

Roma in Public Education

RAXEN

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Institute at the University Bamberg

Doris Lüken-Klaßen
Sonja Meixner

Head of Project:
Prof. Dr. Friedrich Heckmann

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Summary

In Germany, it is prohibited to collect ethnic data. Due to this ban, **no official statistical information** on Sinti and Roma exist and, as a consequence, no reliable statistical data on their educational achievements are available. The **estimated total number** of Sinti and Roma currently living in Germany amounts to about 150,000, approximately 70,000 of whom hold German nationality (i.e. are members of the recognised national minority).

Despite some positive developments during the last ten years, according to all the studies, reports and interviews, the **educational situation** of Sinti and Roma children in Germany is deemed as being poor: their school achievements are below average, they disproportionately often attend special needs schools or schools offering special instruction and only rarely reach higher levels of education. Their absences and drop-out rates are very high.

The educational situation of Sinti and Roma children is characterized by their **insufficient German language skills** and the majority's thinking in stereotypes to which Sinti and Roma are exposed. Furthermore, it seems problematic that the connection between **social origins** and success in school is especially marked in the German school system: Children who come from families with a low educational status, to which the majority of the Sinti and Roma counts, are clearly disadvantaged in their access to (higher) education. The educational situation is further aggravated by the **mistrust of many Sinti and Roma** parents towards the state schools on the basis of negative historical experiences and their fear of being assimilated.

Germany has ratified the **international agreements** on the protection of human rights and on the protection of the rights of minorities (e.g. Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages). National laws especially regulating the educational situation of Sinti and Roma do not exist.

In Germany, there is **no nationally unified strategy** for improving the school situation of Roma and Sinti. A fundamental reason for this is the federal state structure of Germany. Moreover, the proportion of Sinti and Roma at individual schools is often so low that they do not represent a sufficiently large group to justify introducing special measures for them alone. The disapproving attitude of several Sinti and/or Roma associations towards special support programmes for Sinti and Roma pupils and against the inclusion of Romanes as a teaching language also has a negative impact on political activities of the state governments. A lack of awareness of the problems and responsibility by the general public and authorities in Germany are cited as further important reasons for the lack of a consistent strategy

Although there are no national initiatives in Germany, **various measures** are implemented at a number of schools or in several federal states.

On the one hand, there are measures for migrant children in general, of which Roma and Sinti children also profit (e.g. special support classes). On the other hand, specific measures for Sinti and Roma are conducted: In some federal states, Roma or Sinti are employed as **mediators** between school and parents. Several federal states have also introduced programmes for **further education for teachers**: Information material on the ethnic group of Sinti and Roma is distributed to them and further training measures, which are designed to reduce prejudices, are carried out.

In several federal states various **support measures** are currently conducted which aim at preparing Sinti and Roma children for regular school and improving their educational performance; in many of these measures, Sinti and Roma organisations work closely with the state school authorities. Some schools with a lower proportion of Sinti and Roma children have set up projects such as assistance with homework and supervision by social educational workers.

In several federal states **information material** on the history and culture of the Roma and Sinti has been compiled (in cooperation with Sinti and Roma) and incorporated in the teaching material. The information is intended, on the one hand, to increase the majority society's knowledge of and tolerance towards Sinti and Roma and, on the other hand, to offer Sinti and Roma children better chances of identifying with the materials used for teaching.

The only state which offers **teaching or the inclusion of Romanes** in the classroom is Hamburg where the Office for School, Youth and Vocational Training supports the teaching of Romanes at schools in districts where a sufficient number of Roma and Sinti live. The Hamburg Institute for Further Education for Teachers has, for example, published twelve reading books in three dialects of Romanes.

In addition to the state-run support measures for Sinti and Roma in the education system there are also **support schemes run by NGOs** in Germany. Three examples are presented:

The “**Schaworalle**” **day-care centre** was set up in 1999 on the initiative of the Roma Support Organisation in Frankfurt/ Main. It is funded by Frankfurt’s education authority and youth welfare department and by the regional youth welfare office. The aim of the project is to provide Romanian Roma children and young people who are of school age but currently do not attend a regular school with a “substitute education” and open up better future prospects to them.

In the **EQUAL project** “Roma and Sinti into employment and a secure livelihood by means of self-organisation” language courses, courses preparing for the lower secondary school leaving certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*) and further training programmes are conducted with active involvement of Sinti and Roma.

The Advice Centre for Education/ Antiziganism has developed among other things the concept of **needs-orientated individual advice**. The primary aim of this project is to provide the Sinti and Roma who are seeking advice with support in preparing for a school leaving certificate or a vocational training course.

Table of contents

Summary

Table of contents

Data and Information

1. Legal status of Roma and Sinti in Germany
2. Description of the school situation
3. Background to the school situation of Roma and Sinti children
4. Legal framework

Part A

1. Reasons for the lack of national strategies
2. School measures for the integration of minorities and support for those who are disadvantaged
3. Strategies to improve the integration and school achievements of Roma and Sinti
 - 3.1 *Roma and Sinti as mediators, social workers or teachers*
 - 3.2 *Further education for teachers, coordination meetings*
 - 3.3 *Support measures: school preparation, special classes, homework assistance*
 - 3.4 *Teaching materials*
 - 3.5 *Teaching in Romanes*

Part B

1. The day-care centre “Schaworalle”
2. The EQUAL-project “Roma and Sinti into employment and a secure Livelihood by means of self-organisation”
3. Needs-orientated individual advice

References

Data and Information

In this section, reference will firstly be made to the insufficient data in Germany and an overview will be provided of the two groups of Sinti and Roma people in Germany: Sinti and Roma who have German citizenship and are recognised as a national minority as well as foreign Sinti and Roma people. The educational situation and its background will be presented in the subsequent section and, finally, the legal framework will be examined more closely.

The history of Sinti and Roma people in Germany is characterised by many phases of persecution, expulsion, sanctions - such as coerced settlements - and culminates in the murder of more than half the members of this people under the National Socialist regime. As a consequence of this misuse of ethnic data by the Nazis, the basic principle of **not collecting such data** has been established in Germany after World War II.¹ Thus, no official statistical data are available on Sinti and Roma in Germany.

The ban on collecting ethnic data makes the determination of the type and scope of ethnic and racist discrimination extremely difficult. The extent to which migrants and other national minorities living in Germany are affected by it is thus difficult to register.

Due to the ban on collecting ethnic data, no reliable statistical data relating to the educational achievements of Roma and Sinti children exist either. Furthermore, there are hardly any scientific studies specialising on the participation of Sinti and Roma in the education system in Germany. However, for the following information, it was possible to make recourse to discussions with experts and to the results of smaller qualitative surveys.

1. Legal status of Roma and Sinti in Germany

The Sinti and Roma in Germany have different duties and rights according to their nationality (Germans/ Non-Germans) and residence status; not all educational policy measures are open to both groups.²

Those Sinti and Roma who have traditionally lived in German-speaking regions since the 14th or 15th centuries usually have **German citizenship**. They also have the status of a national minority in the sense of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (*Übereinkommen des Europarates zum Schutz nationaler Minderheiten*) and are thus in possession of special rights which the group of Sinti and Roma who do not have German citizenship cannot exercise (see below).

In addition, there are **foreign Sinti and Roma** living in Germany who have residence and work permits. The majority of this group came between 1968 and 1973 within the framework of the bilateral agreement to recruit migrant workers from former Yugoslavia into the Federal Republic of Germany or, in the following years, within the framework of the right of entry granted to family members.

In the early Nineties, many Roma refugees came to Germany, mostly from Eastern Europe; according to an estimation, more than 60,000 Romanian Sinti and Roma applied for asylum.³ Apart from some exceptions, the applications were rejected on the grounds that, in Eastern Europe, there was no evidence of persecution of their group on the basis of ethnic origin. From the middle of the Nineties up to the present, the majority of the Roma refugees have come from Yugoslavia, especially during the Kosovo conflict. The latter group were temporarily granted protection in Germany, mostly in the form of *toleration* according to § 53 Foreigners Act (*AuslG*). *Toleration* is not a residence status, but merely a temporary postponement of deportation for one to 12 months as a rule. People who are merely "tolerated" have only limited access to the labour market due to the priority check (*Vorrangprüfung*)⁴.

¹ cf. Bundesministerium des Innern (BMI) 1999, p. 21

² cf. part A and B

³ cf. Schaworalle 2001

⁴ An employment vacancy is first to be filled by a citizen of the EU or EEA or with people with a secure residence status.

As a result of the lack of statistical data, only estimations are available regarding the size of the respective groups. The number of Roma and Sinti living in Germany is estimated by the Federal Government as well as the Central Council of Sinti and Roma (*Zentralrat der Sinti und Roma*) to be approximately 70,000 (2004).⁵ Added to these, according to the Open Society Institute (OSI), there are around 100,000 Roma with foreign citizenship, mostly refugees from East and Southeast Europe.⁶ The total number of Roma and Sinti living in Germany today is estimated by representatives of Schaworalle, a support programme run by a Roma organisation in Frankfurt/ Main, to be approximately 150,000.⁷

The Sinti and Roma live all over Germany. The majority of this group reside in the main cities of the old federal states, including Berlin and its surroundings as well as in the conurbations around Hamburg, the Rhine-Ruhr area, the Rhine-Main and the Rhine-Neckar population centres.⁸

2. Description of the school situation

According to all the studies, reports and interviews, the educational situation of Sinti and Roma children in Germany is deemed as being poor: their school achievements are below average, they very often attend special needs schools (*Sonderschule*) or schools offering special instruction (*Förderschule*) and only rarely reach higher levels of education. Their absences and drop-out rates are very high.

