as not school-ready are subsequently sent for a more exhaustive psychological assessment.

Employees of pedagogical-psychological advising centres revealed that requests for assessment of children come from multiple categories of actors. In most cases, the requests come from standard primary schools and are initiated when teachers observe pupils achieving failing results. In other cases – most frequently involving children of pre-school age – pedagogical-psychological advising centres receive requests from paediatricians. Employees of pedagogical-psychological advising centres also reported an increasing number of requests in recent years from Romani parents. A psychologist employed in such a centre presented the enrolment process as initiated by parents in the following way: "In September, the mother goes to the special school with the child and says: I want my child to be enrolled in special school...because your school is better, you provide many things for free…but she does not have a paper from an advising centre. And the director of the school sends her to our advising centre to get the paper."

4.2 Problems with diagnostic tools

> If we want to educate Romani children in standard education, they must be tested in the same way as other children.
>
> *Employee of pedagogical-psychological advising centre*
>
> The administration of a test in English to an individual for whom English is a second language and whose English language skills are poor is inexcusable, regardless of any bias in the tests themselves.
>
> *Cecil R. Reynolds and Robert T. Brown,*
> *"Bias in Mental Testing: An Introduction to the Issues"* [31]

Traditionally used tests of school readiness aim to measure skills which Romani children often lack at the age of school enrolment (Rigová and Maczejková 2002: 715). While the main problem is the language barrier (treated in more detail below), other factors include

[31] Reynolds and Brown (1984: 7).

a shorter attention span and less developed fine motor skills, as well as a different set of experiences than most non-Romani children.[32]

4.2.1 Mental disability and socio-cultural background

The diagnostic tests used most frequently in Slovakia are not methodologically appropriate for assessing Romani children. This is because they have been composed in the Slovak language, standardized on ethnic Slovaks, and assume previous acquisition of a repertoire of knowledge and skills associated with putatively intelligent behavior, as well as a vocabulary associated with membership in the middle class (Bernstein 1971; Ferjenčík, Bačová, and Bányaiová 1994: 17; Ferjenčík 1997: 286; Tomatová 2004b: 55). Insofar as Roma were not involved in the standardization of the tests, the use of these tests on Roma is methodologically inappropriate (Ferjenčík 1997: 264; Tomatová 2004a: 35). This is the case regardless of the language in which the tests are administered, as mere translation of a test from one language into another is not sufficient to ensure that both language-versions measure the same: "Information presumed to be equivalent to that asked in the [original language-] version of the test might be more or less common knowledge in the other cultural system. Certainly vocabulary words cannot simply be translated into their nearest equivalent in another language because the best equivalent in another language may be more or less frequently used in that language, and the item difficulties would vary accordingly" (Mercer 1984: 302; see also Hilliard III 1984: 149). Further, the association of a specific ensemble of knowledge and skills means that even non-verbal tests are not culturally neutral (Hilliard III 1984: 166).[33]

It is not surprising that the greatest differences in the scores of Romani and non-Romani children from Slovakia were observed in the two sections of one test which were most imbued with cultural and linguistic content (Ferjenčík 1997: 282). This is because evaluation of the two main components of mental disability (reduced cognitive capacity and social competence) relies heavily on socially determined factors (Tomatová 2004a: 35 fn 22). The most commonly used tests are therefore of

[32] Daróczi (1999) explains the difficulties encountered by Roma in the (non-Romani) school systems of the countries in which Roma live in terms of differences in values between Roma and non-Roma. To the extent that Romani family environments generally provide children different kinds of stimulation than do non-Romani family environments, this may be a fair assessment (see, for example, Sekyt 2000; Rigová and Maczejková 2002: 716; Tomatová 2004a: 37; Tomatová 2004b: 69). On the other hand, the fact that nearly half (45.6%) of Romani respondents in a representative sample ranked education among the three fundamental preconditions for success in life suggests that Roma in Slovakia value formal education (Kriglerová 2002: 749).

[33] The Slovak government's 2008 Concept on the Education of Romani Children and Pupils, Including the Development of Secondary and Higher Education and its Midterm Concept for Development of the Romani National Minority both call for the development of a culturally neutral test of school readiness for six- and seven-year-old children (Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2008: 14; Vláda Slovenskej republiky 2008b: 9).

little use for distinguishing between mental disability (of physiological origin) and developmental delays stemming from the social environment, effectively neglecting the child's potential for development (Ferjenčík 1997: 286; Tomatová 2004a: 36); there is no phenomenological distinction between "intelligent behavior" and "achievement behavior" (Humphreys 1984: 225; Jensen 1984: 581). Moreover, the finding that differences between the scores of Slovak and Romani children on one commonly used test increase most with age among children initially scoring above average suggests that the Slovak education system most disadvantages Romani children with the greatest intellectual potential (Ferjenčík, Bačová, and Bányaiová 1994: 14-15).

A government-commissioned research report from 2002 on the position of Roma in the education system observes that many cases of Romani children failing in school are due not to mental deficiencies, but rather to the fact that Romani children have not previously acquired the basic social and work habits needed for successful schooling (Metodické centrum Prešov 2002: 5). The report also notes that general intelligence is not innate (Metodické centrum Prešov 2002: 6). In order to address the situation, the report recommends school reform along the lines set out in the Ministry of Education's 2001 *Millennium Project* (Metodické centrum Prešov 2002: 6; see also Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2001). Additionally, the report calls for the introduction of alternative teaching methods with the help of international organizations and the civic sector (Metodické centrum Prešov 2002: 33)

In a directive issued in 2005, the Ministry of Education recommends the use of "individual psychological methods on children with marked deficiencies in the language of instruction at the time of enrolment into the first year of primary school" (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2005, Paragraph 3.1). For children from a socially disadvantaged environment with insufficient mastery of the school language of instruction, the Ministry recommends the new "School Readiness Test," which was developed by the Research Institute for Child Psychology and Psychopathology in the framework of the PHARE project, "Reintegration of Socially Disadvantaged Children from Special Schools into Standard Primary Schools" (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2005, Paragraph 3.4; see also European Consultants Organisation 2004; Committee on the Rights of the Child 2006, Paragraph 92). Where children from a socially disadvantaged environment have attended a preparatory grade or the first grade of a special primary school, the directive specifies the use of the "RR screening" (developed by the same institute in the framework of the same PHARE project) for ruling out mental disability in children aged six to ten and who have previously attended a special primary school (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2005, Paragraph 4.3; see also European Consultants Organisation 2004; Committee on the Rights of the Child 2006, Paragraph 92).[34] A report issued by the Ministry of Education

[34] Insofar as neither of the two diagnostic instruments developed in the framework of the PHARE project can be used to establish mental disability, there is still no reliable test available in Slovakia for diagnosing mental disability in Romani children (Tomatová 2004a: 36).

in 2006 goes a step further in not only recommending the used of the two newly developed tests, but also attributing the relatively high number of Romani pupils in special schools primarily to the use of standardized tests for evaluating school readiness and intelligence without taking into account child background (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2006c: 6). The Slovak government's 2008 *Concept on the Education of Romani Children and Pupils, Including the Development of Secondary and Higher Education* goes further still, stating that inappropriate enrolment of Romani children in special schools can be expected to cease as a result of the use of the newly developed tests (Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2008, Annex 3: 4).

However, the Slovak government has not gone as far as to call for the abandonment of the diagnostic tests which disadvantage Romani children. Moreover, the government has not moved beyond the piloting of alterative approaches to entry testing. To date, the diagnostic tests developed in the framework of the PHARE project "Reintegration of Socially Disadvantaged Children from Special Schools into Standard Primary Schools" have been piloted in approximately 40 schools in the framework of another PHARE project ("Further Integration of Romani Children in the Area of Education and Improvement of their Living Conditions" (SR 2002/000/610.03 PHARE 2002)). The pilot found that between seven and ten percent of Romani children in special primary schools showed no signs of intellectual disability, with another 40 percent possibly placed inappropriately (EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program 2007: 490-491).[35]

While the piloting of new diagnostic instruments may appropriately be viewed as a positive development, consistent application of the instruments remains lacking as a result of the emphasis placed on experimental/pilot projects (Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 2005). Only one school director and one psychologist participating in the field research conducted for this study indicating that they used the tests. At best, then, the claim of the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education that a "[q]ualitatively new approach has been applied to the education of Roma children" is thus true only in a geographically restricted sense (Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education 2005: 28). Moreover, the objective of "[b]uilding a successful integrated Roma education system by means of setting up classes in special primary schools" stated in relation to the project "Further Integration of Romani Children in the Area of Education and Improvement of their Living Conditions" seems to suggest that the Slovak government does not view segregation of Roma in education as a problem, but in fact as desirable (Council of Europe 2005, Annex 3: 22).

Focus groups with employees of pedagogical-psychological advising centres and special pedagogical advising centres revealed a high degree of consensus on a set of mutually contradictory views about the reasons for which Romani children are

[35] Information on how these findings were followed up in individual cases was not available as this study was being prepared.

commonly diagnosed as mentally disabled. On the one hand, all participants from both types of institutions linked Romani pupils' special educational needs to coming from a socially disadvantaged environment, with employees of special pedagogical advising centres in particular indicating that social deprivation stands behind children's failure in school. On the other hand, all representatives of both types of centres who participated in focus groups defended as appropriate the diagnostic tools used for testing Romani pupils, expressing the view that because the tests measure school-readiness, children who fare poorly on the tests cannot be expected to do well in standard primary education. Moreover, most of the psychologists participating in the focus groups indicated a view of Romani pupils as mentally disabled and of Romani pupils' mental disability as congenital, with some making explicitly racist statements such as the following:

> We all know that mental disability is congenital […] When the six previous generations are mentally disabled, we cannot expect any change in the next generation.

> Mentally disabled parents behave differently from healthy ones. An intelligent pregnant "white" mother has different behavioural habits from a mentally disabled pregnant Romani woman.

