

**CLUSTER "ACCESS AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN LIFELONG
LEARNING"**

**Summary report of the Peer Learning in Hungary,
25-27 April 2007**

(De)segregation in education

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Executive Summary

The third Peer Learning Activity of the Cluster on Access and Social Inclusion was organised in Hungary on 25-27 April 2007 by the Hungarian Ministry of Education in co-operation with the Roma Education Fund.

Besides the extraordinarily good organisation, participants admired the open attitude of the hosts, who did not hesitate to undergo a tough analysis of the weaknesses of the system and thorough self-criticism. The visits and presentations inspired rich and multiple reflections.

The PLA focused on the situation of educational disadvantage encountered by the large Roma community in Hungary. The analysis however had a universal relevance, much beyond the specific problems of a single community. It implied a broad reflection on the equity of the system, on the reasons for inequity and on possible solutions which can be of relevance also in different contexts. After an overview of the specificities of the Hungarian education system and of the Roma issue, the PLA consisted of a visit to a village school, an afternoon centre, an integrated school and a special school, plus a final debriefing session.

Some key lessons learnt:

- The enrolment in special schools of Roma children who do not suffer of any physical or intellectual handicap is an **extremely detrimental practice**, which has a permanent disabling effect on pupils. It is necessary to bring an end to a practice which endangers the future of so many children.
- There is a direct relation between equity and quality assurance. A system where schools differ very significantly in quality does not guarantee equality of opportunities for all. Establishing a set of minimum quality standards related to teaching and school organisation, and monitoring them, should therefore be a priority to guarantee not only an efficient use of public money, but above all true equality of opportunities for all pupils.
- Free school choice has largely contributed to the deepening of the inter-school gaps in Hungary. The problem with free choice is that not everybody can really choose – the weak, (socially disadvantaged) those with little competence and information, tend to simply take what is left. In most cases, therefore, free school choice without an

efficient system of evaluation and standards assurance generates a cohabitation of excellent schools and of low quality schools catering for disadvantaged pupils. The plan by the Ministry to reduce school choice as from September 2007, combined with the support to the integrated education model, seems a highly interesting initiative which will, however, certainly create a large debate

- When focusing on quality, one should first of all look at teachers. Ensuring that well trained and experienced teachers work in disadvantaged schools would probably constitute a key step in improving the attractiveness of schools and thus rebalance the socioeconomic composition of pupils.
- We saw the key importance of involving the community in education projects. Education projects will be successful only if supported by families and communities. It appears nevertheless that families and communities may have difficulties in identifying what is really good for them in the long term. It is probably necessary to engage community mediators who can explain and convince families on the long term effects of self-damaging choices.
- Guidance services seem to have a role in addressing disadvantaged pupils to vocational schools rather than grammar schools. Guidance services need to ensure impartiality and quality, otherwise they risk being counterproductive.
- The PLA discovered several distortions – measures which had been conceived in support of disadvantaged groups but which eventually generated interests which conflicted with the original aim. While it is certainly very difficult to identify possible distortions when the measures are conceived, a regular evaluation would help to correct those measures which do not achieve their intended aim.

As a final remark, it should be observed that the problems examined in the PLA constitute big challenges for most countries, and should not be seen only as Hungarian/Roma issues. The problem of overrepresentation of minority groups or immigrants in special schools, for instance, exists in many Western European countries and would deserve to be tackled seriously from a human rights perspective. The issues of quality and ghetto schools, as well as their possible remedies, have a direct relevance for most EU countries.

Introduction

This was the third Peer Learning Activity of the Cluster on Access and Social Inclusion. Attendance was good –AT, BEfr, CZ, DE, ES, FR, GR, IE, HU, IT, RO, SE and TR participated, and in many cases involved a non-governmental expert. An external expert, Mr. Ramón Flecha, from the University of Barcelona, also contributed to the discussions. The PLA was organised by the Hungarian Ministry of Education, in co-operation with the Roma Education Fund, and it focused on the situation of educational disadvantage encountered by the Roma community in Hungary. There are at least 700,000 Roma in Hungary. They have been in Hungary for a long time and are sedentary. They live in remote rural areas or in disadvantaged districts of large towns, but almost always suffer from deep socio-economic disadvantage. Their condition has significantly worsened since the end of Communism –due to their poorer qualifications, in the market economy a very large part of the Roma population suffer unemployment.