In 2002, the Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ACFC) found that Roma and Sinti children are "over-represented at secondary school level I (...) and in special needs schools for children with learning difficulties and correspondingly underrepresented at middle and upper schools"⁹. In their response to the ACFC's report, the Federal Government, whilst commenting that "the lower **involvement in education** by this group of pupils was not reliably evidenced statistically", confirmed nonetheless that the federal states reported from time to time that "in general **schools offering special instruction** Sinti and Roma children are represented to a particular extent"¹⁰.

According to a study by Träbing-Butzmann and Wurr, Sinti children in Schleswig-Holstein are "frequently referred by their primary school teachers to schools offering special instruction (mostly) within two years of schooling". The authors point out that this is not a problem exclusive to Schleswig-Holstein and that projects in Hamm and Cologne had revealed similar findings.¹¹

A further indicator for the fact that Sinti and Roma children frequently attend special needs schools to a more than average extent is offered by a survey carried out in 1998 in Schleswig-Holstein which interviewed teachers from all school types on their conscious experiences with Sinti and Roma children in the classroom. A third of the teachers interviewed stated that they already had taught or were teaching Sinti and Roma children. Of the interviewed grammar school (*Gymnasium*) teachers, not one could recall any conscious experience of teaching Sinti and Roma children; of the teachers at secondary schools leading to intermediate qualifications (*Realschule*) and comprehensive schools (*Gesamtschule*), a fifth said they had taught at some time or were teaching Sinti and Roma children. In

⁵ cf. BMI 2004b: 14

⁶ cf. OSI 2002: 82ff.

⁷ cf. Schaworalle 2004

⁸ cf. BMI 2004b: 14f.

⁹ ACFC 2002: 23

¹⁰ BMI 2002: 14

¹¹ cf. Träbing-Butzmann/ Wurr 1998: 13. A survey in Hamburg in the mid-Eighties also revealed that almost 70% of the Sinti and Roma children attended a special needs school there. By 2002, the situation could be remarkably improved as a result of the co-operation between local Roma organisations and the school authorities; however, members of the Hamburg Roma and Sinti Union still came to the assessment that "Roma children are still referred many times more frequently to special needs schools than children of non-Roma are" (cf. OSI 2002: 98).

the case of primary (*Grundschule*) and secondary modern school (*Hauptschule*) teachers, more than one third had had such experiences. The teachers with the most experience by far were those at special needs schools: almost 90% stated that they had taught or were teaching such children.¹²

The above-average frequency of attendance at special needs schools must be seen critically: the **task of special needs schools and schools offering special instruction** is primarily to accept children with consistently low achievements in school, with obvious behavioural problems or children who cannot cope with the school environment and to support them in their personal and educational development. It can thus be an advantage for a child to attend such a school. However, it is problematic that the curriculum of a special needs school or school offering special instruction is aimed at preparing pupils for basic employment and not for more advanced education. This school career thus makes access to training and the labour market more difficult and so impedes the pupil in acquiring better living conditions.

The Roma and Sinti children's **grave periods of absence** at school as well as the **high drop-out rates** remain a further great problem. The children of Sinti and Roma often only attend school irregularly. The Federal Government reports that, within the framework of a project on educational support for Sinti children in the state of Schleswig-Holstein, "striking periods of absences were determined"¹³, despite the fact that female Sintis were involved as assistants to the teachers. In addition, Sinti and Roma children drop out of school more frequently and at an earlier age than their peer group do; Schaworalle refers to an "alarmingly high proportion of young Roma without school-leaving certificates"¹⁴. In 1999, in Heidelberg, eight of ten young Sinti, who attended a secondary modern school (*Hauptschule*), were without a leaving certificate.¹⁵ Many Romanian Roma children who have long since reached school age do not attend regular school at all¹⁶. It can be assumed that the same is true for German Roma and Sinti children.¹⁷

On principle, attempts are made in Germany to avoid **ethnic segregation**; the ethnic affiliation is not used as a criterion for establishing the composition of school classes. However, since children in Germany usually attend the school closest to their homes and Roma and Sinti often live in relatively isolated communities, this often leads in those school catchment areas to a high concentration of Roma and Sinti children in individual schools or classes. This tendency towards segregation is heightened due to the accumulation of Sinti and Roma children at certain school types such as schools offering special instruction. An example for this is the Educational Support School (*Erziehungshilfeschule*) Weingarten in the city of Freiburg: "In 1975, the proportion of children from Sinti families was 29%. Up to 1997 it rose to 72%"¹⁸.

In addition, in exceptional cases, Sinti or Roma classes are temporarily created in order to prepare these pupils for attending regular school classes (cf. part A).

Even if no more exact details can be given which apply to the whole of Germany regarding the concrete drop-out rates and the average extent of school-leaving certificates etc., the OSI assumes that these children are "severely disadvantaged in their access to education"¹⁹; in summarising, Thomas states that "especially Sinti and Roma remain at the lowest end of the educational spectrum and thus at the furthest edge of society. The provision of schooling for them in comparison to that offered for other ethnic groups must still be seen as 'catastrophic negligence'"

Despite everything, in the Nineties "a positive trend for individual young Sinti and Roma and thus for their families"²⁰ could be observed: their participation in education rose in absolute terms.

¹² cf. Träbing-Butzmann/ Wurr 1998: 150f.

¹³ BMI 2002: 16

¹⁴ Schaworalle 2004, cf. also OSI 2002: 105

¹⁵ Beratungsstelle Bildung/ Antiziganismus 2004

¹⁶ cf. Schaworalle 2004

¹⁷ cf. amongst others, Beratungsstelle Bildung/ Antiziganismus 2004

¹⁸ Beratungsstelle Bildung/ Antiziganismus 2004

¹⁹ OSI 2002: 96

²⁰ Thomas 2000: 153 f.

Nevertheless, the positioning of Roma and Sinti children in the German education system remains below average; some of the backgrounds to this situation will be explained in the following.

3. Background to the school situation of Roma and Sinti children

One reason for the poor achievements of Roma and Sinti children at school as well as for the frequent referral to schools offering special instruction is the **thinking in stereotypes** to which these groups are exposed. The Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ACFC) criticised "the incessant problems regarding the disapproving or hostile attitude towards members of the Roma/Sinti minority"²¹; according to the OSI report, Roma and Sinti "find themselves regularly confronted with the clichéd view that Roma and Sinti are 'different' and do not need any qualified training"²².

A case study carried out in Berlin also reached the conclusion that pupils from other cultural spheres are not individually assessed, but that certain characteristics were ascribed to them according to their ethnic group: in the place of subject orientation there was a collective stereotype. It was claimed that children from migrant families were seen by the majority of teachers as a "difficult minority", poor performances in school by children from other cultural circles were attributed to their different cultural background and accepted as unchangeable.²³

It was further claimed that the image of Roma and Sinti pupils was also tainted by stereotypes "both of fear and resistance as well as romanticised fascination"²⁴.

Furthermore, **insufficient German language skills** and problems of understanding frequently hinder Roma and Sinti children from achieving good performances at school. The native tongue and the "family language" of the Sinti and Roma is Romanes; German is merely their second language which they often only learn in a rudimentary fashion before entering school. As many Sinti and Roma often live in relatively isolated areas and the extended family forms the focal point of their lives, the contact to German speakers is small.

Linguists calculate a period of two to five years as being necessary for successive second language learning, such as happens in the case of Sinti and Roma while in school. However, once they attend school, children are faced with lessons in German from the very beginning. They remain systematically disadvantaged until their language competence reaches that of their fellow pupils.²⁵ The advantage other pupils have can be made up with the help of intensive support and sound backing from the parental home. However, since many Sinti and Roma parents were themselves rarely at school, they can hardly assist their children in the learning process; not to mention the fact that they themselves often lack sufficient German skills.²⁶

It is also problematic for the Sinti and Roma that their **bilingualism is disregarded** by public offices, schools and teachers. Difficulties in understanding are often incorrectly interpreted by the latter: they explain their poor performance at school to a lesser degree as being based on their lack of German skills, but rather as being due to learning difficulties.²⁷ A survey of 158 teachers reveals that many of them are unaware of the bilingualism of Roma and Sinti: hardly any of the teachers interviewed could classify the term "Romanes"; only a tenth of them knew that Roma and Sinti have their own

²¹ ACFC 2002: 2

²² OSI 2002: 103

²³ cf. Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung 2004: 16

²⁴ Träbing-Butzmann/ Wurr 1998: 15. In an empirical study carried out in 1995 with just over 1,300 pupils, Träbing-Butzmann determined a "negative" or "rather negative" attitude in the case of two thirds of those interviewed, a "neutral" attitude in the case of around one third and a "positive" or "rather positive" attitude in the case of 8%.