4.2.2 Language barriers

Arguably the primary factor resulting in incorrect diagnoses of mental disability is Romani children's lack of fluency in Slovak at the time of school enrolment (Rigová and Maczejková 2002: 715). The results of Slovakia's 2001 census indicate that 65.8 percent of persons who declared Romani ethnicity indicated Romanes as their mother tongue (Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2008: 3). While the census figures are extremely problematic as measures of the size of the Romani population in Slovakia,[36] they nonetheless support what seems to be the most widely held view: The majority of Roma in Slovakia speak Romanes as their first language.[37] In many cases, this means that Romani children enter school with little knowledge of the language of instruction.

While Slovakia is legally obligated to provide education in Romani to interested Romanes-speakers, to date this obligation has received attention only through experimental programs (Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2008: 18). Like the diagnostic tests often conducted at the time of school enrolment, most schools in the Slovak education system presuppose fluency in Slovak. Even in pre-schools attended by

[36] Also problematic from the standpoint of measurement is that the number of persons declaring Romani ethnicity is smaller than the number of persons indicating Romanes as their mother tongue (Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2008: 3).

[37] For detailed research findings concerning first language among Roma in Slovakia, see Filadelfiová, Gerbery, and Škobla (2007).

children from Romani settlements, bilingual visual aids are generally lacking (Rigová and Maczejková 2002: 703). Moreover, although Slovak Romanes has been codified, the West Slovak dialect which served as the basis for codification is much less widely spoken than East Slovak dialects, which differ from it enough that the few educational materials that exist in Romani are of little use for the majority of Slovakia's Romani population. Finally, although an official ceremony held in June 2008 to recognize the standardization of Romanes and to encourage its further development with tolerance for regional variations provided an encouraging sign (see Úrad splnomocnenca vlády Slovenskej republiky pre rómske komunity 2008), to date the ceremony has not been followed by concrete changes in policy or practice.

Estimates provided by the directors of the special primary schools and standard primary schools with special classes included in the survey sample indicate that approximately a quarter of Romani pupils in special primary schools and classes did not speak the language of instruction when initially enrolled in special education. Not revealed by the field research conducted for this study, however, is the range of proficiency in the language of instruction among the remaining three quarters of Romani children.

Table 4.4 Frequency of Romani pupils not speaking the language of instruction

	Absolute number of Romani pupils enrolled in school in 2008	Number of pupils not speaking language of instruction	Proportion of Romani pupils not speaking language of instruction
Special schools	223	65	29.1%
Special classes	188	40	21.3%
Total	**411**	**105**	**25.5%**

Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with directors of schools

Most teachers in the schools included in the survey sample (who were, with one exception, non-Roma) reported that they do not use Romanes as a supportive language in the classroom (Table 4.5). However, sizeable minorities of teachers in all types of special education indicated that they employ at least the occasional Romanes word in their teaching. Among teachers using any amount of Romanes in the classroom, common were statements that the language served more to create a hospitable environment than to convey material to be learned. Other teachers expressed the view that Romanes should not be used in schools on the grounds that knowledge of the language of instruction (i.e., Slovak or Hungarian) would better serve the cause of Roma's success in school. Finally, teachers in schools located in Western Slovakia frequently reported that there was no need to use Romanes because the pupils themselves do not speak it.

Table 4.5 Use of Romanes in teaching

	Yes	"Some words"	Not at all
Teachers in special schools	2.9%	22.9%	**74.3%**
Teachers in special classes	19.6%	6.5%	**73.9%**
Teachers in secondary schools	6.7%	0%	**87.5%**

Source: Questionnaires with teachers

Among the roles of teaching assistants is to provide Romani pupils with assistance as needed in understanding the language of instruction. Of the 64 teaching assistants employed in the special primary schools and special classes in standard primary schools included in the survey sample, fifteen were Roma (two in special primary schools and thirteen in special classes). The directors of the schools which employed Romani teaching assistants assessed the assistants' language skills as being particularly valuable.

4.2.3 Problems in administering tests

Focus groups with employees of pedagogical-psychological advising centres pointed to a high degree of subjectivity on the part of those administering psychological tests, indicating that the results of a given test can vary when the same test is administered by different psychologists. The probability of variation from one testing to another is particularly problematic for Romani children, who tend to be diagnosed as either mildly mentally disabled or as borderline cases; small differences in test scores may therefore determine whether a child enrols in or is transferred to special education as opposed to standard education. Further, the fact that a minority of school directors interviewed volunteered the information that pupils were assessed only once before being assigned to special education suggests that one-off assessment may be common practice.

Compounding the problems with one-off assessment of Romani children is the typical setting in which the testing is conducted. Particularly for Romani children from rural settlements, it is not uncommon for the moment of testing to be both the first experience in a school environment and the first direct interaction with non-Romani adults. Moreover, the psychologist is generally the only adult present in the room while the test is administered. Insofar as Romani parents also tend to refer to the psychologists who conduct assessments as doctors, the testing environment is often not conducive to an accurate demonstration of Romani children's intellectual abilities. Finally, a minority of teaching assistants and Romani parents interviewed mentioned practices of conducting assessment on Romani children in a group. While hard data on the frequency of such practices are not available, group testing using instruments designed for individuals is methodologically inappropriate and therefore constitutes grounds for invalidating the test results of all children assessed in this manner.

4.2.4 Deliberate abuses of procedure

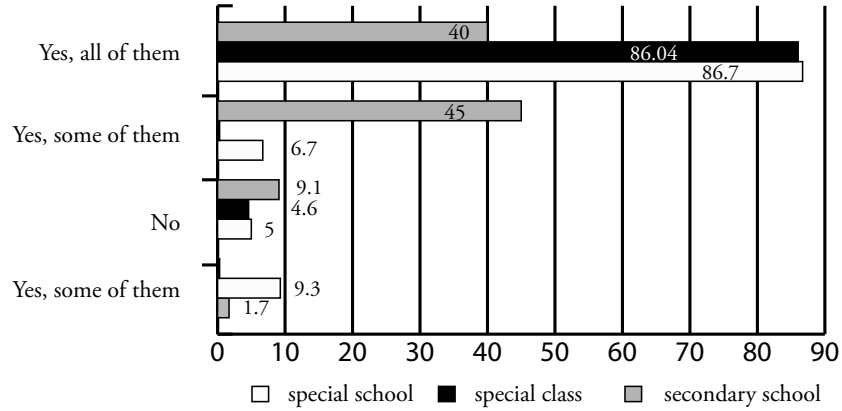
As discussed in section 4.1, the expert opinions of both a psychologist and a special pedagogue are necessary for completion of the paperwork which must be submitted in connection with enrolment or transfer of a child into special education. Interviews conducted by Jana Tomatová (2004a: 49) in nine special primary schools and thirteen standard primary schools with special classes, however, found that in 40 percent of the schools a special pedagogue is not always involved in decisions on enrolment or transfer into special education. The absence of a special pedagogue in turn results in an increased emphasis on psychological instruments, such as the tests discussed in section 4.2.1 (Tomatová 2004b: 39).

Since 1991, schools serving children with special educational needs are legally required to keep records on children enrolled in the relevant special school or classes (Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1991, Section 15.2). Required documentation includes not only the initial proposal for enrolment or transfer and the final decision on the matter, but also a transcript of the discussion of the proposal (Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1991, Section 15.3). Additionally, required since 2000 is a certification of special educational needs (*osobný list žiaka so špeciálnopedagogickými potrebami*) (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2000a, Article I.15.4).

In practice, documentation is often incomplete, with even the problematic diagnostic tests discussed in section 4.2.1 often performed only after the child has been admitted to a special school (Tomatová 2004a: 37; see also (Rigová and Maczejková 2002: 715). In the East Slovak municipality of Pavlovce nad Uhom, for example, an inspection by the Košice Regional School Authority in November 2007 found that of the 28 new pupils enrolled in the local special primary school that year, eighteen had not undergone any form of testing prior to their enrolment (Amnesty International 2008: 8).

According to parents of Romani children, most of their children underwent some form of assessment before being enrolled in special education (see Graph 4.3). On the other hand, a sizeable minority of parents with children in special primary schools and a majority of parents with children enrolled in special classes of standard primary schools reported that they could not remember whether their children were tested in a pedagogical-psychological advising centre, a special pedagogical advising centre, or by an individual psychologist.

Graph 4.3 Parents' responses on whether their children were assessed before being enrolled in special education



Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with parents of pupils in special schools, special classes of standard schools and special secondary schools

4.3 Re-assessment and re-assignment

> Once mental disability is diagnosed, it is forever. It can not disappear somehow. Therefore, it is not very probable that a child can be educated in a standard school.
>
> *Psychologist from pedagogical-psychological advising centre*

Transfer into special education often amounts to giving up on the child in question, shifting the responsibility to an institution with lower standards out of insufficient recognition of the influence of the school environment on the child (Šaško 2002: 669). This influence was documented in a study conducted on a sample of 243 children attending pre-school in five districts, with the finding that average IQ rose from 75.1 to 81.2 in the course of the school year (Valachová et al. 2002: 66). Given that IQ tests are designed to measure innate intelligence, the observed increase points to the environmental origins of Roma's difficulties in the first years of school: "In the case of a more profound mental disability, the child's development and the profit from the stimulation of initiatives is not so rapid and obvious" (Tomatová 2004b: 42). At the same time, the increase indicates the potential for pre-school education to prepare Romani children for a successful entry into standard primary education.

