

The Roma Early Childhood Inclusion+ Studies and Reports

Summary and Guidelines

Summary

The *Roma Early Childhood Inclusion+ Reports* (RECI+) are a joint initiative between the Early Childhood Program of Open Society Foundations (OSF), the Roma Education Fund (REF) and UNICEF. These reports are supported and managed collaboratively and their purpose is to gather data and information about the inclusion of young Roma children and families in the early childhood provision and services.

RECI+ is a second phase of the RECI project. The Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Studies (RECI Phase 1) commenced in 2009. The first phase of the RECI project produced a series of five national Roma early childhood policy analyses (Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia) and an overview report.¹ These reports have been used to raise awareness about the lack of early childhood provision in Roma communities as well as to advocate for improvements with national and regional policymakers and stakeholders.

The reports collect current data on the situation of young Roma children and their families and highlight evidence-based strategies that support families and children, including the need to provide strong government leadership and funding for quality, socially inclusive and inter-cultural service provision.

The *RECI+ Reports* place a strong emphasis on progress achieved and on innovative programs to be generalised in order to benefit all communities in the research country. Each report is examined for its conformity to the *Report Format* (see Annexe 1) and validated through stakeholder interviews and a national consultation meeting of all the stakeholders, including national government and local municipal representatives, policy-makers, civil society organizations, early childhood development professionals, researchers and international experts. The final, concluding chapter of each national report is written following these national consultation meetings. Illustrative *vignettes* documenting the experiences of young Roma children and their families, as well as innovative practices and programs, may also be embedded throughout the final reports.

The Partnering Agencies

The *Open Society Foundations* work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose Governments are accountable to their citizens. To achieve this mission, the Foundations seek to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. The Early Childhood Program (ECP) promotes healthy development and wellbeing of young children through initiatives that emphasize parent and community engagement, professional development and government accountability. The ECP's rights-based approach and social justice framework give particular attention to Roma children, migrant and refugee children and children with developmental delays and disabilities.

The *Roma Education Fund (REF)* was created in 2005 in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Its mission and ultimate goal is to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. In order to achieve this goal, the organization supports policies and programs that ensure quality education for Roma, including the desegregation of education

¹ “Roma Early Childhood Inclusion – Overview Report”, RECI, a joint initiative of the Open Society Foundations, the Roma Education Fund, and UNICEF, published by UNICEF, 2010
<http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/roma-early-childhood-inclusion-overview-report>

systems. Through its activities, the REF promotes Roma inclusion in all aspects of the national education systems of countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion, as well as other countries that wish to join in this effort. The objectives of REF include ensuring access to compulsory education, improving the quality of education, implementing integration and desegregation of Roma students, expanding access to preschool education, and increasing access to secondary, post-secondary and adult education through, for example, scholarships, adult literacy courses and career advice for secondary school students.

UNICEF has been working in Europe and Central Asia since the 1990s with the objective of protecting and promoting the rights of children, especially those from the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. UNICEF is engaged in developing a systematic and coherent engagement with Roma issues through the key entry points of early childhood development and basic education. UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behavior towards children. UNICEF insists that the survival, protection and development of children are universal development imperatives that are integral to human progress. UNICEF mobilizes political will and material resources to help countries, particularly developing countries, ensure a "first call for children" and to build their capacity to form appropriate policies and deliver services for children and their families. UNICEF is committed to ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged children – victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, all forms of violence and exploitation and those with disabilities.

Call for Proposals for Roma Early Childhood Inclusion (RECI+) report Bulgaria

The three partnering agencies – Open Society Foundations, UNICEF and the Roma Education Fund invite concept notes for prospective RECI+ study in Bulgaria.