The analysis however had a universal relevance, much beyond the specific problems of a single community. It implied a broad reflection on the equity of the system, on the reasons for inequity and on possible solutions which can be of relevance also in different contexts.

The PLA lasted two days and a half. On the first afternoon, the group met at the premises of the Ministry of Education, and it was offered an overview of the specificities of the Hungarian education system and of the specificities of the Roma population within the system. The second day consisted of on-site visits in the countryside (two villages about 100 km from Budapest), in order to see the problem in practice. On the third day, there were onsite visits to an integrated school and to a special school, plus a final debriefing session.

1. Overview of the issue

Hungary performs quite well in comparison to the EU average under many education indicators. However, in Hungary like in many other countries, data on education attainment of Roma show a very worrying situation. Fifteen per cent of the Roma pupils do not attend school beyond primary level; those who attend secondary education mainly choose vocational schools, and only 2% attend higher education. Drop out and repetition rates are very high.

The need for intervention becomes particularly evident when considering the very fast pace of increase of Roma population in school age.

The reasons for the problem are multiple and complex. To a big extent, the educational disadvantage of the Roma population is closely connected to an overall situation of exclusion and of socio-economic disadvantage. The educational disadvantage, however, may also be explained and strengthened by the way the education system is conceived. It was pointed out that PISA and TIMSS data show that Hungary is the country with the largest inter-school difference in school performance, as well as with the most important correlation between school results and socio-economic background of pupils. It seems therefore that the system does not correct inequalities, but rather reinforces them.

The PLA focused on the issue of segregation. Most Roma pupils attend schools, or streams within schools, which are mostly attended by Roma. A large basis of evidence indicates that school segregation of children with low socio-economic background generates a vicious circle leading to low quality education, mainly as a result of the strong correlation between family background and the child's expected school achievements. PISA results for minority or immigrant children in segregated schools, for instance, are significantly lower than for children of the same origin in less segregated school environments.

Mechanisms leading to segregation may be of different sorts and natures:

- A rather straightforward reason for segregation is the **residential segregation** that affects to many disadvantaged communities.
- A different but widespread phenomenon is the so-called **“white flight”-effect**. (already observed in the Belgian PLA). When the number of underprivileged pupils in a school rises *beyond a certain threshold* (estimated at around 40%), majority parents prefer to choose another school, often even at the condition of changing area of residence or of making it necessary for children to commute to farther areas.
- A specific problem of Hungary and of some other countries is the important **overrepresentation of Roma in special schools**, based on the administration of a verbal testing (a set of verbal measures) which diagnoses them as being in need of special support.
- Other, subtler, segregation schemes consist in **streaming according to ability levels** – within the same school, different groups are created, the lowest having a clear ethnic representation.

The result of all this is that *for the same, or often for more public money*, Roma pupils receive much poorer education and many less chances than non-Roma.

In order to provide a complete understanding of the issue, the organisers pointed out to some features of the education system.

1. Since the end of communism the system has been based on the principle of free choice of the school by the parents.

2. The system is extremely decentralised. Even though funding is provided by the national budget, schools are administered by municipalities, without any close coordination or control at the national level.

3. There is no system of quality evaluation at all, neither at national nor at regional/municipal level. There are no competence-based national assessments or inspectorates.

4. Municipalities are autonomous in their choices of distributing funding to schools. They receive funding from the State budget according to the number of pupils in their territory (per capita normative support). Eventually they redistribute the budget to the schools according to local criteria. They may provide additional funding or not.

5. The national budget attributes additional per capita grants to multiple disadvantaged pupils. However, municipalities may redistribute the additional funding as they want – they are not obliged to spend the additional money necessarily on the schools attended by disadvantaged pupils. Empirical research showed therefore that budget made available to disadvantaged schools does not exceed the average level.

6. Some financial and organisational arrangements originally conceived in order to support disadvantaged pupils have had boomerang effects. One example is the funding to special schools. These schools (catering for pupils with special education needs) receive much higher funding than non-special or mainstream schools and are separately managed (teachers have a separate training, career and separate unions). As they are funded on the basis of the number of pupils, there may be an interest in filling places in these schools.

7. For a few years, due to fears of possible misuses of data, ethnic data are not collected anymore. This has the disadvantage of making it harder to monitor the situation of Roma and to define indicators for their integration.