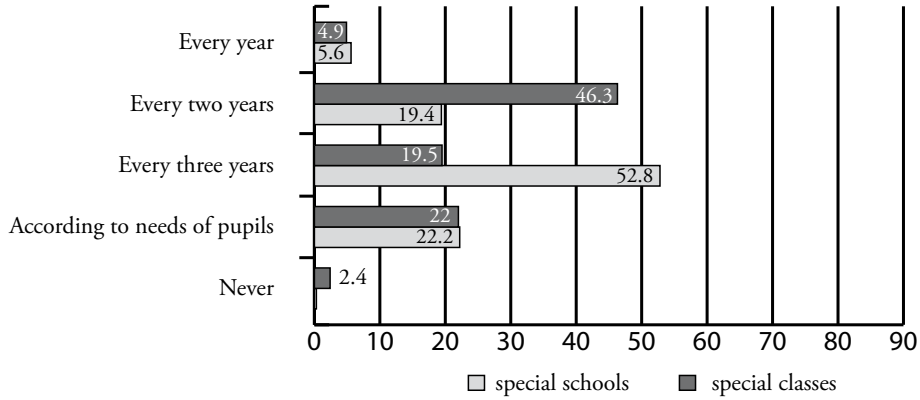
According to a 1991 public notice of the Slovak Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport, a "diagnostic stay" in a special school of up to one year in duration may be proposed by the expert commission which decides on enrolment and transfer into special schools (Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1991, Section 14.4; Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.59.4). In practice, however, diagnostic stays appear to be used in much the same way as (and sometimes in combination with) preparatory grades, as an informal mechanism for streaming Romani children into special education on a permanent basis (see, for example, Amnesty International 2008: 8).

Whereas an official in the Slovak Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family recommends that reassessment be performed every three years on pupils in special education (Tomatová 2004b: 75), the Slovak government's 2008 *Midterm Concept for Development of the Romani National Minority* suggests that diagnostic tests be repeated every two years in "a natural environment" (Vláda Slovenskej republiky 2008b: 10). Slovak legislation, on the other hand, does not indicate the frequency with which pupils in special education should be retested. At a more general level, a public notice issued by the Slovak Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth in 1991 states that if a child's disability changes or enrolment in special education does not address the child's needs, the school director may enrol the child in a different school after consulting with an expert commission and the child's legal guardian (Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1991, Paragraph 16.1).[38] The School Law of 2008 places the decision squarely in the hands of the child's legal guardian, who is to receive a recommendation from the school director based on the latter's consultation with an educational advising institution (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.61.3).

In the absence of a clear legal requirement, schools have considerable discretion in the frequency with which they reassess children in special education. Information provided by directors of the special primary schools and standard primary schools with special classes included in the research points to differences in the frequency of reassessment between special primary school and standard primary schools with special classes. Whereas in special schools assessment is repeated mostly every three years, the most frequent response from directors of standard primary schools with special classes was every two years (see Graph 4.4).

[38] As is the case for enrolling in a special primary school, the expert commission is to consist of a special pedagogue, a psychologist, and other experts, such as a doctor and/or a representative of a special pedagogical advising centre or a pedagogical-psychological advising centre.

Graph 4.4 Frequency of reassessment in special schools and special classes in standard schools



Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with directors of special primary schools and standard schools with special classes

Reassignment from special to standard education is rare, whatever the frequency of reassessment. Focus groups with employees of pedagogical-psychological advising centres and of special pedagogical advising centres revealed a high degree of confidence on the part of psychologists and special pedagogues in the validity of their testing practices, with most expressing the view that attempts at reintegration would only lead to repeated failures in standard schools and classes. Employees of pedagogical-psychological advising centres in particular frequently explained the purpose of reassessment as helping schools to adapt curricula and individual plans for children with diagnosed mental disability. Even among school directors and employees of both types of centres who rooted Roma's problems in school in social disadvantage rather than mental disability, the opinion prevailed that standard classes in standard primary schools are not adequately prepared for the education of children with special educational needs, such that reintegration would not be in the interest of the children currently in special education.

Parents of Romani children in special primary schools and classes were less confident than school directors about reassessment practices, with only 35.9 percent of parents with children in special primary education reporting that all of their children were reassessed after transfer into special school. The additional fact that approximately one in five of the parents with children in special primary education did not remember whether their children had been reassessed suggests that reassessment of children in special primary education may be the exception rather than the rule.

Table 4.6 Responses of parents of Romani children on reassessment practices

	Children reassessed in special schools	Children reassessed in special classes	Proportion of reassessed pupils in special education
Yes, all of them	31.0%	44.1%	35.9%
Yes, some of them	8.6%	2.9%	6.5%
No	39.7%	32.4%	37.0%
I do not remember	20.7%	20.6%	20.7%

Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with parents of children in special schools and special classes

Barriers to Changing Special Education at the Levels of Policy, Institutions and Individuals

Like Chapter 4, this chapter examines factors contributing to the overrepresentation of Roma in special education in Slovakia, as described in Chapter 2. Whereas Chapter 4 dealt with procedures and mechanisms related to entry to and exit from special education, this chapter focuses on official policy and the motivations of relevant institutions and of Romani parents to enrol children in special schools and classes. Whereas the chapter's first section makes the case that policy to address the overrepresentation of Roma in special education has not been consistent, the second section examines features of the system for funding special education and the institutions with an interest in maintaining the current situation. The third and final section of the chapter takes inventory of the factors that lead Romani parents to enrol their children in special schools and classes.

5.1 Inconsistent policy

Official awareness of problems in relation to placements in special education has become apparent only in the last decade. Moreover, to date there has been little action to address the situation. Slovakia's *Second Periodic Report* to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, for example, entertains the possibility of incorrect placement in special schools of children without sufficient preparation for primary school prior to the 2000-2001 school year, but states at the same time that "[n]o cases of wrong placing of pupils should occur in practice under consistent compliance with the valid wording of the School Act" (Committee on the Rights of the Child 2006, Paragraphs 87-88).

Among the factors impeding action to address problems in relation to placements in special education has been a lack of coherence among the prescriptions of the Ministry of Education and the organs operating under it. On the one hand, the Ministry of Education's 2004 *Concept of Integrated Education of Romani Children and Youth, Including the Development of Secondary and Higher Education* states clearly that only children with a mental deficit should be admitted to special primary schools (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2004: 8). This recommendation is further elaborated in a Ministerial directive issued in 2005: "If mental disability is ruled out by diagnostic tests on a child from a socially disadvantaged environment, the pedagogical-psychological advising centre shall not recommend that such child be placed in a special primary school" (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2005, Paragraph 4.2). Similarly, a

2006 government report recommends that only children with the appropriate degree of mental disability be placed in special education (Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2006).

On the other hand, the annual report of the State School Inspectorate for the 2004-2005 school year lists "pupils from a socially disadvantaged environment" among the target groups served by special primary schools (Štátna školská inšpekcia 2005: 2005). In similar fashion, a 2005 English-language publication of the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education, which is administered by the Ministry of Education, states that special schools are intended to provide education for "maladjusted pupils" (among others) (Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education 2005: 18-19).

Another factor impeding action to address problems in relation to placements in special education has been the room left in Slovak policy documents for confusing Romani children with children with mental disability, failing to take into account that the educational needs of Romani children from integrated environments do not differ significantly from the educational needs of non-Romani children (see Kriglerová 2002: 755). On the one hand, the relationship between "social disadvantage" and Romani ethnicity is insufficiently defined in Slovak policy documents, with data on the number of children in this category first available in 2008 and no official information on the overlap between this category and the size of the Romani child population (see, for example, Amnesty International 2007: 2; Amnesty International 2008: 22; EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program 2007: 404). On the other hand, the distinction between the needs of children from marginalized Romani communities and the special needs of mentally disabled children is not made clear (Nadácia Milana Šimečku 2007: 15; Vláda Slovenskej republiky 2008b: 9).

Apparently the first official definition of "socially disadvantaged environment" appears in a directive issued by the Slovak Ministry of Education in 2005 (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2005, Paragraph 2a). The definition given in the directive is "an environment which, due to social and linguistic conditions, does not provide the child the makings of mastering the subject-matter of the first grade of primary school in one school year." A slightly different definition appears in a government-commissioned research report published in 2006 (Metodicko-pedagogické centrum v Prešove 2006: 7). In the report, a pupil is considered to come from a socially disadvantaged environment when at least three of the following criteria are fulfilled:

- At least one parent collects social welfare benefits (*dávky v hmotnej núdzi*).
- At least one parent is unemployed.
- At least one parent has completed primary education or less.
- "Non-standard living and sanitary conditions".
- The language spoken by the child at home is different from the language of instruction.

The 2005 Ministerial directive defines a child from a socially disadvantaged environment as "a child with problems in learning and attitudes acquired on the

basis of dysfunctional social conditions resulting from social exclusion (e.g., poverty, insufficient education of parents, non-standard housing and sanitary conditions and the like)" (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2005, Paragraph 2b). A report published by the Ministry the following year seems to link social disadvantage with Romani ethnicity, referring to "the problematic of educating Romani children and pupils, or children and pupils from a socially disadvantaged environment" (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2006c: 1).

The Slovak government's *Midterm Concept for the Development of the Romani National Minority* for the period 2008-2015 calls for a legal definition of the term "child/pupil from a socially disadvantaged environment" as a child/pupil "with specific (individual) educational needs" (Vláda Slovenskej republiky 2008b; see also Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2008: 12). Slovakia's new School Law offers such a definition as a subcategory of the category "children/pupils with special educational needs" (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.2.p). By this definition, a child/pupil from a socially disadvantaged environment is "a child or pupil living in an environment which, in light of social, family, economic, and cultural conditions, stimulates insufficiently the development of the child or pupil's mental, wilful (*vôlové*) characteristics, does not support his socialization, and does not offer appropriate stimuli for the development of his personality."

The close relationship between the categories "child/pupil from a socially disadvantaged environment", "Romani child", and "child with special educational needs" in Slovak policy was first made explicit in official communications as late as 2008. In a letter to Amnesty International from January 2008, Slovakia's Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights and Minorities noted in relation to "[c]hildren from disadvantaged social environments" that "in most cases we are referring to Roma children from settlements naturally or artificially separated from municipalities" and who "belong to the group of children with special educational needs" (Amnesty International 2008: 22-23). Later that year, the Slovak government's *Concept on the Education of Romani Children and Pupils, Including the Development of Secondary and Higher Education* explained that "[t]he category of children from a socially disadvantaged environment […] is used as a substitute for the missing ethnic data, even though it is not possible to guarantee that it represents all Romani children and it covers at the same time also children of other nationality" (Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2008: 2).