In terms of research elements that are part of the RECI+ proposals, it is expected that accredited research institutions (such as university research units, independent research consultancies, think tanks and other) will be included in the partnership, with a clear research plan that will:

- Incorporate a variety of research approaches to gather qualitative and quantitative data.
- Propose a sampling approach and methodology that ensures participation of the most vulnerable Roma families and children, including children with disabilities and developmental difficulties. Rural/urban, segregated communities.
- Contain clear ethical guidelines for research amongst Roma communities.
- Set out a timetable for research to be achievable within 70 days' total research time.
- Analyse and interpret the data in the context of the report, to provide a basis for the first four chapters of the RECI+ final country report. These chapters will include background to the Early Childhood Development (ECD) provisions and services generally in the country, legislative and strategic framework for the delivery of such services; background to the Roma community in the country (including socio-economic, demographic and cultural-linguistic data, patterns of mobility and migration); identification of the obstacles and impediments to accessing quality, socially inclusive ECD provision and services in the country (including the existence of segregated provision, prejudicial attitudes towards Roma, geographical distance and marginalisation).
- Organise a national consultation on the research findings with participation of relevant government departments and civil society organisations.
- Suggest an outline of the final (fifth) chapter of the RECI+ country report, for conclusions and recommendations to incorporate the outcomes from the national consultation in the final draft report.

Additionally, it is expected that research teams will be made up of Roma and non-Roma researchers. The inclusion of Roma researchers is particularly important for the fieldwork. Training in anti-bias, social justice and cultural competences for the research teams will be

expected to be part of the preparation for fieldwork research timetable (not to exceed 70 days, including the fieldwork).

The research organization would be expected to coordinate the preparation and training prior to the research fieldwork, the management of the research timetable, the coordination of the drafting of materials and the national consultation. The final draft of the RECI+ country report will be submitted to the partnering agencies for final editing and production.

The proposals will be reviewed by the partnering organisations and comments returned to the research organization for further clarification and development, before the proposals are submitted. Contracts will be issued following final agreement on the research scope, methodology and research implementation for preparing the country report.

How to apply

Interested parties are invited to send a cover letter expressing their interest with the following:

- A capability statement in relation to the university's/institution's self-assessed suitability for the work and its previous work of a similar nature together with its experience in working collaboratively within partnership arrangements;
- An outline plan with timeframe of how the study will be carried out;
- An outline proposal of the methodology, techniques and tools to be employed;
- A list of the individuals to be deployed and their latest Curriculum Vitae (CVs);
- Proposed budget

Please send proposals by **13th August 2018** to Katherine.Street@opensocietyfoundations.org.

Guidelines

Justification context

The need for the RECI Project stemmed from the convergence of different rationales. Firstly, the situation of Roma populations and their children in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries which has been increasingly researched and documented by many international organisations, show that Roma communities face persistent barriers to employment, education, housing and health services and are much more likely than those from non-Roma communities to be below their country's at-risk-of-poverty threshold.² Secondly, the growing commitment of Roma non-government organizations and governments to end this situation; and thirdly, the understanding that the early childhood period is the foundation stage not only of individual health, welfare and education, but also of social equality and cohesion. The development of early childhood services in the CEE countries provided a unique opportunity to exercise research based advocacy within a process of practicing democratic consultation and by securing collaboration among state institutions, majority populations and Roma communities.

The focus of the research contract - RECI+ (Phase 2)

In 2011 the Partnership agreed to launch Phase 2 of the Project, hereinafter referred to as RECI+. This project envisaged RECI+ studies in a further five countries and the next of these studies will be focused on Bulgaria. Building on the experience of the RECI Project Phase 1³, RECI+ has endeavoured to advance the process by incorporating Roma research workers/assistants within the research teams and for all such teams to receive training in anti-bias and social justice prior to the commencement of the fieldwork research. The RECI+ concept also places a greater emphasis on post-publication advocacy for targeted advancements in early childhood policy, provision and practice.

² EU-MIDIS, I. I. (2016). Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey Roma– Selected findings.