²⁵ cf. Träbing-Butzmann/ Wurr 1998: 91

²⁶ cf. Rao-Casimir 1995: 450ff.

²⁷ cf. OSI 2002: 100

language.²⁸ This has grave consequences for the pupils; in its recommendation “School and Migration” (*Schule und Migration*), the Heinrich Böll Foundation (*Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung*) states “that ignoring or not sufficiently regarding bilingualism in itself is a reason for the considerable disadvantage of these children because it excludes a decisive area of the children’s sphere of expression and life”²⁹.

In the case of Non-German children, in contrast, public offices, schools and teachers are clearly aware of their lacking German skills and incorporate this factor into their daily work and dealings with them. However, even in this case, the Heinrich Böll Foundation criticises the fact “that the language acquisition of children with a migrant background, their varied language cultures and differing preconditions (...) have been integrated too little into pedagogic concepts”³⁰.

Poverty and dependence on social welfare is high amongst the members of the Sinti and Roma people.³¹ In addition, it is claimed that there has been neglect for many years on the part of the authorities and discrimination in the case of access to private housing.³² The **living conditions** of the majority of Sinti and Roma are thus below average; flats which are too small are the rule. These living conditions also affect achievements in school: due to their cramped accommodation, Sinti and Roma children often have no space and quiet to do their homework. Some of them must also contribute to earning the family’s living (above all, the boys) or do household chores (particularly the girls)³³. For this reason, some of them are not able to attend school regularly or drop out entirely.³⁴

Another reason for the poor school results achieved by Sinti and Roma children is closely linked to the fact that most of their **parents have limited educational attainment**. “Parents with little ‘educational horizons’ can hardly or not at all be role models in this field”³⁵. Additionally the **value of school education** is mostly assessed differently by Sinti and Roma than it is by the majority population. Attending school is even partially seen as “useless”³⁶.

Moreover, it can be assumed that Sinti and Roma parents agree to their child being transferred to a special needs school more quickly than would be necessary in the individual case: although the parents are often informed and advised by the school authorities, due to language problems or lacking education, they frequently do not gauge the consequences of such a measure and agree to the change of school. If one child in the family is already attending a special needs school as well, the parents agree more readily to the change of school for the other children as they want to avoid their children being split up from each other. In this way, whole Sinti and Roma families and neighbourhoods often find themselves together in special needs schools.³⁷

Also of disadvantage for the children is the widespread **illiteracy of their parents** and the lacking preparation and empathy on the part of the teachers in dealing with the (quasi-) illiterate background of the children.³⁸

In the light of this background, it is particularly problematic that the **connection between social origins and success in school** is especially marked in the German school system. Children who come from families uninvolved in education, to which the Sinti and Roma count, are clearly disadvantaged in their access to (higher) education. Results of the PISA study of the OECD as well as the study by

²⁸ cf. Träbing-Butzmann/ Wurr 1998: 151

²⁹ Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung 2004: 21

³⁰ Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung 2004: 21

³¹ cf. Rao-Casimir 1995: 451f.

³² cf. OSI 2002: 80, 114

³³ Adolescent youths often drop out of school at the onset of puberty as they are then seen as adults in their culture and are expected to contribute to earning a living (cf. Schaworalle 2001). The drop-out rate is even higher for Sinti and Roma girls than it is for boys (cf. European Roma Rights Center/ EUMAP/ OSI 2004: 22f.): they do housework at an early age and take care of younger siblings; they marry relatively young and at the latest upon marrying they leave school (cf. Hornberg 2000: 21f.).

³⁴ cf. European Roma Rights Center/ EUMAP/ OSI 2004: 22f., Hornberg 2000: 21f.

³⁵ Beratungsstelle Bildung/ Antiziganismus 2004

³⁶ Schaworalle 2001, cf. also Kristen/ Granato 2000

³⁷ cf. OSI 2002: 98

³⁸ cf. Träbing-Butzmann/ Wurr 1998: 13

Kristen and Granato (2004) based on the evaluation of the microcensus show that success in the German school system greatly depends on the mastery of the German language, the experience of education gathered in the family and the professional position of the parents.

Additionally, the educational situation of Sinti and Roma is made more difficult due to the **insufficient intercultural focus of the school curricula**. In the view of the Advisory Centre Education/Antiziganism (*Beratungsstelle Bildung/ Antiziganismus*) of the Baden-Württemberg Association of German Sinti and Roma (*Verband Deutscher Sinti und Roma*) “only little suitable teaching material and even fewer methodical guidelines for the teaching staff are available to date in the schools in Baden-Württemberg”³⁹. According to Hornberg, much of the classroom content does not correspond to the Sinti and Roma’s experience of life: “Their history and way of life is usually not made the subject of lessons, which makes their identification with the content of the lessons difficult”⁴⁰.

At the same time, the school rules are not always compatible with the everyday life of Sinti and Roma. In school they encounter “many **unfamiliar cultural practices**, for example, a rigid allocation of time, which many Sinti and Roma children are not used to as they are less regulated in their domestic context”⁴¹. From an early age, they are integrated into the adults’ daily lives, are very independent and contribute to deciding themselves whether and when they go to school.⁴² According to a report by Schaworalle, teachers and headmasters frequently refer to “structural problems”⁴³ resulting from the differing worlds in which they each live.

Furthermore, reference can be made to the **mistrust** of many Roma and Sinti parents **towards the state schools** on the basis of negative historical experiences and their fear of being assimilated⁴⁴; many are worried that attending school, “without regard for our bilingualism, raising our children to be independent and a life without rule or government alienates our children from their families”⁴⁵.

The **lack of pre-school education** also plays a decisive role for the poor educational achievements of Roma and Sinti. There is a close connection between attending a kindergarten or a pre-school and the educational success of a child, as the EFFNATIS study, amongst others, has confirmed: children of international migrants “who attended kindergarten in Germany are more likely to achieve a higher educational level”⁴⁶. The Roma and Sinti children do not attend kindergartens as a rule; in their culture, it is frowned upon to allow strangers to look after their small children.⁴⁷ When the children of Roma and Sinti are eventually admitted to school, the other children are ahead of them in their linguistic, cognitive and fine motor skills.⁴⁸

A special position with regard to school attendance is occupied by **foreign Roma and Sinti**. School attendance is compulsory for children who have German citizenship. Although the children of refugees and asylum seekers have the right to attend schools in all of the federal states, they are not

³⁹ Beratungsstelle Bildung/ Antiziganismus: 2004

⁴⁰ Hornberg 2000: 23

⁴¹ Hornberg 2000: 22

⁴² cf. Schaworalle 2001

⁴³ “Many children who attend school are frequently absent, are unpunctual, do not have the necessary materials with them, do not do their homework, do not sit still (...) speak and answer directly without being asked to, do not allow themselves to be interrupted in their conversations with others by the teacher (...) have a low tolerance level to frustration (...) have no respect” (Schaworalle 2001).

⁴⁴ This distrust stems from “the exclusion of these people and their negative experiences in school as well as the subsequent denial of access to education of any kind during their persecution by the Nazi regime” (BMI 1999: 98f.); Schaworalle, too, reports that, due to their history, Roma and Sinti encounter strangers from other cultures on principle with suspicion (cf. Schaworalle 2004).

⁴⁵ Ms Melanie Spitta, quoted in Schaworalle 2004

⁴⁶ Lederer 2001: 28. For example, 21.3% of those who attend kindergarten achieved a higher form of qualification, whereas this was only the case for 8.1% of those who did not attend kindergarten.

⁴⁷ cf. Schaworalle 2004

⁴⁸ cf. OSI 2002: 101f.

subject to the **obligation to attend school** in all of them.⁴⁹ This can result in lasting disadvantage for these pupils: on the one hand, the parents of these children must themselves become active in registering their child for school and take responsibility for the child regularly attending classes.⁵⁰ On the other hand, schools have, in some cases, refused them access to the school if there is no free capacity anymore; social welfare offices could also refuse to place “the necessary material support for attending school” (e.g. financial means for purchasing school books) at the children’s disposal.⁵¹

4. Legal framework

Germany has ratified the international agreements on the protection of human rights and on the protection of the rights of minorities. In addition, all people staying in Germany can call upon the German Constitution (*Grundgesetz*). National laws especially regulating the educational situation of Sinti and Roma do not exist.

The **Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** (*Rahmenübereinkommen des Europarates zum Schutz nationaler Minderheiten*) came into force on 01.02.1998 in Germany and guarantees German minorities’ protection of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity. Alongside other groups, the German Sinti and Roma are recognised by the Federal Government as a national minority.⁵² The Convention “forbids any discrimination of a person due to his or her membership of a national minority as well as the assimilation of members of a national minority against their will”⁵³. Simultaneously, the German state undertakes to protect the rights to freedom, such as the freedoms of speech, conscience and religion, and commits itself to comprehensive protective and supportive measures in the fields of education, culture, schooling and social life.⁵⁴

Within the framework of this report, Articles 12, 13 and 14 are of special importance. Article 12 decrees that the equality of chances for members of national minorities is to be fostered at the time of access to all levels of education and thus suitable teacher training and access to appropriate teaching material are to be offered. Article 13 assures the right for national minorities to found and run their own private educational and training institutions. Finally, Article 14 regulates the right of minorities to learn their minority language and that the state, should it be required to do so, is also obliged to provide teaching in and of this language.