5.2 Institutional incentives

5.2.1 Normative funding

Per-pupil normative funding consists of a salary norm and an operational norm, with the former including wages, salaries, insurance, and employers' contributions while the latter covers most running costs for school infrastructure and per-pupil costs for teaching (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2003b, Sections 4.2-4.6). The overall

per-pupil norm is calculated on the basis of various parameters, including school type, personnel demands, form of study, and language of instruction (for details, see Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008a). School funding is thus determined mainly by the size of the per-pupil norm and the number of pupils in the school.

While the number of factors taken into account in Slovakia's per-pupil formula complicates direct comparison of costs among different forms of education, per-pupil funding tends to be considerably higher for special education than for standard education. In 2008, for example average per-pupil funding for special primary schools was approximately 1.6 times the average for standard primary schools (see Table 3.5 above; see also Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2004a).[39] In similar fashion, per-pupil funding for a special class in a standard primary school is 1.75 times that for an otherwise identical standard class in the same school. With municipal authorities responsible for decisions on establishing classes for children with special educational needs in standard primary schools, opening special classes in standard schools may be particularly attractive for schools faced with a decreasing student body, as it offers the possibility of bolstering enrolment and allowing smaller classes to be maintained, in turn facilitating the maintenance of teaching staff (see Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2003a, Article I.6.8.h.8; Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2004a, Annex 1; European Roma Rights Centre 2004: 56).

The norm provided for individual integration of children with special needs in standard classes is 2.5 times the standard norm (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2006b, Article I.1). While this might seem to create a strong financial incentive for enrollment of Romani children in this form of special education, in practice the effect of the higher norm for individual integration appears to be minimal (Nadácia Milana Šimečku 2007: 8-9). There are several institutional reasons for this. First, in seeking to integrate pupils with special educational needs, standard schools give preference to non-Roma. Second, the special schools in which Roma are enrolled generally discourage reassignment to standard education, as the loss of pupils is not in the special schools' financial interest. Third, the capacity of the pedagogical-psychological advising centres responsible for carrying out the diagnostics necessary for reassignment is overstretched. Fourth, most teachers lack the specialized training necessary to teach individually integrated pupils with special educational needs. Finally, directors must reckon with the likely scenario in which non-Romani parents withdraw their children from classes which include Roma (European Roma Rights Center 2007: 48); two and a half times the standard norm may still not be enough to maintain school facilities and staff if the school loses three non-Romani pupils for each Rom enrolled.

While higher funding levels for the education of children with special needs have potential to improve education outcomes, as explained below Slovakia's normative

[39] For information on the system of normative funding in place since 1 January 2009, see Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky (2008a).

funding system creates incentives for recruiting Romani children into special education regardless of their actual needs.

5.2.2 Institutions with an interest in maintaining the status quo in special education

> The disproportionately high representation of Romani children in special schools is a separate problem requiring an immediate solution. Within the domain of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, it is necessary to adopt effective measures in the field of school readiness testing, pre-school education, preparatory grades and the content of education.
>
> *Basic Theses of the Concept of the Government of the Slovak Republic's Policy in the Integration of Romani Communities*[40]

Notwithstanding the clear view of overrepresentation of Roma in special education as a problem in the *Basic Theses of the Concept of the Government of the Slovak Republic's Policy in the Integration of Romani Communities*, a complex network of institutions appears to have an interest in maintaining Slovakia's special education system (Roma Education Fund 2007h: 34). Consistent with this view, the Slovak government's *Midterm Concept for the Development of the Romani National Minority* recommends increasing the number of special pedagogues in standard primary schools in order to create educational conditions for individually integrated pupils with special educational needs (Vláda Slovenskej republiky 2008b: 9).

5.2.2.1 Schools

The institutions with the greatest interest in the status quo in special education in Slovakia are the special primary schools themselves. As discussed above, the higher per-pupil funding levels for special schools make such schools financially attractive from the standpoint of those who work in them, as well as for those who administer them. The fact that numbers of pupils in special schools have decreased more slowly than have school enrolments overall in recent years suggests that special primary schools have been successful in securing the numbers of pupils necessary to sustain them (Kriglerová 2006).

Administratively independent from standard education, special primary schools are founded by regional school offices rather than by the municipal offices which found standard primary schools. This being the case, transfers of pupils between standard primary schools and special primary schools (in either direction) also transfer funding from one level of government to another. This in turn creates a situation in which local and regional government are in competition with one another for funding.

[40] Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky (2003: 5).

Notwithstanding the relative stability of Slovakia's network of special primary schools as a whole, interviews with school directors revealed important regional variations. In Eastern Slovakia, directors of special primary schools included in the qualitative research generally expressed satisfaction with their respective schools' financial situation, viewing the per-pupil norms as adequate for covering costs. By way of contrast, directors of special primary schools in Western Slovakia reported problems in enrolling a sufficient number of pupils, with one school director making an explicit comparison: "[S]pecial schools in Eastern Slovakia do not have financial problems. Maybe it is because they have more Romani pupils from a socially disadvantaged environment. In comparison to Košice and Prešov regional offices we have a 30 million [Slovak crown] deficit."

The incentive structure for standard primary schools in regard to special education differs from that of special primary schools. In interviews, directors of standard primary schools with special classes reported that such classes are established less for financial reasons than in situations in which relatively large numbers of pupils were failing in standard classes and/or the nearest special primary school was located too far from the failing pupils' place of residence for parents to be willing to send them to the special school. Not mentioned by school directors but apparently playing a role in decisions to establish special classes in standard schools is a desire (whether on the part of the director or of non-Romani parents) to separate Romani pupils from non-Romani pupils (see Chapter 2). In other words, whereas special primary schools have an unequivocal financial incentive to recruit children diagnosed with mental disability, the establishment of special classes in standard primary schools appears to constitute an attempt to address difficulties posed by the presence in standard classes of children with non-standard educational needs and/or the demands of non-Romani parents. Apparently also contributing to the appeal of special classes staff in standard primary schools is the tendency for children attending special classes to have higher grades than children attending standard classes in the same schools, thus making children in special classes more likely to access motivational scholarships and in turn bolstering enrolments by providing a financial incentive for parents (see section 5.3.3).

5.2.2.2 Advising centres

The 2007 *Concept on Special Pedagogical Advising* states the main aim of special pedagogical advising centres as "secur[ing] expert care for children with a health impairment (or children and youth with special educational needs) and provid[ing] them expert assistance in the process of integration into society in cooperation with family, school, physicians and social workers" (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2007: 3). Central to realization of this aim is the role special pedagogical advising centres play in diagnosing mental and physical disabilities. Given the interest of special schools in maintaining enrolments, however, insofar as many special pedagogical advising centres are housed in the premises of special primary schools and share a director with a special primary school, with teachers from the special primary school sometimes serving as diagnosticians, situations of conflict of interest are not uncommon. Further

compromising special pedagogical advising centres' independence in assessment is that the centres' own funding levels depend on the number of clients served; employees of special pedagogical advising centres participating in focus groups cited lack of financial resources as one of the most important problems facing their institutions.[41]

Unlike special pedagogical advising centres, pedagogical-psychological advising centres do not have a financial interest in recruiting pupils into special schools and classes. This is the case because funding for pedagogical-psychological advising centres depends on the centres' capacity to serve clients (i.e., the number of staff they have) rather than on the actual number of clients served. As a result, there is no institutional conflict of interest in pedagogical-psychological advising centres' assessment operations. On the other hand, the fact that pedagogical-psychological advising centres' activities are identical to those of special pedagogical advising centres where children with special educational needs are concerned combines with the fact that pedagogical-psychological advising centres do not depend for funding on the volume of assessments performed to produce an incentive structure conducive to allowing special pedagogical advising centres to play the leading role in assessing children's educational needs.

5.3 Incentives for Romani parents

> When my daughter was at home, she could read and write. But the standard school coerced me.
>
> They did not persuade me in any way. They just placed him there…They made the decision at the school and I only had to sign papers…
>
> *Parents of Romani children in special primary schools*

Factors leading Romani parents to enrol their children in special education include not only the aspects of special schools and classes which make them attractive, but also various difficulties associated with the participation of Romani children in standard education. Moreover, some parents are simply not aware of the options available and of the differences among them. The School Law of 2008, however, adds to the requirement of consent in place since 1991 the specification of "informed consent", defined in the Law as written consent with awareness of the consequences of consenting (Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008c, Article I.2.y). Enrolling the children of parents without such awareness is therefore illegal.

Also problematic from the standpoint of informed consent requirements are cases in which Romani parents are pressured by staff of standard and/or special primary

[41] The Slovak government's 2008 Concept on the Education of Romani Children and Pupils, Including the Development of Secondary and Higher Education calls for diagnostic testing to be performed exclusively by pedagogical-psychological advising centers (Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2008: 15).

schools to sign consent forms (see, for example, European Roma Rights Center 2004: 48; Vláda Slovenskej republiky 2008a: 6). Given their low levels of education, Romani parents are often in an inferior position, either trusting school staff's assessments (whether formal or informal) or simply afraid to resist authority. Where non-Romani parents do not agree with the placement of their children in special primary schools, on the other hand, children are likely to be individually integrated in standard classes.

The types of incentives discussed below are ordered by the frequency with which Romani parents reported that school staff employed arguments structured around the various incentives in an attempt to persuade Romani parents to enrol their children in special education. In addition to the frequency with which Romani parents reported their use by school staff, the presentation of each type of incentive also includes a brief look at the actual importance of the incentive in question in parents' enrolment decisions for their children. As will become apparent in the course of the exposition, the findings of the field research conducted for this study on the one hand reveal some significant differences in perception between school staff and Romani parents, and on the other hand suggest that the informed consent requirement of the School Law of 2008 is often violated.

5.3.1 Expectations of better grades

They told me it would be better to send my child to special school. In standard school she would repeat the grade several times and would finish primary school in a lower grade with no opportunity to continue her education.