³ See <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/roma-early-childhood-inclusion-overview-report>

Summary of the objectives of the contracted RECI+ Studies

- To produce research reports of high quantitative and qualitative data quality and reliability which can be used with confidence for robust advocacy both nationally and internationally;
- To assess the normative and regulatory environment, at central and local levels, as well as the provision of relevant state and non-governmental services and supports for comprehensive Early Childhood Development (ECD);
- To identify and describe both the explicit and the implicit barriers which Roma communities face in accessing and participating in high quality ECD services;
- To engage Roma researchers and or assistants within the fieldwork research process and the development of appropriate research methodologies;
- To identify and document particularly successful models of policy, provision and practice that enable and support young Roma children's happy and successful participation in mainstream ECD services;
- To contextualize current ECD policies, provisions and practices that impact upon Roma children in Bulgaria within the framework of broader European and international trends and new research findings;
- To provide recommendations for policy development and for further research areas of priority importance;
- Through the process of conducting the studies in a participatory manner, to support government and local authority efforts to improve the early childhood services for Roma children, and develop the capacity of families, early childhood practitioners and staff working directly with young children.

Audience of the RECI+ reports

The primary audiences of the RECI+ reports will be the national and local governments of the countries involved; law and policy makers; ECD service providers and practitioners; local educational authorities; civil society organizations; Romani study faculties/centers/departments; media; inter-governmental institutions and international organisations. The reports are intended to advocate for social cohesion as well as advance the knowledge and interest in facilitating research based advocacy, to ensure equality and respect for the rights of young Roma children by informing public policy, provision and professional practice.

Timeframe for RECI+ Bulgaria

Key dates	Stage of process
10 th July	Call for proposals in the public domain
13 th August 2018	Deadline for applications
28 th September 2018	Selection of candidates, negotiation and signing of contract
21 st December 2018	Trainings on anti-bias and social justice completed. Fieldwork completed.
29 th March 2019	Delivery of the inception report for a review by the partnering agencies.
20 th May 2019	Delivery of full report, ready for review by the partnering agencies and national stakeholders (ministries and relevant institutions).
28 th June 2019	Delivery of final report draft with incorporated feedback from all parties involved.
July - August 2019	Design, editing and publishing + policy brief developed
September 2019	Launch of RECI+ Bulgaria

*Please note that the timeframe is only tentative and flexible adjustments may need to be allowed.

Deadline

Interested parties shall submit their application with the required information listed above by **13th August 2018**.

Partnership Responsibilities (OSF, UNICEF and REF)

- Contracting and funding a university or other research institution of higher educational and social policy research to conduct the research study and deliver a high quality research report;
- Briefing the successful research university/institution and their lead researcher(s);
- To make sure that the research institution identifies, recruits and supports Roma research workers/assistants as well as delivers to the research team training in anti-bias and social justice. OSF will arrange for a trainer to work in cooperation with the research institution.
- Providing international consultant expertise to the process from start to finish;
- Approving, together or in sequence, the proposed study outline for the target country produced by the successful contracted applicant;
- To ensure that the established local coordinating coalition of partners contacts the relevant government departments to inform them about the research prior to its commencement and the report's findings upon completion, with the purpose of aligning this activity with central and local government initiatives in the field of ECD policy, provision and practice;
- Reviewing the **draft** report (see below *Format* of reports);
- In coordination with the partner organizations to organize, attend and approve the format and organisation of the national consultation of all stakeholders on the first 4 chapters of the draft report's findings;
- Following the national consultation, to collaborate with the contracted university/institution's research team on the drafting of 'Chapter 5' – Conclusions and Recommendations;
- Reviewing the **final** report and sharing it with stakeholder peer reviewers including the local coordinating coalition of partners;
- To ensure the delivery on time of the final report in English and Bulgarian from the contracted university/institution;
- To prepare the post-publication Advocacy Strategy and ensure its effective and efficient implementation;
- Approving the plan and attending the in-country launch event and other international dissemination/advocacy occasions, and participation in press/TV conferences as required;
- Ensuring the production by the contracted university/institution of the complementary output of a **policy paper** on the inclusion of Roma children and their families in the country of research based on the research data stemming from the final country report;

N.B. The Partnering organisations (OSF, UNICEF and REF) retain the right to invite additional partners to the RECI+ process. This may be necessary in some countries where the level of established local Partnership activities has minimal capacity to take on the extra work and responsibilities involved in the RECI+ Studies.