At the beginning of 1999, the **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** (*Europäische Charta der Regional- oder Minderheitensprachen*) came into force, which also protects and supports Romanes, the language of the (German) Sinti and Roma. These protective and supportive measures also intend to make the use of regional and minority languages possible in cultural activities as well as in economic and social life; this includes teaching of and in the language.⁵⁵

The Convention and the Charter are valid in Germany as federal law, i.e. they override other laws having a lower priority (e.g. state law).⁵⁶ However, these agreements are restricted to the group of recognised German minorities; approximately half of all the Sinti and Roma living in Germany do not belong to this group, however.

Furthermore, the regulations of the **Constitution (GG)** are of fundamental importance for the public sphere, and therefore also for school education. In Art.3 of the Constitution it is stipulated that it is

⁴⁹ There is no obligation to attend school in Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Saxony-Anhalt, Saxony and Thuringia (cf. Stiegeler 2003: 11).

⁵⁰ cf. Hornberg 2000: 11

⁵¹ cf. Klingelhöfer/ Rieker 2003: 18. The newspaper *die tageszeitung* reported of such cases in Nordhausen in Thuringia (cf. Mai 2004: 7).

⁵² cf. BMI 2004a: 36

⁵³ BMI 2004b: 24

⁵⁴ cf. BMI 2004b: 24f.

⁵⁵ cf. BMI 2004a: 37

⁵⁶ cf. BMI 2004b: 24f.

illegal to discriminate against anybody because of their sex, descent, race, language, origin, belief, or their religious and political views.

In addition, a discrimination ban is included in some school laws of various federal states. In the Hessian School Law, for example, it is stipulated that the school must not discriminate against pupils because of their sex, descent, race, language, origin, belief, or their religious and political views (§3 Section 3 HSchG).

According to the German Constitution, the responsibility for the system of education in Germany lies with the individual federal states (federalist state structure).

It can therefore be noted that general regulations prohibit discrimination in public educational institutions, but that there are no special antidiscrimination laws dealing with the special features of the educational situation and fixing concrete norms.

According to OSI, the practical application of the Convention and Charter in Germany has been rather deficient; attempts to secure the right to language and education often fail due to the resistance of the state offices responsible. For example, only very few projects have been started to teach in Romanes; efforts to incorporate the history and culture of the Roma into the school curriculum were only supported on a very limited basis.⁵⁷ Moreover, the legislation for cultural affairs lies within the realm of the federal states, which delays the implementation of international agreements: although Romanes is spoken in almost all federal states, Hesse is the only federal state to date which has implemented the Charter and regulated the use of Romanes.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ cf. OSI 2002: 81

⁵⁸ cf. BMI 2004a: 37

Part A

Since the collection of ethnic data is prohibited in Germany, the educational achievements of Sinti and Roma in Germany cannot be systematically observed and evaluated. Nonetheless, the problematic situation of this group of pupils is well-known.⁵⁹

To improve this situation, there is a **large variety of measures, projects and initiatives** in Germany which aim to improve both the integration of minorities in general, and the Roma and Sinti in particular, into the school system and achievements at school of this group.

Apart from few exceptions, these initiatives relate selectively to one school or neighbourhood and are not centrally coordinated and also not networked with each other. In Germany, there is **no nationally unified strategy for improving the school situation of Roma and Sinti**. The effectiveness of the individual initiatives (with regard to developing a comprehensive and lasting policy which ensures that the children of Roma and Sinti have the same chances in education as other children have) is not systematically evaluated, either.

In the following, firstly some reasons for the lack of national strategies will be advanced. Subsequently, general measures in educational policy for the children of minorities and those with a migration background will be described from which the group of the Sinti and Roma also profit. The description of the various strategies pursued in Germany by individual federal states or schools respectively especially for the Roma and Sinti will be dealt with in the final section.

1. Reasons for the lack of national strategies

A fundamental reason for the lack of nationally unified regulations is the **federal state structure** of Germany. Educational matters are the responsibility of the federal states. Strategies such as further education for teachers, the devising of special teaching material or the establishment of literacy classes are thus planned and implemented at the federal or local level.

A further reason for the lack of national strategies for the educational situation of Sinti and Roma is the **ban on collecting ethnic data**, as described in the first part of this report. Due to the lack of these data, Sinti and Roma are not statistically identifiable as a group, with the result that there is no reliable information on the educational situation of these children and young people. Therefore, according to Mr Egon Schweiger of the State Association of German Sinti and Roma Baden-Württemberg (*Landesverband Deutscher Sinti und Roma Baden-Württemberg e.V.*), it is difficult enough to make public offices aware of the deficits existent in the educational situation of Sinti and Roma.⁶⁰ The **proportion of Sinti and Roma** at individual schools is, moreover, often **so low** that they do not represent a sufficiently large group to justify introducing measures for them alone.⁶¹

The disapproving **attitude of several Sinti and/or Roma associations** towards special support programmes for Sinti and Roma pupils and against the inclusion of Romanes as a teaching language affects the political activities of the state governments.

Although experience in Hamburg shows that special support lessons, the formulating of written tasks in Romanes as well as in German and other such measures are seen positively and are desired and supported by Roma children and parents and some Roma associations⁶², the official response of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma (*Zentralrat deutscher Sinti und Roma*) and the Sinti

⁵⁹ cf. part on "Data and Information".

⁶⁰ Interview with Mr Egon Schweiger on 11.10.2004

⁶¹ "The German Sinti and Roma, everywhere in their settlement areas, represent a small, hardly quantifiable proportion of the population"; BMI 1999: 9.

⁶² Interview with Dr Mareile Krause on 18.10.2004

Alliance Germany (*Sinti Allianz Deutschland*) regarding such state measures especially for Sinti and Roma continues to range from distanced to disapproving.

According to the federal government, some day nurseries, separate schools or school classes for Sinti and Roma are rejected by Sinti and Roma associations; the latter attach great importance to the existing state and state-recognised school and education system being used without restriction by Sinti and Roma children, as is presently the case.⁶³ With regard to the inclusion of Romanes in the classroom, the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma maintains the position that “the language should be passed on within the ethnic group alone and not learnt and taught by outsiders in the state education system”⁶⁴. Some Sinti associations, such as the Sinti Alliance Germany (SAD), vehemently reject the teaching of Romanes and Sinti culture: “The private cultivation of Sinti culture and language is of particular importance for Sinti identity. (...) To teach our culture and language in state schools, to make it the subject of university studies [or] to use it in public offices (...) would mean a total break with the cultural laws of the Sinti community. Thus, we reject every state measure in this field which interferes with the private character of Sinti culture and language cultivation, such as those contained as state obligations for support in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, for example. For this reason, the SAD asks the states of the Federal Republic of Germany, in the interest of preserving our culture, that they do not enter into any further obligations regarding the Charter according to Part III, as these would collide with the cultural laws of the Sinti”⁶⁵.

According to the federal government in its first report on the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, this position should be noted by the state. For the state, special protection and support is regarded only as an offer; it is “the concern of every person affected to make use of this offer for him- or herself or to forgo its implementation”⁶⁶.

Disinterest and a lack of awareness of the problems and responsibility by the general public and authorities in Germany are cited as further important reasons. Dr Mareile Krause, the founder of the Co-ordination and Advice Centre for Pedagogy with Roma and Sinti (*Koordinations- und Beratungsstelle für Pädagogik mit Roma und Sinti*) at the Hamburg State Institute for Further Education for Teachers and School Development (*Landesinstitut für Lehrerfortbildung und Schulentwicklung*)⁶⁷ describes the dilemma as follows: In large sections of the population, an uncertainty about Sinti and Roma culture reigns; this is coupled with the belief that Sinti and Roma parents have no interest themselves in their children’s education. As a consequence, society does not assume any responsibility, but leaves the education of these children to the families and interprets the lack of involvement in education by this group as their “culture”. For Dr Mareile Krause, this is a manifestation of educational discrimination; a sign that the group is not seen as having equal rights.⁶⁸ Mr Egon Schweiger, too, speaks of politics and schools neglecting the problem, which makes the implementation of strategies difficult.⁶⁹

⁶³ cf. BMI 1999: 96, 102; SENBJS 2002. However, the Central Council supports additional lessons at schools for German Sinti and Roma children who are interested, during which school topics are dealt with in the Romanes language by teachers from the minority; however, there are only very few teachers available with the necessary linguistic competence (cf. BMI 1999: 96).

⁶⁴ SENBJS 2002. The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma in 1998, for example, thus turned to the Prime Minister of Schleswig-Holstein, rejected the implementation of the obligations stipulated in Article 10, section 1 a) and section 2 b) and asked to withdraw notification to the European Council as it did not regard the regulations for Romanes as practicable (Schleswig-Holsteiner Landtag 2004).