The Hungarian authorities, and namely the Ministry of Education, are well aware of the problem and actively trying to correct it. The Ministry, in co-operation with the Hungarian Institute of Educational Research and Development and with the Roma Education Fund, is currently promoting, through grants and technical assistance, the development of “integrated education”. Schools undertaking integrated education must ensure that their school population reflects the socio-economic balance and composition of the district in which they are located. They take a fixed quota of multiple disadvantaged students, and foster quality in the school, also through the provision of extracurricular activities. This development is still at an initial/pilot stage, and it was underlined that convincing schools to undertake integrated education is a difficult process. Last year, a large part of the funds allocated to supporting integrated education was not assigned because of lack of demand.

A major breakthrough will be the limitation of school choice. As from September 2007, schools will have to prioritise enrolments based on residence criteria. It is expected that this measures will create a lot of debate.

Another key factor which, if used correctly, could make the difference is the use of structural funds in support of equity measures in the period 2007-2013. The challenge will be to ensure the actual access to funds by the disadvantaged communities (which might be prevented by the bureaucratic burden or the financial preconditions for access), and to establish an efficient monitoring system, based on clear and meaningful indicators. It will also be important to ensure that the projects selected for funding go in the right direction – if not, structural funds might even reinforce the current segregation practices, by upgrading, for instance, special education schools which in turn would need to fill in even more places.

2.The visits

The purpose of the visits was to give a complete picture of the reality, in its complexity and variety. The examples we visited were not extreme cases in positive or negative terms, but average samples of the average day-to-day school life. This approach was deeply appreciated by all participants.

2.1. The first visit - a village school

The first visit was to a village in the countryside, 150 km from Budapest. 30% of the population of the village is Roma, but the local primary school has a population of 70% Roma and 30% non-Roma pupils. This is the result of both higher birth-rates among Roma families and the so-called “white flight” phenomenon, which consists of non-Roma parents preferring to enrol their children in the school of a nearby village, which they perceive as of better quality and “whiter”.

In the absence of a system of common quality standards and or of an efficient inspectorate, the promotion of the attractiveness of schools is left to the competence, knowledge and imagination of their principals. In this case, while no extracurricular activities are implemented and no focus is placed on teachers’ training, the incentive to convince the “white” families to keep their children in the village has been the streaming of pupils based on ability. As the reason for families to flee is the fear that the low level of schoolmates may hinder learning for their children, streaming should guarantee them that less talented pupils will not disturb learning of more talented ones, as they will be in separate groups. What is striking, however, is the fact that each class is divided in two groups according to the abilities of the pupils, not depending on the subject, for the whole length of the school year. The result is a sort of segregation in practice - the lower level classes being composed almost exclusively by Roma pupils. We saw lessons for one class at the lower and at the higher level. Pupils in the lower levels were almost exclusively Roma boys, while in the better level there was a more mixed population, mainly feminine. Teaching in the lower level did not seem to be especially tailored to cater for greater needs - it was a very traditional, frontal class.

PISA shows that Hungary has a very large rural-urban gap in school performance, and it was possible to appreciate this through the visits. The great majority of pupils of the school do not continue to general secondary education, but rather to short vocational training. There is a difference between Roma and non-Roma participation in secondary level: Roma pupils are exclusively sent to vocational training

Even if it was not directly shown to us as part of the programme, we could also give a look at the special class. The class gathers around ten children of very different ages (all were Roma) with one teacher for all courses. The teacher does not have a specific training in special needs’ education, and there does not seem to be any specific pedagogical project to support these children.

It should be noted that equipment and infrastructures seemed quite good – the school building

is very pretty, and all classrooms were equipped with electronic boards. The size of classes is rather small (less than twenty pupils per class). The key issue is therefore not related to infrastructural/contextual problems, but to the quality of teaching.

We also visited the local kindergarten - an extremely pretty, quaint place. According to what we learnt from the teachers, the kindergarten also experienced, though in lesser proportions, the “white flight” phenomenon.

2.2. The second visit – Tanoda

The second visit was to a centre for afternoon classes and activities. It is part of an ESF-funded programme ("Tanoda") and it aims at providing disadvantaged children, mainly Roma, but not only, with the extra support that better-off children would normally receive at home. The centre is organised with the strong involvement of the so called Roma government, which is part of the Centre board. The director of the centre is also a Roma. There are currently around 70 centres of this kind in Hungary.