Qualifications and Responsibilities of the contracted university/institute/research organization

Qualifications

- University/institution headquarters based in Europe;
- Strongly established faculty/department of education, social policy, sociology and anthropology or other relevant research area with a sound record of relevant research and publications (please provide references);
- Focused and academic expertise in relation to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), and or Early Childhood Development (ECD);

- Research experience related to the education of minorities, disadvantaged and marginalised communities;
- Previous research related to Roma communities, especially in the field of education.

Responsibilities

- To participate with the Partnership organisations in the briefings provided;
- To conduct a desk study of all relevant material and prepare a literature review.
- To prepare and submit a study outline for the target country (including sampling, methodology, tools for data collection, ethical guidelines, etc.);
- To prepare the research fieldwork questionnaires and other documentation (e.g. discussion/question points for focus group meetings with key stakeholders including Roma communities);
- In collaboration with the local coordinating coalition of partners, and the Roma research workers/assistants, to participate in, and contribute to, the trainings in anti-bias and social justice;
- To arrange for a photographer, to accompany the research team on one or two days of their research fieldwork;
- To provide illustrative *vignettes* documenting the experiences of young Roma children and their families, as well as innovative practices and programs, to be embedded throughout the final report.
- To ensure the full cooperation at all times with the Partnership's international consultant(s);
- To ensure the delivery of the draft report (first 4 chapters - see below for the format of reports) in compliance with the approved timetable as set out in the study outlines to be prepared;
- In collaboration with the local coordinating coalition of partners, to amend the draft report in response to the solicited comments and observations offered by the Partnership, its international consultant(s) and other stakeholders;
- In collaboration with the local coordinating coalition of partners, to organise a national consultation with all stakeholders (government, civil society organizations, community members) on the first 4 chapters of the draft report's findings;
- On the basis of the feedback from the national consultation and in collaboration with the Partnership's international consultant(s), to draft chapter 5 of the RECI report – Conclusions and Recommendations;
- To ensure the delivery on time of the final report in English;
- To ensure the production of the complementary output in the form of a policy paper on the situation of Roma children and their families in the country of research based on the collective research data and including clear recommendations;
- In collaboration with the local coordinating coalition of partners, to efficiently organise a national launch event and to lead in the presentation of the research findings and participate as requested in any press/TV conference;
- To arrange for the translation of the English final report into the official language of the country;
- To arrange for the publication, printing and distribution of the final report in English and Bulgarian languages.
- To administer the award funds transparently, efficiently and effectively in accordance with the terms and conditions of the said contract.

Responsibilities of the partner organizations

The coordinating coalition of partners will be responsible (in consultation with the contracted university/institution) for:

- Ensuring involvement and participation of Roma NGOS in the coordinating coalition;
- Helping to identify researchers/assistants from the relevant Roma communities;
- Coordinating pre-research training in social justice/anti-bias and cultural competences;

- Providing support for the organisation of the National Consultation;
- Reviewing the country profiles, the demographic, socio-cultural, linguistic and historical data regarding Roma communities, including Roma participation in ECD services and identifying best sources of current statistics;
- Arranging all necessary meetings with government officials, ministry officials, county and local municipal officials, civil society stakeholders (including Roma NGOs, teachers' associations, human rights organisations), community representatives and leadership, as well as families with young children;
- All partners, including the contracted university/ institutions shall participate in debriefing; Supporting the research teams in finalising itineraries for travel and local field-work research;
- Aiding the organisation and logistics of the launch of the final report;
- Supporting the publicity and distribution of the published report and its subsequent advocacy strategy.