⁶⁵ <http://www.sintialliance-deutschland.de>

⁶⁶ BMI 1999: 10

⁶⁷ At that time, it was still the Hamburg State Institute for Further Education for Teachers (*Landesinstitut für Lehrerfortbildung Hamburg*); the Co-ordination and Advice Centre (*Koordinations- und Beratungsstelle*) was established by the Hamburg Senator for School, Youth and Vocational Training, Ms Raab (cf. Dr Mareile Krause 2004). Dr Mareile Krause is now the head of Personnel and Organisation Development in the Department of Further Education.

⁶⁸ Interview with Dr Mareile Krause on 18.10.2004. Even the fact that there are hardly any academics amongst the Sinti and Roma is not defined as a problem as it is deemed highly unlikely that this group may produce academics.

⁶⁹ Interview with Mr Egon Schweiger on 11.10.2004

2. School measures for the integration of minorities and support for those who are disadvantaged

As described above, the responsibility for the system of education in Germany lies with the individual federal states. For that reason no nationally standardized legal provisions for minority education exist. Nevertheless, supportive measures for children and young people with migration background are offered in all federal states. These measures vary greatly, however, with respect to their legal basis, target group and organisational implementation.⁷⁰

Measures for migrant children offered in almost all the federal states with varying degrees of emphasis and from which Sinti and Roma children also profit are special support classes and special instruction. **Special support classes**⁷¹ are generally found at the outset of primary education for beginners, but are also found in primary schools and secondary modern schools for “newcomers entering education at a later stage”. In these classes, children and young people who cannot yet take part in regular teaching due to lacking German skills, for example, are prepared for transition to the regular classes. They mainly learn German, but they also receive subject-related teaching. They should be in position to join regular classes after a year in such a special class. The period of attendance can be reduced or, in exceptional cases, extended for a period of two years maximum. This model, which attempts to foster a form of teaching as integrated as possible with German and migrant pupils in regular classes, is currently the most predominant - with minor differences - in all federal states.

If the formation of a special support class is not possible due to a low number of participants⁷², then **special instruction** (support course, intensive course, etc.) is offered as an accompanying instrument. As with special support classes, learning German and receiving some instruction in other subjects, such as mathematics, is the main purpose of the teaching. Special instruction is conceived of as a temporary measure to facilitate integration into the regular classes and to reach the level of the class. In order to establish such a measure, a minimum number of pupils who require special instruction is required. In primary and secondary modern schools in Baden-Württemberg, for example, at least four migrant pupils must have difficulties with German as the teaching medium or demonstrate lacking knowledge in other subjects in order for special courses to be offered.⁷³

A further method is the **opening of schools** in the afternoons as well as **project work**. Better supervision and the integration of all pupils as well as improvements in educational achievements are to be reached by establishing special afternoon programmes directed towards all interested pupils.

The idea of the “open school” was realised in an exemplary manner by the *Kuppelnau* School in Ravensburg, which is presented here by way of an example: in the catchment area of this school, special accommodations for asylum seekers, a housing estate with a high Sinti population (Ummenwinkel) and a high proportion of council flats, amongst others, can be found. In 1985, the headmaster of the school countered the problem of absenteeism in the case of many Sinti children with a parents’ evening *in* the housing estate; this was followed by intensive cooperation with the parents as well as the restructuring of the school into an all-day institution for all children. Today, supervision periods, work groups, “integrated learning periods”, a café for the pupils, group and individual advice, amongst others, are offered. In addition, school social work has become a fixed element of the school concept; a social worker has been employed full-time by the town of Ravensburg. These attempts at integration are not expressly part of a specific Sinti project, but concerns reorganisations affecting all pupils.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ cf. Gogolin/ Neumann/ Reuter 2001

⁷¹ The terminology used for this educational measure differs in the various federal states. For example, some states refer to preparatory classes or courses or transitional classes.

⁷² As a general rule, special classes are created when an average of 10 children cannot immediately be integrated into regular classes.

⁷³ cf. Schroeder 2001: 14

⁷⁴ cf. Träbing-Butzmann 1998: 165f.; <http://www.schulamt-tettang.de>, Interview with the headmaster Mr Rudolf Bosch, on 13.10.2004).

Project work is also carried out at numerous other schools. Particular attention is paid to Roma by the Reinhold Schneider School in Freiburg: this school was incorporated into a programme run by the State Office of Criminal Prosecution (*Landeskriminalamt*) by the name of **EZARO**, which stands for “Offensive for the Future for Endangered Roma and Ethnic German Migrants” (*Eine Zukunftsoffensive für gefährdete Aussiedler und ROMA*). This project aims to contribute to preventing violence, criminality and addiction at the secondary modern school (*Hauptschule*) level and in international preparatory classes. The goal is the integration of all pupils and the reduction of xenophobia in the school. A special integration project in dance and acrobatics, PC courses and a bicycle workshop are supposed to facilitate positive cooperation.⁷⁵

3. Strategies to improve the integration and school achievements of Roma and Sinti

Although there are no national and only few federal initiatives in Germany, various measures are implemented at a number of schools or in several federal states which have proven to be very helpful. The most significant of them are presented in the following.

3.1 Roma and Sinti as mediators, social workers or teachers

In some states, Roma or Sinti are employed as mediators. Depending on the school, they are active as social workers, teachers or (volunteer) contact persons. The aim of these projects is to impart and improve mutual understanding between the children, parents and teachers: “Roma and Sinti as school mediators initiate the cultural and linguistic dialogue between the school and the family, accompany the children on their way to school, in the classroom and on school trips, motivate the parents and children to become involved in school, take part in school conferences and parents’ evenings and mediate between children, parents and teachers”⁷⁶.

An exemplary case for this is the project “Improving the school situation of Sinti children” which has been in place at the *Matthias Claudius* School in Kiel-Elmschenhagen⁷⁷ (Schleswig-Holstein) since 1994. A teacher (Ms Ute Weid) teaches Sinti children with behavioural problems in a “Sinti class” (1st – 9th grade); the aim is to integrate these children into regular classes. Sinti mediators also cooperate in the project: a social education assistant as well as three other mediators are employed at the *Matthias Claudius* School. They take part in the lessons (“extra tuition during the lessons”), cook and offer Sinti children activities in the breaks. The range of their tasks also comprises the general supervision of Sinti children, help with homework, occupying Sinti children when lessons are cancelled as well as the organisation of extracurricular activities. In addition, they accompany the parents to parents’ evenings, offer advice with regard to the school situation of the children and intervene in cases of conflicts amongst the pupils, between pupils and teachers and between Sinti parents and the teachers.⁷⁸

The mediators are Sinti mothers who were worried about the school careers of their own children and initially became involved on a voluntary basis. Today, all the mediators carry out their work full-time; the activities are wished for and supported by the school, the teaching staff as well as the school head are committed and involved and the mediators have assigned one of their former teachers as a tutor who supports them with coordination and advice. The Ministry of Education in Schleswig-Holstein is also involved in this work, for example, with the organisation of conferences for mediators and teachers. The employees are paid by the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein.

⁷⁵ Heizler-Ries 2002. The school social workers thus organised a dance theatre project for a fifth grade class which, in addition to the German pupils, was attended by six Roma children and eight pupils from other countries. The project served to allow the pupils to become better acquainted with each other and to come together as a class; it met with a great response and left a good social climate.

⁷⁶ RAA-Berlin 2004

⁷⁷ At the *Matthias Claudius* School, schooling is provided for approximately 35 Sinti children; around 60 children take part in the afternoon supervision sessions.

⁷⁸ For all these activities, a meeting room and an office have also been set up.

The employment of Sinti women as mediators has proven to be a “huge success”⁷⁹. Although absenteeism is still high⁸⁰, the achievements in school of several children have clearly improved. According to Weid, the children adhere more to school regulations, follow rules and come to school on a more regular basis. Furthermore, there have been Sinti children in the meantime who pass through secondary modern school (*Hauptschule*) “smoothly” (without having to repeat classes etc.). In individual cases, there are Sinti children who attend secondary schools leading to intermediate qualifications (*Realschule*) or grammar school (*Gymnasium*). In addition, in the opinion of Träbing-Butzmann und Wurr, significant changes in attitude can be determined on both sides (school, family) such as the reduction of prejudices, greater trust on the part of Sinti parents in the school and the teachers; intercultural interaction becomes normal since the offers of supervision are also accepted by non-Sinti children.⁸¹

Alongside Schleswig-Holstein, **Hamburg** is also very involved in this field. With the establishment of the Co-ordination and Advice Centre for Pedagogy with Roma and Sinti (*Koordinations- und Beratungsstelle für Pädagogik mit Roma und Sinti*) at the Institute of Further Education for Teachers (see above), in 1993 a new form of cooperation started in Hamburg with the Roma and Sinti. The first Roma teacher was employed in 1993; today, nine Roma and Sinti work at schools in Hamburg and support and successfully foster school attendance of Sinti and Roma children. They participate in the lessons, give classes in their native tongue and advise and support teachers, pupils and parents. In addition, they are also contact people for other schools, children and youth institutions in the area and thus their work permeates the neighbourhood. The staff of the local institutions and, above all, Roma and Sinti families living there have someone locally available to whom they can talk. Along with the Roma and Sinti teachers and social workers, contracted staff work with individual Roma and Sinti children or groups.⁸² According to Ms Mareile Krause, the number of children not entered into schooling, absences and learning deficits (due to the lack of assistance at home with schoolwork) has been reduced by the deployment of a contact person for “urgent cases” at school.⁸³