Parent of Romani child attending special primary school

At the beginning, I did not want to enrol my son in a special school, but now I am happy about it. The teacher devotes more energy to my child than in standard school. And for him it is enough when he can read and write.

Parent of Romani child attending special class in standard primary school

The type of argument used most frequently by school staff in order to convince Romani parents to enrol their children in special education focused on children's ability to follow instruction. Over half of Romani parents polled (exactly 50 percent of parents of children attending special primary schools and 54.1 percent of parents of children attending special classes in standard primary schools) indicated that members of school staff had used arguments of this type. Such arguments emphasize expectations of failure in standard education, the easier curriculum and individualized approach offered in special education, or both.

Although the field research conducted for this study did not attempt to measure Romani parents' awareness of differences between special and standard education, the fact that a minority of the parents interviewed volunteered statements that demonstrated clearly a lack of such awareness suggests that this problem may be more widespread. Closely related to this, parents frequently reported that teachers explain special education in terms of its apparent advantages over standard education: an easier curriculum and

an individual approach. In the absence of awareness about the long-term consequences of special education, Romani parents are often easily convinced to choose the prospect of better grades and a lower number of pupils in class. As one Romani parent of a child attending a special primary school explained, "My children are very successful at this school. They have very good grades. Finally, now I can show off that my children are good pupils. They can receive better grades than in a standard school."

Where expectations of better grades are concerned, school staff's perceptions about Romani parents' priorities seem to be largely accurate. From the standpoint of informed consent, this high degree of accuracy is extremely problematic, as it promotes the use of better grades as a selling point for special education without providing information on the consequences for children's longer-term educational and employment prospects.

5.3.2 Geographic proximity of special schools to settlements

> We have a very large Romani community. Many of the Romani children had poor grades in standard classes, so we made the decision to establish special classes. The children were assessed psychologically and the tests showed mental disability. The psychologists recommended their enrolment in special school, but the nearest school is in the city. Romani parents would not send their children to a school which is so far from here.
>
> *Director of standard school with special classes in Eastern Slovakia*

While it is not unheard of for Romani parents to send their children to special primary school because this is the school closest to home (see, for example, Tomatová 2004b: 73; Nadácia Milana Šimečku 2007: 8-9), only ten percent of the Romani parents who completed questionnaires in the framework of the field research conducted for this study indicated school staff used proximity as an argument to convince them to enrol their children in special primary schools, with none of the parents of children attending special classes in standard primary schools providing a similar response. This line of explanation is supported by the facts that most of the children attending special schools had previously attended standard classes in standard primary schools before being transferred into special education (see Table 4.2) and that special primary schools are generally located in urban areas, whereas Slovakia's Romani population is predominantly rural.

As mentioned in the discussion of factors weighing in Romani parents' decisions to enrol their children in special secondary schools, geographic proximity is an important consideration for reasons of finance and security. Moreover, this consideration on the part of Romani parents is known to directors of standard primary schools, with decisions to establish special classes taking this into account. Thus, although members of school staff rarely cite geographic proximity in attempting to convince Romani parents to enrol their children in special education, the importance of this factor in parents' enrolment decisions makes for considerable potential for abuse, particularly in the absence of awareness on the part of Romani parents of the differences between special and standard education.

5.3.3 Promises of material benefit

Special schools may be attractive to some Romani parents insofar as such schools provide children with food and other forms of material support. Since 2005, all pupils in schools in which at least half of the enrolled children come from families in material need receive state subsidies for school aids and meals (Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny Slovenskej republiky 2005). Insofar as many special schools receive a majority of their pupils from families in material need, such schools effectively provide enrolment incentives.

A 1991 public notice of the Slovak Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport stipulates that grading in special primary schools for pupils with mental disability, in practical schools, and in special technical schools takes into account pupils' disability (Sbírka zákonů České a Slovenské federativní republiky 1991, Section 21.2). Easier grades in special schools motivate some parents to request that their children be enrolled in such schools (EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program 2007: 450-451; Nadácia Milana Šimečku 2007: 8-9; Vláda Slovenskej republiky 2008a: 6). Moreover, insofar as good grades (regardless of the curriculum followed) provided access to government stipends until the stipend scheme was changed in 2008 to reward attendance rather than scholastic achievement, the stipends in effect served as a "strong marketing instrument" for motivating some Romani parents to consent to the ungrounded enrolment of their children in special schools (Kriglerová 2008; Vláda Slovenskej republiky 2008a: 6; Zbierka zákonov Slovenskej republiky 2008d).

Notwithstanding the potential appeal of the material benefits associated with special education, Romani parents of children enrolled in special schools and classes indicated that only in approximately five percent of cases (5.2 percent in special schools, 5.4 percent in special classes in standard schools) did school staff point to such incentives in persuading parents to enrol their children in special education. Moreover, some of the parents were not aware of the opportunity to receive social benefits associated with their children's participation in special education, with the directors of special schools explaining that not all pupils receive scholarships as the family's situation is reassessed on a monthly basis. On the other hand, the directors of standard schools with special classes included in the qualitative research reported that the majority of beneficiaries of motivational scholarships and donations for meals and school aids attend special classes. In such schools, the differences between recipients and non-recipients of social benefits are more visible than in special schools, as children attending special classes in standard schools tend to have higher grades than children attending standard classes in the same schools, thus qualifying in larger numbers for motivational scholarships.

Romani parents also pointed to the low quality of the meals provided on the basis of material need (and not related to scholastic performance). Although many Romani pupils in special schools and classes receive free-of-charge meals at school, the food often consists only of sandwiches. Additionally, as many schools lack a proper cafeteria, some parents reported a preference for cooking for their children at home over making use of school meals.

Whatever the apparent potential of material incentives for convincing Romani parents to enrol their children in special education, the field research conducted for this study suggests that members of school staff do not often attempt to make use of this potential. The findings on the actual role of such incentives in Romani parents' enrolment decisions are more mixed, with visible differences between recipients and non-recipients of social benefits in standard schools likely to encourage enrolment in special classes while incomplete awareness of the availability of material benefits and preferences for home-cooked over school meals suggest that such benefits are not such an important incentive. With the legal change in the criterion for accessing motivational scholarships from scholastic achievement to attendance, material benefits arguably constitute the least problematic of the factors reviewed in this section for fulfilment of the 2008 School Law's requirement of informed consent.

5.3.4 Experiences in standard and special education

> My son attended a standard primary school, but he was the only Rom in class. All of the children were against him – he was very afraid to go there.
>
> I attended this school, my husband attended this school, so I decided to send all of my children to this school.
>
> *Parents of Romani children attending special primary school*

The belief among some Romani parents that special schools and classes provide a more hospitable environment for their children than does standard education stems from a combination of positive perceptions of the former and negative perceptions of the latter. Among the "push" factors encouraging some Romani parents to enrol their children in special schools by way of discouraging them from enrolling their children in standard schools are various forms of discrimination by teachers in standard schools (Ringold 2000: 27). Interviews with Romani parents suggest that bullying of Romani pupils in standard primary schools by non-Romani pupils is also a frequent occurrence, with a significant minority of parents initiating transfer to special primary schools in response to their children's fear of attending standard schools. Additionally, while the objections of many non-Romani parents to their children attending school and/or classes with Romani children sometimes result in "white flight",[42] in other cases non-Romani parents' negative reactions result in Romani parents enrolling their children in special schools rather than in standard schools.[43]

[42] In Jarovnice (Eastern Slovakia), for example, one of the village's two standard primary schools and the special primary school are attended exclusively by Roma. Slovak children from Jarovnice, on the other hand, attend a standard primary school with no Roma.

[43] In Hermanovce, Eastern Slovakia, non-Romani children attend the standard primary school on the hill while Romani children go to special classes in the older school in the valley below.

"Pull" factors which directly encourage Romani parents to enrol their children in special education include the various efforts made by school staff to create a "Roma-friendly" environment in special schools and classes, as well as common references by school staff to special schools and classes as "Romani". Whereas multicultural education is a rarity in Slovakia's schools in general, some special schools constitute an exception in their treatment of the culture and history of the pupils who often constitute a majority of the school population (Amnesty International 2007: 27). Romani parents interviewed also reported predominantly positive experiences in communicating with teachers in special schools and classes, particularly in comparison with experiences in communicating with the directors of standard schools. As one mother of a Romani child attending a special class in a standard primary school explained, "The school director is a very aggressive person […] But the teacher in the special class is very nice. She has no problem to explain everything happening in the school."

Among the factors motivating some Romani parents to send their children to special school is that this may be the school best known and most widely attended within the local Romani community in general and the family in particular (see, for example, Rigová and Maczejková 2002: 712; Šaško 2002: 669; Tomatová 2004b: 73; Nadácia Milana Šimečku 2007: 8-9). In some cases, the parents have themselves attended special primary school, seeing special education for this reason as the most viable option for their children (see Šaško 2002: 669). Although less than five percent of the Romani parents polled indicated that school staff had pointed to the presence of other Roma in special schools and classes in an attempt to persuade the parents to enrol their children in the school or class in question, separate interviews with parents revealed the presence of other Roma in general and siblings in particular as an important factor in their decision. The importance of this factor was explained most frequently in terms of safety in numbers, with older children accompanying younger children on the trip to school, whether by foot or by bus.

As was the case with geographic proximity, the findings of the field research conducted for this study suggest that members of school staff tend to underestimate the importance of inter- and intra-ethnic relations for Romani parents as they make enrolment decisions for their children. On the one hand, the negative experiences of Roma (both children and parents) with non-Romani pupils and staff in standard schools make integrated education less appealing. On the other hand, the presence of other Roma and efforts by school staff to create a hospitable environment in special schools and classes provide positive incentives for enrolment in special education. Taken together, these factors form yet another area for violating informed consent requirements to the extent that parents lack complete information on the limitations imposed by enrolment in special primary education on their children's access to higher levels of education and to employment.