The Centre helps children with homework, but it also organises art and sport activities. For school subjects, courses are provided by the local school teachers, who can identify difficulties at school and provide pupils with an extra support in the afternoon. Children attend the Centre on a completely voluntary basis and it is normally them who make publicity and invite their friends to join in. School performance and attendance has dramatically risen since the Centre started to work.

Once again, we confirmed what already observed in former PLAs. On the one hand, we saw the importance of recreational activities and of respectful and comprehensive support to improve school performance and well-being. When asked about the reasons for their liking and attending the Centre, pupils answered that it was mainly the feeling of being respected and listened to. On the other hand, the key success factor seems to be the direct involvement of representatives of the Roma community. The involvement of the community is a central factor of success of educational projects. Probably because of this, the Centre is successful also in involving parents. In some cases parents accompany children to the centre even from rather far away villages.

2.3 The third visit - an example of integrated education

The third visit was to an integrated school in the poorest area of Budapest. The concept of integrated schools is quite innovative. Their enrolment rules oblige them to maintain the same socio-economic balance (i.e. neither a higher nor a lower proportion of disadvantaged pupils) as in their reference area. They have a rich programme of extracurricular activities (arts, martial sports, dance), aimed at compensating for those stimuli that children cannot receive at home. The school which we visited has 25% pupils with multiple disadvantages (mainly Roma).

The school fosters ambition and quality. There is an emphasis on language learning, English and German above all. Pupils are offered to take marketable, well-recognised language certificates (ITK Origo test for German and Pitman test for English). Besides, they take ECDL before leaving the school. As a result, 85% of the pupils, no matter what their background/origin is, are accepted in the most prestigious stream of upper secondary (general) education (by contrast, in the village school, last year only two pupils had entered upper general education).

Besides, focus is placed on participation and extra-curricular activities. Pupils are encouraged to organise all sorts of activities (while being there, we heard announcements for hairdressing competition and for paper recycling activities). The school organises martial sports classes, dance courses and arts, as well as special camp schools in the countryside during the academic year and other camps during the summer holidays.

There are special tutors, speech therapists and a school psychologist to cater for specific learning needs. Besides, the school has recently demanded and obtained an ESF grant to spend on support for heavily disabled children.

We were guided by pupils to observe some classes, which did not seem to have been staged for our visit. They were highly interactive and favoured to multidisciplinary learning (for instance, we attended a class combining ICT and literature: pupils had to prepare a PowerPoint presentation on the poet Sandor Petöfi). We had lunch with the pupils, and saw that they are fluent in English.

2.4. The fourth visit – a special school

The fourth visit, to a special school, was simply shocking. Even if we had heard quite a lot about this problem, seeing it left us with a feeling of deep consternation. The population of the school is composed of about a hundred pupils. The school caters for SEN pupils – pupils whose disabilities are supposed to be so significant that they could not usefully be placed in mainstream school. And indeed, there are in the school some (twenty) more or less severely disabled children. The remaining seventy pupils, however, do not seem to suffer any significant disability, neither physical nor intellectual – but they are all Roma. Prior to entering primary school, these children went through testing (an oral exam) which diagnosed them as “mildly disabled”. Since then, they have attended the special school. Even if there is in theory the possibility of a transfer from the special school to a mainstream one, this almost never happens in practice, due to the extremely reduced content of the curriculum followed in the special school. To give an example, while 7th grade mainstream pupils would learn rather complex algebra, 7th grade special school pupils are asked to range numbers (e.g. 7 542, 5 472, 2 475) in an order of magnitude. At the end of the school, they are guided to choose among five special vocational training courses

The school had a medical/care home atmosphere and very numerous staff (about 40 staff for 100 pupils). There was no presentation on the specific SEN pedagogy of the school, and at first sight it was difficult to identify a pedagogical strategy, as well as a structure of classes and courses. The main emphasis was on small practical activities (making candles, necklaces, baking biscuits, but also more complex works like weaving and mosaic). For most pupils these activities were quite straightforward and effortless. The severely disabled pupils, however, who were the ones in need of a very close support, did not always seem sufficiently attended. In many classes we saw them in a corner, playing alone. In a case we saw teachers doing the task for the child, in order not to make the rest of the group wait for too long.