Other federal states, too, aim to employ Sinti and Roma mediators; for example, in Bremen there are special positions for social workers whose main tasks comprise teaching in their native tongue, literacy and working with parents.⁸⁴ In Darmstadt (Hesse), too, mediators have been used since 2001.⁸⁵

3.2 Further education for teachers, coordination meetings

Several federal states have introduced programmes for further education for teachers; a selection is offered below:

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (*Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport*) in the federal state of *Brandenburg* distributes materials to teachers on the Sinti ethnic group which offer insights into the social position of the families and detail specific demands of the teaching staff. As a result, teachers are better able to do justice to the individual needs of these children.⁸⁶

In *Hesse*, the Hesse State Institute of Pedagogy (*Hessisches Landesinstitut für Pädagogik (HeLP)*) carries out further training for teachers⁸⁷ designed to reduce prejudices. The aim of this training is to

⁷⁹ Interview with Ms Ute Weid on 15.10.02

⁸⁰ cf. BMI 2002: 16

⁸¹ cf. Träbing-Butzmann/ Wurr 1998: 176ff., Interview with Ms Ute Weid on 15.10.02

⁸² Their range of duties include helping with homework, literacy training for the children and assistance with German as a second language as well as offering advice for parents and teachers. They support the families in sending their children to school and when changing schools.

⁸³ cf. Dr Mareile Krause 2004

⁸⁴ cf. Thomas 2000: 145

⁸⁵ Associations and initiatives such as the RAA-Berlin, the State Association of German Sinti and Roma in Baden-Württemberg (*Landesverband Deutscher Sinti und Roma*) and others are involved in the training of mediators.

⁸⁶ cf. Thomas 2000: 145ff.

⁸⁷ Above all, for teachers of history and social studies.

make participants aware of the problems associated with frequently referring pupils to special needs schools and to make teaching staff sensitive to the Sinti and Roma by providing information.⁸⁸ Thus, for example, amongst others, lectures are held at the University of Marburg, seminars are organised for students of pedagogy and those studying to become teachers, and further education is carried out within the schools. At the University of Marburg, the practical school supervision of Sinti and Roma is discussed in seminars and lectures for future teachers and in training programmes within the schools themselves; the participants are made aware of the cultural identity of Sinti and Roma and didactical teaching material is developed with which the culture and the history of the Sinti and Roma can be imparted to German pupils. The result of this work is the indirect support for Sinti and Roma through conveying knowledge and understanding of their history and culture.

Further education for teachers and advice are also given by the Hamburg State Institute for Further Education for Teachers and School Development. In addition, the Advice Centre "Pedagogy with Roma and Sinti" (*Beratungsstelle "Pädagogik mit Roma und Sinti"*) at the State Institute runs coordination meetings across the board for all school types ("*schulübergreifendes Kollegium*"). Roma and Sinti teachers and school social workers and non-Sinti and Roma who are also active in this field reflect upon their work and together develop it further. They organise their work in cooperation with the respective schools in such a way that the greatest possible support for Roma and Sinti and their families is guaranteed with regard to successfully attending school; the respective focus of their work is coordinated with the headmasters, teachers, pupils and parents involved.⁸⁹

In addition to the aforementioned examples, other federal states also carry out further education events; for example, in *Baden-Württemberg* where the Ministry of Education cooperates with the Sinti and Roma support organisations and in *North-Rhine Westphalia* where teachers receive further training within the framework of various projects (such as in Cologne and Hagen).⁹⁰

3.3 Support measures: school preparation, special classes, homework assistance

In various federal states, various support measures are in place at present to prepare Sinti and Roma children for school and assist in their integration; in many cases, Sinti and Roma organisations work closely with the state school authorities.⁹¹ Some of these measures are described in the following:

Special/Introductory classes: At the time when many Roma refugees lived in North-Rhine Westphalia in the Nineties, small groups of Roma children of the same age were formed there, for example. They were taught several times each week by a secondary modern school (*Hauptschule*) teacher and were accompanied by social workers. The aim of this preparatory measure was for the children to transfer to regular school classes.

At the Reinhold Schneider School in Freiburg (Baden-Württemberg), schooling has been provided each school year over the past four years for between 45 and 60 Roma children from former Yugoslavia. A differentiated concept has been developed for the schooling of Roma children which takes into account the talents of pupils who, in the regular system, seem to be either not yet, or no longer able to be provided with schooling. For the new intake of Roma children without sufficient language skills and pre-school experience, there is a *Roma Introductory Level (Roma-Eingangsstufe)*. Additionally, there is an *International Preparatory Class (Internationale Vorbereitungs-klasse)* aimed at language learning for 8-14 year olds which is open to all new pupils; as a support level offering practical skills for later life (technology, work experience, project lessons) a *Subgroup of the International Preparatory Class (Untergruppe der Internationalen Vorbereitungs-klasse)* was established for Roma pupils of secondary modern school age who bring low prerequisites for

⁸⁸ Interview with Dr Marlis Sewering-Wollanek on 30.09.04

⁸⁹ cf. Dr Mareile Krause 2004

⁹⁰ cf. Thomas 2000: 146ff.

⁹¹ cf. OSI 2002: 101ff.

education with them. Children and young people are taught by teachers, support education workers and students (trainees).⁹²

The temporary establishment of these small classes for Roma or Sinti children is also practiced – with minor adjustments in each case – in Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein, amongst other places.

At some schools with lower proportions of Roma and Sinti children, “smaller” projects are offered such as *assistance with homework, offers for small groups* and *social educational supervision*.⁹³

For example, in Darmstadt, a dozen children receive assistance with their homework twice a week in small groups and are offered the opportunity to deepen their knowledge related to the grade in which they are at primary school; the supervision is offered by an employee of the State Association of Sinti and Roma Hesse (*Landesverband Sinti und Roma Hessen*) and a Sinti woman.⁹⁴

An exemplary project for *social educational accompaniment* was started in 1994 on the initiative of the teacher Ms Mechthild Brand (Non-Sinti). She was initially released from her classes for five hours per week to “take stock of questions and problems regarding Sinti in individual schools”. From 1995 onwards, she was employed on a full-time basis in all the schools frequented by Sinti in Hamm; this activity was financed by the State of North-Rhine Westphalia. The focus of her work was, amongst others, mediation between teaching staff and Sinti in the case of acute problems, the organisation of assistance with schoolwork, individual supervision and practical help with everyday school life (such as producing visual timetables for illiterate parents or assisting at parents’ evenings). This project was very successful. Whilst a majority of pupils did not attend school at all in 1994, school education has taken on a great importance for Sinti families in Hamm: the obligation to attend school is met by all pupils; the proportion of Sinti children attending special needs schools has reduced greatly.⁹⁵ Ms Mechthild Brand retired in the past school year, but the project will be continued with church funding. As far as the federal state’s involvement goes, according to Ms Mechthild Brand on 03.10.04, the measure “was cut to such a degree that it became more or less ineffective”.

A further concept is the “*needs-orientated, integrative schooling of Roma*” which is also referred to as the “*Hagen Model*”: on the initiative of Roma parents,⁹⁶ a class was established in Hagen with approximately 20 Roma children aged between 10 and 15. This initiative is concerned with a specific school concept for Roma integration which has the reality of Roma life as its starting point and takes the “subjective side” of the children as the basis for learning at school: amongst others, cultural techniques are imparted for attending regular schools or for achieving a school-leaving qualification; in addition, attempts are made to “include parents in the broadest way possible into school life”. Simultaneously, depending on their level of achievement, children can also attend other classes at school or later other schools. Since the children have “grown out” of the project, it is no longer in existence in Hagen. However, many Roma children continue to be provided with schooling according to this model throughout Germany.⁹⁷

3.4 Teaching materials

Information about the history and culture of the Sinti and Roma has been incorporated into the teaching materials used in several federal states⁹⁸, and that on the basis of the expressed needs and wishes of representatives of those affected.⁹⁹ The information is intended, on the one hand, to increase the majority society’s knowledge and tolerance of Sinti and Roma and, on the other hand, to offer

⁹² cf. <http://www.ph-freiburg.de>

⁹³ cf. Thomas 2000: 144

⁹⁴ cf. Association of Sinti and Roma Hesse (*Verband Sinti und Roma Hesse, LV Hessen*) 2003

⁹⁵ cf. Brand 2002: 10

⁹⁶ Above all, from Poland.

⁹⁷ cf. Thomas 2000: 151

⁹⁸ Six of the sixteen federal states (Hesse, Berlin, Rhineland-Palatinate, Hamburg, North-Rhine-Westphalia und Baden-Württemberg) have legal regulations for pre-school, primary and secondary modern schools as well as for secondary schools and adult education which support the implementation of Article 8 of the Charter. Within this framework, teaching material in those states has been revised (cf. OSI 2002: 146).