Conclusion and Recommendantions

> The Slovak Republic has no significant mineral resources and its greatest treasure and potential for future prosperity are its inhabitants, their education, wisdom, morality, creativity.
>
> *Concept of the Development of Education in the Slovak Republic in the Next 15-20 Years*[44]

The preceding chapters have provided a fuller picture of the situation of Roma in relation to special education in Slovakia than had previously been available. Beginning by presenting the overrepresentation of Roma in special education as a phenomenon widespread in Central and Eastern Europe, the study moved to providing information on the Slovak case at the levels of both policy and practice. After giving estimates of the total enrolment of Roma in special education as well as information on the geographic distribution of institutions providing special education relative to Romani settlements and factors affecting the quality of education offered in special schools and classes, the study examined the effects of Roma's overrepresentation in special education from the standpoint of individual access to opportunities for further education and employment on the one hand and cost-effectiveness for the state on the other. Special education was thus shown to be a losing proposition for both individuals and the state.

The Slovak government has demonstrated an awareness of problems related to special education since at least 2001, when the Slovak Ministry of Education issued a call for lowering the number of children (without specification of ethnicity) in special schools by way of precise diagnoses and a concept on the integration of children with special needs into standard schools (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2001: 15). Three years later, the Ministry noted the need to prevent formation of segregated classes for Romani children (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2004: 6). In the same document, the Ministry calls for applying the experiences from projects for reintegrating Romani children into standard primary schools while creating appropriate conditions in the receiving schools (Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky 2004: 8).

Reducing the number of Romani children attending special primary schools and special training facilities also figures among the five objectives of Slovakia's National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion (Government of the Slovak Republic 2005: 5-6; see also Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2008: 13). The goal corresponding to this objective is elimination of misdiagnosis of Romani children, with the corresponding expectation that the number of Romani children placed in special primary schools

[44] Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky (2001: 14).

and special training facilities will be reduced by fifteen percent by 2015. However, no information is provided as to the basis for this expectation or as to how misdiagnosis will be eliminated.

Despite progress in the field of policy, a complex set of factors contribute to the continued overrepresentation of Roma in special education. Some of these factors are related to the procedures and mechanisms by which children enter and leave special education. No less important, however, are the motivations of relevant institutions and of Romani parents to enrol children in special schools and classes.

Taking into account the current situation and the Slovak government's political commitment to addressing the situation, the recommendations below reflect the need for specific targeted measures in order to reverse patterns of segregation of Roma in special education.

1. *Eliminate overrepresentation of Roma in special schools and classes.* The Slovak government should set a target of equalizing the respective proportions of Romani and non-Romani populations enrolled in special education by 2015. To this end, the Slovak government should publish and implement a plan of action, taking into account the recommendations which follow.

2. *Discontinue psychological testing as a mechanism for assigning children to special education in pre-school and the early years of primary school.* Children without immediately apparent signs of mental disability should be provided with standard pre-school preparation (see recommendation 7, below), then placed in standard classes of standard primary schools. If testing continues for the purpose of streaming, then diagnostic instruments should include input from Roma (and other minorities) to take into account cultural diversity, should be standardized using ethnically appropriate samples, and should be conducted in the language in which the child is most fluent, with Roma involved also in administering the instruments.

3. *Apply mechanisms for identifying and reversing inappropriate placement in special education.* Children in all categories of special education should be assessed annually using the tests developed by the Research Institute for Child Psychology and Psychology for ruling out mental disability. This should be an enforceable legal requirement. Children found not to have a mental disability should be transferred into standard classes in standard schools and provided with the support necessary to bridge the gap between reduced and standard curricula.

4. *Abolish special primary schools for children with mild mental disability.* Children in the first three grades special primary schools in this category should be transferred immediately to standard, ethnically integrated classes of standard primary schools and provided with the pedagogical support necessary to bridge the gap between reduced and standard curricula. Pupils above grade three should

be provided with intensive preparation for enrolment in standard secondary education following completion of primary education in their current (special) schools, with an enhanced curriculum as well as legislation modified in order to allow access to standard secondary education.

5. *Distinguish explicitly and clearly between mental disability, social disadvantage, and ethnicity.* The Slovak government should state explicitly that mental disability and social disadvantage are distinct phenomena and that neither phenomenon is a component of Romani ethnicity. Subsequent policy measures should reflect the difference between the two in both design and implementation. The provisions of Slovakia's new School Law, which require that no child be placed in special education on the basis of social disadvantage or ethnicity, should be implemented.

6. *Promote and practice informed parental consent.* Consistent with Slovakia's new School Law, outreach programs should be launched to provide accurate and accessible information on school choices and their consequences, with particular emphasis on the longer-term educational and employment prospects for children entering special education. Clearly presented in this information should be the option of individual integration of children with special educational needs in standard classes as an alternative to assignment to special schools and classes. To support this effort, annual surveys should be conducted with parents enrolling their children in special education to verify that they were provided with the information necessary to legitimate their consent.

7. *Ensure access to ethnically integrated standard pre-schools.* Taking into account that low pre-school enrolment among Romani children (approximately 4 percent) makes their integration into primary school more difficult, the Slovak government should increase enrolments of Romani children in pre-school education by either making this level of education compulsory for all children of pre-school age or by giving Romani and/or socially disadvantaged children priority in enrolment. Considerable care must be taken and resources committed to ensure that the increased demand for pre-school education is met with a quantitatively and qualitatively adequate supply.

8. *Review and revise the school funding scheme.* Official policy should be introduced and implemented to provide a financial incentive for integration of Romani children in standard-curriculum classes in standard primary schools, with the complexity of the current per-pupil normative system reduced in such a way as to both provide clear motivation for school directors to change their behavior and eliminate competition for students between schools administered by different levels of government. In addition, the material benefits provided for children from a socially disadvantaged environment should be made available to all students regardless of the concentration of children from a socially disadvantaged environment in a school.

9. *Restructure the system of advising centres.* The Slovak government should consider abolishing special pedagogical advising centres. Necessary personnel from these centres could be transferred to pedagogical-psychological advising centres so that the latter type of centres can focus on helping children to integrate successfully in standard education. If special pedagogical advising centres are not closed, then they should be made independent of special schools in order to eliminate their incentive to assign children to special education, with their responsibilities in relation to pedagogical-psychological advising centres codified in legislation.

10. *Provide appropriate pre- and in-service training for education staff.* Teachers, pedagogues, and psychologists employed in schools should be provided with professional preparation for providing quality education to pupils from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Existing special pedagogues should be retrained as necessary to enable them to provide support to pupils transferring from special primary schools to standard classes in standard primary schools. University programs in special pedagogy should be reduced in size and refocused on mainstreaming.

11. *Collect and maintain ethnically disaggregated data in conformity with EU standards on data protection.* Test data disaggregated by ethnicity are indispensable for measuring the effects of education policies on Roma's scholastic achievement. The current absence of official data poses a serious obstacle to the design of effective measures to improve the situation faced by Roma in the area of education (as well as in other areas), preventing setting targets and monitoring progress (see Úrad vlády Slovenskej republiky 2008: 2). Without such data, governments can be criticized neither for not making measurable commitments, nor for non-fulfilment of any commitments they make (Salner 2005c: 18).

Research Samples

The sample universe

As mentioned in the Introduction, both samples used in the field research conducted for this study were constructed from the universe of all special primary schools, special classes in standard primary schools, and special secondary schools in the Slovak Republic in the 2007-2008 school year, based on official data from the Institute of Information and Prognoses in Education. Both samples were designed in such a way as to mirror the relative proportions of each of these three forms of special education in the sample universe. Using the method of proportionately stratified random selection, the sample universe was divided into several groups (i.e., strata), with simple random selection made within each group. The table below shows these proportions for samples of 25 and 99 units in total.

Form of special education	Number	%	Sample N=25	Sample N=100
Special classes in primary schools	216	46	11	46
Special primary schools	179	38	10	38
Special secondary schools	71	15	4	15
Total	**466**	**100**	**25**	**99**

For constructing the two samples, two stratification criteria were applied to the sample universe:

» Region (European Administrative Unit - II. Level, NUTS II)
» Size of municipality (up to 5000 inhabitants, 5000 and more inhabitants)

The results of the application of these two criteria to the entire sample universe are shown in the tables below.

Special primary schools	**Size of municipality**		
NUTS II level	**0 - 5000**	**5000 +**	**Total**
SK01 (Bratislavský)	0	9	**9**
SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	11	55	**66**
SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	12	34	**46**
SK04 (Prešovský, Košický)	21	37	58
Total	**44**	**135**	**179**

Special classes in primary schools	**Size of municipality**		
NUTS II level	**0 - 5000**	**5000 +**	**Total**
SK01 (Bratislavský)	7	0	**7**
SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	19	5	**24**
SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	39	7	**46**
SK04 (Prešovský, Košický)	118	21	**139**
Total	**183**	**33**	**216**

Special Secondary Schools	**Size of municipality**		
NUTS II level	**0 - 5000**	**5000 +**	**Total**
SK01 (Bratislavský)	0	5	**5**
SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	5	16	**21**
SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	4	15	**19**
SK04 (Prešovský, Košický)	8	18	**26**
Total	**17**	**54**	**71**

For the purpose of constructing the larger of the two samples, the sample universe of schools and classes was also divided into two categories according to size. More specifically, the median value of 27 pupils was used to create one category of schools and classes with 27 pupils or fewer and another category of schools and classes with more than 27 pupils. The results of this categorization are given in the three tables that follow.

Special primary schools		
Number of pupils	**Number of schools**	**%**
Up to 27	166	77
More than 27	50	23
Total	**216**	**100**

Special classes in primary schools		
Number of pupils	**Number**	**%**
Up to 27	26	15
More than 27	153	85
Total	**179**	**100**

Special secondary schools		
Number of pupils	**Number**	**%**
Up to 27	41	58
More than 27	30	42
Total	**71**	**100**

Combining the three stratification criteria reveals the complete set of proportions among the three types of special education units in the sample universe.