What was rather surprising was that the school did not try to minimise the issue of the huge overrepresentation of Roma pupils, but actually this was underlined it as a natural key feature of the establishment. It seems deeply contradictory that the school works in close co-operation with a local Roma NGO. There seems therefore to be a misunderstanding on the side of the community about what their real interest should be. It is also worth noticing that, in many cases, it is the parents who support the choice of the special school for their children. This may be explained on the one hand as an imitative behaviour (the children of the neighbours attend it, thus it should be fine, and usually generations from a family have attended). On the other hand, the special school may look like a much more reassuring environment to many families - it is clean, well decorated, teachers are kind and comprehensive, while normal schools may appear excessively demanding and somewhat scaring for uneducated parents.

3. Lessons learned and questions left open

The final discussions were quite lively. It is clear that segregation is an issue that does not only affect Roma – in the PLA in Brussels, for instance, we saw ghetto schools with a population exclusively composed of immigrant pupils.

3.1. Overrepresentation of ethnic minorities in special schools

Very seldom are education issues black or white – issues are very complex and most of the times solutions can just be tentative. The systematic enrolment of Roma children in special schools, however, is one of the rare cases where there is no doubt. The group agreed that a very clear statement should be made on this **extremely detrimental practice**.

Attending a special school without needing it has an evident disabling effect. While most pupils we met in the special school could have made it in a normal integrated school had they started it since the beginning, it will be impossible for them to go back to normal education in the future. After attending a special primary school, their only option will be to go on to a special vocational training, and perhaps if they are very lucky to find a job reserved to disabled people.

On the other hand, the practice of enrolling non-disabled children in special schools penalises also the truly disabled children who are thus not properly catered for. Paradoxically, the result situation is that disabled pupils in special schools have to face the same challenges as they would if they were integrated in mainstream education (failure to compete, isolation, lack of specific attention), but without any pedagogical project left to support them.

There seems to be an unbearable conflict of interests at the root of the issue. Enrolment in special schools takes place on the basis of tests administered before entering primary school. The commission organising the test is linked to the administration of special schools and often composed of special school staff. Special schools receive funding based on the number of pupils, and receive much higher per capita funding than normal schools. Therefore, there is a clear interest in enrolling as many pupils as possible in order to keep the school going. It actually appears that numbers of children diagnosed as SEN are very high in neighbourhoods where there is a special school, while they drop dramatically if there is no availability of the service. Special schools teachers have a separate career from mainstream teachers and they

are organised in a very strong corporation.

It is thus understandable that tackling the issue may be extremely hard, given the interests at stake and often the evidence that families and community representatives may support this kind of education. However, the participants believe that the higher interest of the pupils should prevail, and that the Hungarian authorities should strive to bring an end to a practice which endangers the future of so many children.

A straightforward solution in order to preserve jobs for special education teachers would seem to convert special schools in resources centres which could support integrated schools through the provision of specific expertise.

It should be reminded that the practice of enrolling Roma pupils in special schools on the basis of often biased testing has been condemned several times by the Council of Europe and by the European Parliament as being in breach of human rights.

3.2. *Equity and quality*

Through the PLA, we could appreciate the direct relation between equity and quality assurance. A system where schools differ very significantly in quality does not guarantee equality of opportunities for all. For the same public money, the village pupils received much poorer education –and therefore fewer chances for their future – than the pupils of the integrated school. Establishing a set of minimum quality standards related to teaching and school organisation, and monitoring them, should therefore be a priority to guarantee not only an efficient use of public money, but above all true opportunities for pupils to start on the same foot. This is important under any circumstance, but in a system based on strong decentralisation and free school choice this would seem especially crucial.

3.3. *Free choice*

The problem of free school choice is a very complex and sensitive issue (see the current debate on *carte scolaire* in France).

Free school choice has been introduced in the post-Communism transition period as a sort of natural consequence of the free market economy. It is clear that this introduction has largely contributed to the deepening of the inter-school gaps. While in theory free choice should

foster an overall quality improvement, as schools enter a competition over resources, in real terms this almost never happens. The fact is that not everybody can really choose – the weak, those with little competence and information, tend to take what's left. In most cases, therefore, free school choice without an efficient system of evaluation and standards assurance generates a symbiotic cohabitation of excellent schools and of low quality schools catering for disadvantaged pupils.