⁹⁹ cf. OSI 2002: 146

Sinti and Roma children better chances of identifying with the materials used for teaching. As examples, mention is made in the following of the measures employed in Hesse, North-Rhine Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg:

The Hesse State Institute of Pedagogy (*Hessisches Landesinstitut für Pädagogik*)¹⁰⁰ has developed appropriate teaching material at the request of the Ministry of Education in Hesse and in cooperation with the Fritz Bauer Institute: “In Hesse, the history, present-day and culture of the Sinti and Roma is to be made a subject of teaching with the aim of removing prejudices. The project sees itself as a part of a pedagogy of raising children to be tolerant, to respect human rights and to be against racism”¹⁰¹.

In Hamm and Cologne (North-Rhine Westphalia), too, teaching materials have been written and regional further education courses organised with the involvement of local Sinti and Roma, informing the participants about the cultural background and history of these two groups.

In Baden-Württemberg, the Ministry of Education, the State Association of German Sinti and Roma Baden-Württemberg (*Landesverband Deutscher Sinti und Roma Baden-Württemberg*) and the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma (*Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma*) in Heidelberg are working together to provide new impetus for the inclusion of the history and culture of the German Sinti and Roma in teaching. A working group set up especially for this purpose by the Ministry of Education at the State Institute for Education and Teaching (*Landesinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht*) has produced a brochure which is to be used in dealing with the history of the Roma and Sinti in the classroom; in addition, the state government is making efforts with the publishing houses producing schoolbooks to encourage greater consideration for Sinti and Roma in schoolbooks and other teaching media.¹⁰²

It is a matter of particular importance for the State of Hamburg to incorporate topics into the classroom which represent important educational material from the perspective of Roma and Sinti. The Hamburg Institute for Further Education for Teachers in cooperation with the University of Manchester has published twelve **reading books in three dialects of Romanes**, “the content of which means something to Sinti and Roma”¹⁰³.

3.5 Teaching in Romanes

Teaching in the Romanes language is not a provision of any school law in the federal states. This corresponds to the (official) demands of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and the Sinti Alliance Germany (see above). However, some Roma organisations and, above all, children and parents often take a different view and argue for incorporating Romanes into the classroom.¹⁰⁴ In some federal states, the administrations thus support and foster projects on the inclusion of Romanes.

The only state which offers teaching or the inclusion of Romanes in the classroom is Hamburg where the Office for School, Youth and Vocational Training (*Behörde für Schule, Jugend und Berufsbildung*) supports the teaching of Romanes at schools in districts where a sufficient number of Roma and Sinti live¹⁰⁵. The teaching in Romanes is integrated into the curricula of these schools, Roma teachers work in a team with another teacher. Parts of the teaching material is bilingual and comprises information on the history and literature of the Roma. The Hamburg administration also supports vocational

¹⁰⁰ In 1998, the Ministry of Education in Hesse established the “Pedagogical Office for National Minorities: Sinti and Roma” (*Pädagogisches Büro Nationale Minderheiten: Sinti und Roma*) and affiliated it to the Hesse State Institute of Pedagogy (*Hessisches Landesinstitut für Pädagogik*).

¹⁰¹ <http://www.help.bildung.hessen.de>

¹⁰² cf. BMI 1999: 86ff., Thomas 2000: 146ff.

¹⁰³ Interview with Dr Mareile Krause on 18.10.2004, cf. Dr Mareile Krause 2004, Thomas 2000: 144

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Dr Mareile Krause on 18.10.2004

¹⁰⁵ Primary school (*Grundschule*) Läiszstraße, Primary, Secondary Modern and School Leading to Intermediate Qualifications (*Grund-, Haupt- und Realschulen*) Billbrookdeich, Friedrichstraße und Ochsenwerder.

training as well as further education and training in Romanes at adult education classes (*Volkshochschule*). The Hamburg authorities have in some cases reduced the qualifications needed in order to employ Roma as teachers (see above).

The achievements of Roma and Sinti children have improved in Hamburg; transfers to support schools (*Förderschulen*), which were common in earlier years, have become less frequent.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ cf. Dr Mareile Krause 2004, OSI 2002: 146

Part B

In addition to the state-run support measures for Sinti and Roma in the education system there are also some support schemes run by private actors in Germany.

Three examples are presented in the following pages: the “Schaworalle” day-care centre run by the Roma Support Organisation (*Förderverein Roma e.V.*) in Frankfurt/ Main, the EQUAL Project “Roma and Sinti into employment and a secure livelihood by means of self-organisation” supported by the Berlin Regional Centre for Foreigners, Intercultural Education, Youth and School (*RAA Berlin*) and the concept of “needs-orientated individual advice” of the Advice Centre for Education/ Antiziganism at the Association for German Sinti and Roma – Baden-Württemberg Regional Association (*Beratungsstelle Bildung/ Antiziganismus im Verband Deutscher Sinti und Roma - Landesverband Baden-Württemberg e. V.*).

These three projects use rather innovative and much promising methods to foster integration, but they differ concerning their specific target groups and the applied approach. Therefore, the selected examples of “good practice” cover a broad range of existing programmes .

1. The day-care centre “Schaworalle”¹⁰⁷

The “Schaworalle” (“Hello children”) day-care centre was set up in September 1999 on the initiative of the Roma Support Organisation in Frankfurt/ Main. It is funded by Frankfurt’s education authority and youth welfare department and by the regional youth welfare office.

The aim of the project is to provide Romanian Roma children and young people who are of school age but currently do not attend a regular school¹⁰⁸ with a “substitute education” and open up better future prospects to them. There is close co-operation here too with the juvenile court, the juvenile court assistance and the probation service of the City of Frankfurt; for Roma children and young people who have committed a criminal offence, attendance or community service at the day-care centre is imposed as a condition.

The day-care centre is open until late afternoon on weekdays. Approximately 90 children and young people aged between three and 16 are permanently enrolled there at present; most of them come three to four times per week.

The daily routine of this establishment is as follows: in the mornings the children are divided into four groups – one nursery school group and three school groups. Then there is lunch, prepared by Roma mothers, and after that help is offered with homework and there is a varied leisure programme consisting of sports, games, musical workshops etc. For those working on the project it is important not only to facilitate access to education for the children and young people, “but also to give them the opportunity ‘to be a child’ beyond all material worries, i.e. also to play and romp about like any other children”.

The afternoon programme is mixed-age; eleven children and young people who attend regular school in the mornings also currently come to the “after-school care centre”.

At present about 30 pre-school children attend the nursery school. A team of nine teaching staff, including three Roma, is responsible for these children. There they can learn “what the bigger children missed in their early childhood: carefree play, the colours, the seasons, painting, cutting, doing jigsaw puzzles”. Learning and following group rules, experience of guided play, promotion of language learning, excursions etc. are also part of the programme.

Occasionally nursery school children already take part in the school lessons in “Schaworalle” and attend a teaching unit in the primary school group on some mornings.

¹⁰⁷ Unless noted otherwise, the information and quotations come from the annual report of Schaworalle (2004); current figures were provided by the head of the day-care centre, Ms Sabine Ernst, during an interview conducted by telephone on 19.10.2004.

¹⁰⁸ See “Background of the school situation of Roma and Sinti children” in data and information.

The “little school” in “Schaworalle” consists of junior level (age seven to eleven), middle school level (age 11-14) and secondary school level (age 14-16). A total of 51 children and young people are enrolled at the school here for the school year of 2004/ 2005. They are taught to read and write, learn German and gain the basic skills they need if they are to start regular school: The “little school” sees itself as an “intermediate stage or alternative to regular school”.

On the part of the state education authority, two teachers are delegated to the “little school”, one secondary school teacher and one primary school teacher; this makes it a formally and legally recognised place of teaching. However, not only the teachers are involved in organising lessons, but also Roma colleagues and social workers. The latter work in the context of individual support, give lessons in the children’s native language, and/or offer special programmes such as “learning on the computer”, “nature and technology”, music, art etc.

At the day-care centre Roma and non-Roma work together with equal rights. The presence of staff from the children’s own cultural group creates a sense of trust and at the same time facilitates access to the realities of life of the children and young people. In addition it helps to create an “adequate low-threshold learning atmosphere” to which “Schaworalle” attaches great importance. A great deal of attention is also paid to “an educational thinking that is orientated towards the community of the Roma”: in the day-care centre the cultural manners and rules of the Roma apply. Furthermore “intensive relations work” is of great importance to the people working on the project. According to the Schaworalle project concept, educational work can only succeed if the children’s parents have confidence in the measures of the scheme. A mother-and-child group¹⁰⁹ and a family care and advisory service¹¹⁰ for support with problems in the family or at school are intended to introduce parents to the establishment and facilitate their identification with “Schaworalle”.

The described support measures are already showing an effect: in the school year 2003/ 2004 five children moved from the “little school” to a regular school – two of them to primary school and three to secondary school. However, changes of address, homelessness and in particular the uncertain residence of the participating Sinti and Roma¹¹¹ make it difficult for them to attend school regularly. The head of the day-care centre, Sabine Ernst, sees the greatest problem for her work in the lacking right of residence of many Roma refugee families: “You get so far with a child that he or she can go to a regular school – and three months later they are deported”¹¹².