Special classes in primary schools			Size of municipality		Total
		NUTS II level	Up to 5 thousand	More than 5 thousand	
Number of pupils	Up to 27	SK01 (Bratislavský)	3%	0.0%	**3%**
		SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	9%	2%	**11%**
		SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	17%	3%	**19%**
		SK04 (Prešovský, Košický)	37%	7%	**44%**
	More than 27	SK01 (Bratislavský)	0.5%	0.0%	**0%**
		SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	0.0%	0.5%	**0%**
		SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	1%	0.5%	**2%**
		SK04 Prešovský, Košický)	18%	3%	**20%**
Total			**85%**	**15%**	**100%**

Special primary schools			Size of municipality		Total
		NUTS II level	Up to 5 thousand	More than 5 thousand	
Number of pupils	Up to 27	SK01 (Bratislavský)	0.0%	0.0%	0%
		SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	3%	7%	**10%**
		SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	2%	2%	**3%**
		SK04 (Prešovský, Košický)	0.0%	1%	**1%**
	More than 27	SK01 (Bratislavský)	0.0%	5%	**5%**
		SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	2.8%	24%	**27%**
		SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	5%	17%	**22%**
		SK04 (Prešovský, Košický)	12%	20%	**31%**
Total			**25%**	**75%**	**100%**

Special secondary schools			Size of municipality		Total
		NUTS II level	Up to 5 thousand	More than 5 thousand	
Number of pupils	Up to 27	SK01 (Bratislavský)	0.0%	6%	**6%**
		SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	1%	15%	**17%**
		SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	3%	10%	**13%**
		SK04 Prešovský, Košický)	6%	17%	**23%**
	More than 27	SK01 (Bratislavský)	0.0%	1%	**1%**
		SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	6%	7%	**13%**
		SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	3%	11%	**14%**
		SK04 Prešovský, Košický)	6%	8%	**14%**
Total			**24%**	**76%**	**100%**

Larger sample

For the purpose of ensuring statistical representativeness, the size of the larger sample was set at 100 units, with this figure constituting approximately 21.5% of the total number of special primary schools, special classes in standard primary schools, and special secondary schools in the Slovak Republic. Once the size of the sample was set, the sample was constructed in a process involving three steps:

- Dividing the sample universe into the three types of units of special education to be included in the sample, with representation of each type in the sample proportional to its representation in the sample universe;
- Applying to the raw sample stratification criteria of region (NUTS II), municipality size, and number of pupils per unit; and
- Selecting specific units in each category using simple random selection, assigning two substitutes for each selected unit in case the first-choice unit refused to take part in the study.

As shown in the table below, the first step of the process of constructing the larger sample yields a raw sample consisting of 46 special classes in standard primary schools, 38 special primary schools, and fifteen special secondary schools.

Form of special education	Numbers in sample universe	%	Sample
Special classes in primary schools	216	46	46
Special primary schools	179	38	38
Special secondary schools	71	15	15
Total	**466**	**100**	**99**

The second step produces a selection of special education units by region, municipality size, and number of pupils per unit for the sample, with proportions matching those in the sample universe.

Special classes in primary schools			Size of municipality		Total
		NUTS II level	Up to 5 thousand	More than 5 thousand	
Number of pupils	Up to 27	SK01 (Bratislavský)	1	0	**1**
		SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	4	1	**5**
		SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	8	1	**9**
		SK04 Prešovský, Košický)	17	3	**20**
	More than 27	SK01 (Bratislavský)	0	0	**0**
		SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	0	0	**0**
		SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	1	1	**2**
		SK04 Prešovský, Košický)	8	1	**9**
Total			**39**	**7**	**46**

Special primary schools			Size of municipality		Total
		NUTS II level	Up to 5 thousand	More than 5 thousand	
Number of pupils	Up to 27	SK01 (Bratislavský)	0	0	**0**
		SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	1	2	**3**
		SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	1	1	**2**
		SK04 Prešovský, Košický)	0	1	**1**
	More than 27	SK01 (Bratislavský)	0	2	**2**
		SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	1	9	**10**
		SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	2	7	**9**
		SK04 Prešovský, Košický)	4	7	**11**
Total			**9**	**29**	**38**

Special secondary schools			Size of municipality		Total
		NUTS II level	Up to 5 thousand	More than 5 thousand	
Number of pupils	Up to 27	SK01 (Bratislavský)	0	1	**1**
		SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	0	2	**2**
		SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	0	2	**2**
		SK04 Prešovský, Košický)	1	3	**4**
	More than 27	SK01 (Bratislavský)	0	0	**0**
		SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	1	1	**2**
		SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	0	2	**2**
		SK04 Prešovský, Košický)	1	1	**2**
Total			**3**	**12**	**15**

In the third step, simple random selection was used to identify individual units in all three categories from a complete list of such units organized according to the stratification criteria described above. Second- and third-choice units were identified in the same manner.

Lists of the schools included in the larger sample follow below

Special classes in primary schools	
Banská Bystrica	Magurská 16
Bušince	Krtíšska 26
Čerhov	Hlavná 1
Herľany	Herľany 37
Hlinné	Hlinné 138
Hniezdne	Hniezdne 244
Hriňová	Školská 1575
Ipeľský Sokolec	Ipeľský Sokolec 331
Jakubany	Jakubany 15
Jasov	Jasov 23
Jesenské	Mieru 154
Jurské	Jurské 40
Krivany	Krivany 1
Litava	Litava 4
Lovinobaňa	Školská 9
Ľubotín	Školská 2
Lučivná	Lučivná 75
Markovce	Markovce 31
Medzilaborce	Komenského 135/6
Necpaly	Necpaly 12
Nitrianske Hrnčiarovce	Jelenecká 72
Novosad	Letná 91
Petrovany	Petrovany274
Poprad Matejovce	Koperníkova 21
Prešov	Matice slovenskej 13
Rakúsy	Rakúsy 81
Rimavská Seč	Záhradná 31
Šaľa	Horná 22
Sokoľany	Sokoľany 147
Spišská Nová Ves	Z.Nejedlého 2
Spišské Vlachy	Komenského 6
Spišský Hrušov	Spišský Hrušov 264
Spišský Štvrtok	Školská 255/6
Strážske	Mierová 1
Svodín	Svodín 1125
Šarišské Bohdanovce 179	Šarišské Bohdanovce 179
Švedlár	Školská 122
Tisovec	Francisciho 803
Torysa	Torysa 25
Turňa nad Bodvou	Turňa nad Bodvou 301
Varhaňovce	Varhaňovce 62
Vlčany	Vlčany 1547
Východná	Školská 790

Special classes in primary schools	
Vysoká nad Kysucou	Horný Kelčov 658
Záhorská Ves	Hlavná 31
Zemplínska Teplica	Hlavná 209

Special primary schools	
Locality	**Address**
Bratislava	Karpatská 1
Zlaté Klasy	Čakanská cesta 800/1
Lehnice	Školská 116
Trnava	Spojná 6
Skalica	Jatočná 4
Dunajská Streda	Sládkovičova 6
Šaľa	Krátka 11
Hurbanovo	Komárňanská 42
Stupava	Záhumenská 50/2
Ilava	Pivovarská 455/62
Čadca	Palárikova 2758
Považská Bystrica	Sídlisko SNP 1653/152
Žilina	J.M. Hurbana
Šuja	Šuja 54
Žarnovica	Andreja Sládkoviča 24
Bánovce nad Bebravou	Radlinského 1605
Prešov	Masarykova 20/a
Košice	Vojenská 13
Malý Slivník	Malý Slivník 28
Humenné	Komenského 3
Michalovce	Školská 10
Kráľovský Chmec	Majlátha 1
Sečovce	Nová 11
Trhovište	Tichá 50
Toporec	Toporec 39
Gelnica	Kováčska 12
Liptovský Hrádok	Hradná 336
Banská Štiavnica	Novozámocká 11
Polomka	Štúrova 60
Veľký Krtíš	Za parkom 966
Rimavská Sobota	Hviezdoslavova 24
Šahy	F.Rákociho
Veľká Čalomija	Školská 63
Hrabušice	Hviezdolsavova 164
Poprad	Partizánska 2
Richnava	Richnava 189
Komárno	Košická 8
Dunajská Streda	Nám.Sv. Štefana

Special secondary schools		
Locality	**Address**	**Type**
Ždaňa	Ždaňa 244	Practical
Košice	Alejová 6	Practical
Košice	Alejová 6	Technical
Prešov	Matice slovenskej 11	Practical
Poprad	Partizánska 2	Practical
Prakovce	Breziny 256	Technical
Kysucké	Murgašova 580	Technical
Prievidza	Nábrežie J.Kalinčiaka 14	Practical
Banská Bystrica	Moskovská 17	Technical
Rimavská Sobota	Bottova 13	Practical
Piešťany	Švabinského 7	Practical
Trnava	L.Van Beethovena 27	Practical
Mojmírovce	Mojmírovce 1791	Technical
Nitra	Červeňova 42	Practical
Liptovský Mikuláš	Janka Alexyho 1942	Technical

As reported in section 1.3, questionnaires were administered to 99 directors, 136 teachers, and 114 parents of Romani children in schools included in the larger sample. Details on the number of questionnaires completed by type of school are given in the tables below.

Questionnaires with directors	
Type of school	**Number of questionnaires completed**
Special primary school	38
Special class in standard primary school	46
Special secondary school	15
Total	**99**

Questionnaires with teachers	
Type of school	**Number of questionnaires completed**
Special primary school	75
Special class in standard primary school	46
Special secondary school	15
Total	**136**

Questionnaires with parents	
Type of school	**Number of questionnaires completed**
Special primary school	60
Special class in standard primary school	43
Special secondary school	11
Total	**114**

Smaller sample

The smaller sample to be used for the qualitative research is constructed in much the same way as the larger sample. In this case, however, the size of the sample is set initially at 25 units. As will be explained below, the second step of the three-step process used in constructing the larger sample was also truncated.