The plan by the Ministry to reduce school choice as from September, combined with the support to the integrated education model, seems a highly interesting initiative which will however certainly create a large debate. In fact, it should be taken into account that whenever possible parents will try to choose what they believe is the best for their children. In a situation where choice is limited by administrative provisions, those parents who can do it may try find alternative ways so as to choose (changes of residence, private schools etc). It is therefore essential that the limitation of choice is accompanied by an efficient strategy to promote quality.

3.4. *Quality and teachers*

When speaking about quality, it is clear that the main focus should be on teachers. The main difference between the village school and the integrated school in Budapest, in fact, did not reside in infrastructure or equipment, but in the quality of teaching and in the provision of extracurricular activities. The difference between teaching methodologies was remarkable. Providing continuous training and evaluating the quality of teaching/teaching methodologies seems essential. When parents can choose, in fact, the supposed quality of teachers in effect is the first criterion on which choice would be normally made. Supporting the quality of teaching in schools catering for disadvantaged pupils – ensuring that well trained and experienced teachers work in disadvantaged schools - would probably constitute a key step in improving the attractiveness of schools and thus rebalance the socioeconomic composition of pupils.

3.5. *Integrating education*

Even if the example of the integrated school seemed very positive, it should be underlined that integrated education is not yet a nation-wide practice. In fact, the National Integration Network tried to systemise the practice at the national level. However, the only way they could do it was through voluntary applications by schools to open calls for tenders. Schools applied to receive funding and close guidance and support to change their practices. The problem was that only a few schools decided to apply – the available budget could not be

entirely spent. There seems to be a very strong resistance, mainly based on the fear to lose the privileged public in case schools admitted a relatively large quantity of disadvantaged pupils. Even the schools which did apply, the concepts and philosophy of integrated education do not always seem to have been fully understood. The process is therefore very slow and painstaking, and it requires a constant communication effort as well as a close follow-up.

3.6. *Involvement of the community*

The Tanoda example shows once more the key importance of involving the community in education projects. The prestige of community leaders on parents, and the presentation of role models to the children, is, without any doubt, one of the key issues for making the project work.

3.7. *Wrong choices: do disadvantaged families/communities have a correct perception of their true interests?*

It appears nevertheless that families and communities may have difficulties in identifying what is really good for them in the long term. The example of special schools, which are actually supported by families and by some Roma organisations probably simply because the school staff is *nice* to them, is clear in this sense. Another example is home study – Roma pupils are often encouraged to learn at home instead of going to school. Of course it is the family who accepts this, probably because it seems easier or because of negative experiences in the relation with the school. The catastrophic effects of such a choice are evident when looking at it from the outside, but it may be difficult for a family with no experience in education to identify them. Such self-penalising choices may be explained also with overall low expectations on the possible returns of education – the idea being that, “given that we are excluded and have no way out anyway, let’s take the easiest option”.

Overcoming this problem seems a huge task. It probably requires the involvement of community mediators who can explain and convince families on the long term effects of self-damaging choices.

3.8. *The role of guidance*

There seems to be a role of poorly conceived guidance in addressing disadvantaged pupils to lesser quality vocational schools. Guidance services have a key support role, but they need to ensure impartiality and quality, otherwise they risk being counterproductive. It would be

interesting to analyse whether training for guidance professionals in schools is appropriate, and whether awareness about equity and possible biases is sufficiently built in.

3.9. *Identifying and avoiding conflicts of interests*

The PLA undiscovered several distortions – measures which had been conceived in support of disadvantaged groups but gave results which conflicted with the original aim. The most evident one, already described, is the case of special schools. Other initiatives to support disadvantaged pupils which proved counterproductive have been changed. For instance, support for underdeveloped villages had resulted in maintaining small village school with low quality instead of integrating children in bigger and better quality schools; per capita support for travelling students benefited non Roma more than Roma, who were less incline to this solution; catch up programs for Roma pupils resulted in segregated classes. While it is certainly very difficult to identify possible distortions when the measures are conceived, a regular evaluation may help to correct those measures which do not achieve their intended aim.

3. 10. *Not only a Hungarian/Roma issue!*

It is important to underline that the problems examined in the PLA constitute big challenges for most countries, and should not be seen only in a Hungarian/Roma perspective. The problem of overrepresentation of minority groups or immigrants in special schools, for instance, exists in many Western European countries and would deserve to be tackled seriously under the human rights point of view. The issue of quality and ghetto schools, as well as the possible remedies, have a direct relevance for most EU countries, as do the possible solutions.

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