Nevertheless, according to Ms Sabine Ernst a lot has changed in Frankfurt due to “Schaworalle”: “We offer the children a sensible activity, the city has become more sensitive and also the Roma families have built up trust and have learnt something new”¹¹³.

The success of the “Schaworalle” project model is well-known among experts throughout Germany; it is increasingly being used as a model by other support projects for Sinti and Roma. Thus, for instance, Germany’s second Social and Cultural Centre for Roma children and young people, “Amaro Kher” (“Our house”), was opened in Cologne in July 2004. The concept of the Cologne day-care centre is similar to that of “Schaworalle”; however, the centre in Cologne is not only open to Romanian Roma, but to all Roma, both foreign and German. The Cologne Organisation Roma e.V. is responsible for the project; it is being funded initially for three years by Cologne City Council and the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ The offer is made in co-operation with the juvenile court assistance and the probation service and is aimed specifically at young mothers who have to complete a period of community service.

¹¹⁰ At the association offices there is an advisory and guidance service concerning securing a livelihood and residence.

¹¹¹ See “Legal status of Roma and Sinti in Germany” in data and information.

¹¹² StadtRevue 2004

¹¹³ ebd.

¹¹⁴ cf. StadtRevue 2004

2. The EQUAL project “Roma and Sinti into employment and a secure livelihood by means of self-organisation”¹¹⁵

In the EQUAL development partnership of “Roma and Sinti into employment and a secure livelihood by means of self-organisation”, twelve project partners have been co-operating since the beginning of 2003 – these partners include the Roma Support Organisation in Frankfurt/ Main (*Förderverein Roma Frankfurt/ Main*), the Freudenberg Foundation (*Freudenbergstiftung*) and the Society for Employment and Further Training (*AW-AG Gesellschaft für Arbeit und Weiterbildung*) in Aachen. The responsible body for this project is the Berlin Regional Centre for Foreigners, Intercultural Education, Youth and School (*RAA Berlin*)¹¹⁶; it is co-funded by resources from the European Social Fund.

With active involvement of the Roma and Sinti, language courses, courses preparing for the lower secondary school leaving certificate (*Hauptschulabschluss*) and further training programmes are conducted. The main objective of this initiative is to integrate disadvantaged groups into the labour market and to improve “life-long learning”.

In the context of this project, seminars are offered to German and foreign Roma and Sinti in Berlin. They are aimed at gaining competence and qualifications in “intercultural school mediation”, “intercultural media design” and “literacy skills, German as a second language, lower secondary school leaving certificate”.

Twelve places were set up for the training course for intercultural school mediators¹¹⁷. In this course the participants gain basic knowledge about structures and legal basic conditions of the school system, about school education and vocational training offers and about language acquisition and literacy teaching; in addition they learn how to use a PC, presentation and mediation techniques, as well as methods for dealing with conflicts.

Seven Roma are being trained as intercultural media designers. This qualification enables them among other things to teach young people in schools and leisure establishments how to use the new media creatively.

A total of 30 Roma are taking part in the programme “literacy skills, German as a second language and preparation for the lower secondary school leaving certificate”.¹¹⁸ This module is offered as a complement to the two vocational training schemes. The reason for this is that even the Sinti and Roma who have vocational skills or qualifications are often denied access to training offers and employment owing to their poor knowledge of the language. Participants who cannot read or write are first taught to do so in their native language as basic training; in a second course the “pupils” learn German (as a second language). Furthermore, young Roma may attend a special course to prepare them for an adult education course leading to the lower secondary school leaving certificate.

In addition to professional teaching staff, Roma mediators are also involved in training the participants. They work in a supportive role and help to care for the participants personally and to develop “a continuous and workable motivation to participate in training”¹¹⁹.

The training schemes will run until May 2005; then an evaluation will be conducted which will serve as a basis to decide whether the scheme is to be continued. The key question of the evaluation is to what extent these concepts really increase the chances of integration in the labour market for Sinti and Roma.

Although the EQUAL project does not aim primarily at a better integration of Sinti and Roma children into education, individual elements of the scheme are designed to improve the poor educational

¹¹⁵ Unless noted otherwise, the information and quotations come from: RAA Berlin (2004), supplemented by information gathered during an interview with the person responsible for the scheme, Mr Matthias Winter, which was conducted by telephone on 19.10.04.

¹¹⁶ RAA Berlin sees itself as a support agency for school development and intercultural and democracy-promoting projects.

¹¹⁷ See Part A regarding the tasks of school mediators.

¹¹⁸ Some of them are attending this course as a complement to their training as intercultural school mediators or media designers.

¹¹⁹ RAA Berlin 2004

situation of the Sinti and Roma; discrimination on the labour market is being combated by promoting Sinti and Roma in the field of education and training; in particular the programme “literacy skills, German as a second language and preparation for the lower secondary school leaving certificate” can be related to this objective. In addition to this, the training of Sinti and Roma as intercultural school mediators or media designers is indirectly of benefit to the Sinti and Roma children.

3. Needs-orientated individual advice¹²⁰

On the basis of the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Association of German Sinti and Roma – Baden-Württemberg Regional Association set up the Advice Centre for Education/ Antiziganism in 1998. This establishment is being supported by the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Education for a period of five years, from 2000 until 2005. One of the focuses of the centre’s work is the promotion of equal opportunities in education and employment for Sinti and Roma.

The Advice Centre for Education/ Antiziganism has developed among other things the concept of needs-orientated individual advice. This individual approach was chosen consciously as a contrast to generalised schemes: “This approach of individual support does not only avoid generalising assumptions with regard to the culture and history of the Sinti and Roma. On the contrary, in the concrete point of view of the individual it contributes towards a perception that is more in line with reality and to empathic and intersubjective action.”

Parents and school pupils can receive advice on subjects such as nursery school, starting primary school, transition to secondary schools and choice of occupation or training. Young adult Sinti and Roma are also offered information and advice on the possibilities of further vocational training and retraining schemes.

Sinti and Roma receive individual help according to their school-related and training-relevant circumstances and needs; with orientation towards the individual biographies, a “subject-orientated education and training plan” is drawn up together with them “which integrates as far as possible all those involved in the education process”. The primary aim of this project is to provide the Sinti and Roma who are seeking advice with support in preparing for a school leaving certificate or a vocational training course. As according to the concept of the project this can only succeed if both those seeking help and the school staff “show willingness to reflect upon themselves and to change their point of view”, those working at the centre orientate themselves to the premise of a “culture of mutual dialogue”.

For the individual advice service, the Advice Centre for Education/ Antiziganism co-operates with local establishments in Ravensburg, Offenburg, Freiburg, Heidelberg, Mannheim and Karlsruhe. In each of these towns 15 to 35 children and young people take up the offer of individual advice regarding education and training. The individual advice and identification of problems on the spot is favoured in the project as such measures and solutions make it easier to take into account the concrete life-world situation of those concerned: solutions to problems should thus be found within the education process. Delegation and shifts into other measures or schemes can often be avoided in this way.

In addition to the needs-orientated individual advice service, the Advice Centre for Education/ Antiziganism also provides an advisory service for teachers who are seeking help, develops teaching materials, assists mediators, conducts further training courses for mediators and holds seminars about

¹²⁰ Unless noted otherwise, the information and quotations come from: Advice Centre for Education/ Antiziganism (2004); supplemented by information gathered during an interview with the head of the advice centre, Mr Egon Schweiger, conducted by telephone on 19.10.04.

minority-specific topics for teachers and civil servants (e.g. for civil servants in youth welfare departments).¹²¹

These measures are additionally intended to contribute towards breaking down the reserve between representatives of the majority and those of the minority, thus helping to overcome ethnic stereotyping and patterns of interpretation.

In spite of individual successes, such as the reintegration of a pupil into secondary school or averting the transfer of a pupil to a special needs school (*Förderschule* or *Sonderschule*), it has so far not been possible to achieve any fundamental changes in the school situation of the Sinti and Roma in Baden-Württemberg.¹²² According to the head of the advice centre, Mr Egon Schweiger, problems are caused in particular by the lack of support and funding for this establishment from the local authorities.¹²³ In his view there will therefore be cuts in funds for the individual advice and guidance offers, and there will be no possibilities for working preventively, even though in view of the present situation in Baden-Württemberg it would be more necessary to expand resources. The advice centre already has to rely strongly on voluntary involvement today so that projects that are already underway do not have to be abandoned altogether.¹²⁴ However, it is so far unclear whether the financial support from the state will continue beyond 2005.

¹²¹ Teachers are provided with information on topics such as “History and the present day of the minority” and “Antiziganism”.

¹²² In Heidelberg for instance the ratio of qualifications held by members of the minority in relation to those held by the majority continues to be extremely low (cf. Beratungsstelle Bildung/ Antiziganismus 2004).

¹²³ Although the jobs budget is too low by far, jobs have been cut for example in Offenburg and Karlsruhe.

¹²⁴ Examples of voluntary involvement: a young Roma woman works on a voluntary basis as a mediator in Offenburg and conducts individual advice sessions there as well as doing other tasks; Sinti set up the association *Bildung für Sinti & Roma, Ravensburg e.V.* (Education for Sinti & Roma, Ravensburg), which provides for pupils with low financial means “offers to promote motivation” as well as individual assistance.

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