The first step of the process thus results in a raw sample consisting of eleven special classes in standard primary schools, ten special primary schools, and four special secondary schools.

Form of special education	Numbers in sample universe	%	Sample
Special classes in primary schools	216	46	11
Special primary schools	179	38	10
Special secondary schools	71	15	4
Total	**466**	**100**	**25**

The second step produces a selection of special education units by region and municipality size. Because of the small size of this sample, the selection criterion of number of pupils per unit could not be applied.

While the smaller sample was not designed to be statistically representative, in order to maximize regional coverage by ensuring at least one unit from each sub-category, the number of special classes in the sample was increased from the initial figure of eleven to twelve.

Special classes in primary schools	Size of municipality		
NUTS II level	Up to 5,000	More than 5,000	**Total**
SK01 (Bratislavský)	3%	0%	**3%**
SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	9%	2%	**11%**
SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	18%	3%	**21%**
SK04 (Prešovský, Košický)	55%	10%	**64%**
Total	**85%**	**15%**	**100%**

Special classes in primary schools	Size of municipality		
NUTS II level	Up to 5,000	More than 5,000	**Total**
SK01 (Bratislavský)	1	0	**1**
SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	1	0	**1**
SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	2	1	**3**
SK04 (Prešovský, Košický)	6	1	**7**
Total	**10**	**2**	**12**

In similar fashion, the number of selected special primary schools was increased from ten to eleven.

Special primary schools	Size of municipality		
NUTS II level	Up to 5,000	More than 5,000	Total
SK01 (Bratislavský)	0%	5%	**5%**
SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	6%	31%	**37%**
SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	7%	19%	**26%**
SK04 (Prešovský, Košický)	12%	21%	**32%**
Total	**25%**	**75%**	**100%**

Special primary schools	Size of municipality		
NUTS II level	Up to 5,000	More than 5,000	**Total**
SK01 (Bratislavský)	0	1	**1**
SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	1	3	**4**
SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	1	2	**3**
SK04 (Prešovský, Košický)	1	2	**3**
Total	**3**	**8**	**11**

The number of special secondary schools to be selected was also increased, from four to five.

Special secondary schools	Size of municipality		
NUTS II level	Up to 5,000	More than 5,000	Total
SK01 (Bratislavský)	0%	7%	**7%**
SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	7%	23%	**30%**
SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	6%	21%	**27%**
SK04 (Prešovský, Košický)	11%	25%	**37%**
Total	**24%**	**76%**	**100%**

Special secondary schools	Size of municipality		
NUTS II level	Up to 5 thousand	More than 5,000	Total
SK01 (Bratislavský)	0	1	**1**
SK02 (Trnavský, Trenčiansky, Nitriansky)	0	1	**1**
SK03 (Žilinský, Banskobystrický)	0	1	**1**
SK04 (Prešovský, Košický)	1	1	**2**
Total	1	4	**5**

The resulting sample consists of a total of 28 units: twelve special classes in standard primary schools, eleven special primary schools, and five special secondary schools.

Form of special education	Numbers in sample universe	%	Sample
Special classes in primary schools	216	46	12
Special primary schools	179	38	11
Special secondary schools	71	15	5
Total	**466**	**100**	**28**

As was done for the larger sample, in the third step simple random selection was used to identify first-, second-, and third-choice units in all three categories from a complete list of such units organized according to the stratification criteria. As mentioned above, all units included in the smaller sample are also part of the larger, statistically representative sample.

Details on the number of interviews conducted with school directors, teaching assistants, and parents of Romani children are given by type of school in the tables below.

Interviews with directors	
Type of school	**Number of interviews**
Special primary school	9
Special class in standard primary school	14
Special secondary school	5
Total	**28**

Interviews with teaching assistants	
Type of school	**Number of interviews**
Special primary school	3
Special class in standard primary school	12
Special secondary school	1
Total	**16**

Interviews with parents	
Type of school	**Number of interviews**
Special primary school	8
Special class in standard primary school	11
Special secondary school	2
Total	**21**

Statistics

Table B1 Presence of schools, hospitals, and non-Romani settlements in 46 localities with Romani settlements

	Standard **Pre-school**	**Standard primary school**	**Standard secondary school**	**Hospital/ sanitary facility**	**Special kindergarten**	**Special primary school**	**Special secondary school**	**Non -Romani settlement**
Present	84.8%	95.7%	63.0%	67.4%	19.6%	71.7%	43.5%	87.0%
Absent	15.2%	4.3%	37.0%	32.6%	80.4%	28.3%	56.5%	13.0%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Source: Author's calculations based on observation grids

Table B2 Educational attainment of teachers in special primary schools

	Absolute numbers	**Percentage**
Lower than university degree	4	5.6%
University degree (title Bc)	1	1.4%
University degree (title Mgr or Ing)	66	91.7%
University degree (title Dr.)	4	1.4%
Total	**72**	**100%**

Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with teachers in special primary schools

Table B3 Educational attainment of teachers in special classes

	Absolute numbers	**Percentage**
Lower than university degree	2	4.4 %
University degree (title Bc)	3	6.7%
University degree (title Mgr or Ing)	41	88.9%
University degree (title Dr.)	0	0
Total	**46**	**100%**

Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaires with teachers in special classes in standard primary schools

Table B4 Educational attainment of Roma in Slovakia (structure)

Level of education	Men	Women	Total
Incomplete primary	32.2	37.7	35.0
Primary	33.8	39.3	36.6
Incomplete secondary	10.4	7.5	8.9
Secondary	19.2	11.4	15.2
Higher	0.3	0.1	0.2
Special school	4.1	3.8	3.9
Do not know	0.1	0.3	0.2
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**

Source: Filadelfiová, Gerbery, and Škobla (2007)

Table B5 Social welfare benefits (Dávky v hmotnej núdzi) in Slovakia, 2009

Type	Level of benefit (EUR)
Single person without children	58.43
Single person with 1-4 children	109.54
Single person with 5 and more children	159.34
Couple without children	101.58
Couple with 1-4 children	150.04
Couple with 5 and more children	201.16
Supplement for pregnant women	12.95
Supplement for parents taking care of child under 1 year of age	12.95
Contribution for health care	2.00
Benefit for a child attending compulsory education	16.60
Housing benefit for one person	52.12
Housing benefit for multiple persons	83.32
Activation incentive (*Activačný príspevok*)	63.07
Protection contribution (*Ochranný príspevok*)	63.07

Source: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Table B6 Clients of labour offices according to level of education, October-December 2008 (structure)

	Absolute figures	Proportion
Incomplete primary	15,695	6.3%
Primary	76,484	30.8%
Vocational	77,584	31.2%
Secondary technical	1,220	0.5%
Secondary (*maturita*)	65,019	26.2%
Higher	2,369	0.1%
University	10,037	4.0%
Postgraduate	148	0.1%

Source: Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family

Table B7 Socially disadvantaged children in primary schools by regions (2008-2009)

Region	Socially disadvantaged pupils at standard primary schools	Total number of pupils at standard primary schools	Percentage of socially disadvantaged pupils at standard primary schools	Socially disadvantaged pupils at special primary schools[45]	Total number of pupils at special primary schools	Percentage of socially disadvantaged pupils at special primary schools
Bratislava	559 pupils 75 schools (average 7.45 pupils per school)	39,184 pupils 155 schools	1.4% pupils 48% schools	187 pupils 17 schools (average 11.00 pupils per school)	2,153 pupils 25 schools	8.7% pupils 68% schools
Trnava	1,721 pupils 175 schools (average 9.83 pupils per school)	45,430 pupils 243 schools	3.8% pupils 72% schools	405 pupils 24 schools average 16.87 pupils per school)	1,658 pupils 35 schools	24.5% pupils 69% schools
Trenčín	1,133 pupils 130 schools (average 8.72 pupils per school)	48,764 pupils 201 schools	2.3% pupils 65% schools	241 pupils 14 schools (average 17.21 pupils per school)	1,100 pupils 21 schools	21.9% pupils 67% schools

Region	Socially disadvantaged pupils at standard primary schools	Total number of pupils at standard primary schools	Percentage of socially disadvantaged pupils at standard primary schools	Socially disadvantaged pupils at special primary schools[45]	Total number of pupils at special primary schools	Percentage of socially disadvantaged pupils at special primary schools
Nitra	4,080 pupils 256 schools (average 15.94 pupils per school)	56,600 pupils 318 schools	7.2% pupils 81% schools	517 pupils 23 schools (average 22.47 pupils per school)	1,825 pupils 32 schools	28.3% pupils 72% schools
Žilina	2,474 pupils 193 schools (average 12.82 pupils per school)	67,474 pupils 270 schools	3.7% pupils 71% schools	394 pupils 19 schools (average 20.74 pupils per school)	1,604 pupils 30 schools	24.6% pupils 63% schools
Banská Bystrica	8,591 pupils 250 schools (average 34.36 pupils per school)	54,651 pupils 291 schools	15.7% pupils 86% schools	1,157 pupils 29 schools (average 39.9 pupils per school)	2,975 pupils 36 schools	38.9% pupils 81% schools
Prešov	14,649 pupils 357 schools (average 41.03 pupils per school)	85,620 pupils 448 schools	17.1% pupils 80% schools	2,119 pupils 33 schools (average 64.21 pupils per school)	4,408 pupils 47 schools	48.1% pupils 70% schools
Košice	13,797 pupils 276 schools (average 49.99 pupils per school)	73,916 pupils 320 schools	18.7% pupils 86% schools	2,226 pupils 32 schools (average 69.56 pupils per school)	4,201 pupils 39 schools	53.0% pupils 82% schools
Total	**47,004 pupils 1,712 schools**	**471,639 pupils 2,246 schools**		**7,146 pupils 191 schools**	**19,924 pupils 265 schools**	

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the Ministry of Education[45]

[45] The category of special primary schools used in this table includes all types of special schools at the primary level, including not only special schools for children with mental disability, but also special schools for children with health problems, as well as others.

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