Annex 1. Format of the RECI+ reports and research methodology

Each report will have five chapters including:

- ***Introduction***
- ***Chapter I – The country context and the situation of Roma communities, past and present***

Chapter I is an overview of the country in question. Based on the most recent data, it will provide information on the cultural, historical, linguistic and socio-economic context (to the extent that these are unfamiliar, i.e. have received more or less attention), in which Roma families and their children live and of the particular difficulties they face. Authors will collect national and international data and information on:

- Current demographic features and specific culture, history and language(s) of the Roma populations;
- Brief history of Roma communities and majority interaction;
- The past and present contributions of the Roma populations to the country, especially in terms of culture, language, technical skills, trade patterns, etc;
- Current social and cultural policy toward ethnic groups and diversity, from national governments;
- The legal framework for the protection of minorities, their cultural and linguistic rights and the implementation of national anti-discrimination laws and policies; past and current litigation processes.
- The current socio-economic and labour market situation, in particular, employment, and poverty faced by Roma children, youth and adults;
- Health and wellbeing indicators such as those relating to child and infant mortality, access to prenatal care and birth rate;
- A description of civil society and NGO activation in support of Roma communities, particularly the 'grass roots' sector.

Please note that Chapter 1 – and likewise Chapters 2 and 3, are essentially descriptive only and will rely upon well-chosen, critical analysis of secondary sources. Every effort should be made to obtain factual information on the themes selected and to describe the context dispassionately. Judgments or opinions (implicit or otherwise) are to be avoided in these chapters. Ample opportunity is provided in Chapter 4 to raise issues and concerns.

- ***Chapter 2 – Overview of health and social services***

Chapter 2 will provide *general* overviews of the health and social systems in the country, including their relevance to and differential use by the Roma populations as compared to the majority populations. More specific information on early childhood care and education programmes for young children 0-7 years and any outreach work to Roma families from these programmes should be reserved for Chapter 3.

The themes treated in Chapter 2 will include:

- *Health services for young children and their families in the country*, including special initiatives to improve the health and well-being of socially and economically disadvantaged families; maternal/child support and the availability and utilisation of routine health checks.
- *Children with disabilities and children in care in the country* - reliable data on the proportion of Roma children in these groups would be useful, including data on institutionalisation, social protection and violence.
- *An overview of general social welfare and housing policy in the country* including a note on the provision for, and the use of these services by Roma families;
- *Local government responsibility for family health, social affairs, and education*, e.g. statutory responsibility, funding, administration, the role of local authorities etc. In general, each theme should provide an overview of services provided for all young children and then

provide further information on specific services (if any) provided to Roma families and their children.

- *Civil society and NGO contribution to health and social policy for the Roma community.*

The *detailed* description of early childhood education and care services should be reserved for Chapter 3.

- ***Chapter 3 - Overview of the early childhood education and care system and the place of Roma children and parents within it***

Chapter 3 will provide a comprehensive overview of the early-childhood education and care system and the place of Roma children and parents within it. Among the topics selected for treatment are:

- *Understandings of ECEC;*
- *General policy for early-childhood education and care in the country;*
- *Provision patterns and levels of access, attendance and attainment;*
- *Quality and assurance mechanisms.* Quality assurance includes not only the structural requirement for quality (e.g. adequate levels of funding per child with additional resources to children with additional learning needs; the initial recruitment and training of teachers to tertiary level; reasonable child: staff ratios; buildings and materials) but also the active addressing of national policy challenges, active local management or an ongoing focus on teacher development in order to improve quality.

For the structural quality elements, authors are asked to provide as much data as possible, e.g. on the qualifications and education of teachers and school inspectors. For the more dynamic elements, such as pedagogical process or the engagement of parents in the early education of their children, authors may wish to provide examples of practice that might be generalised across a country or even a region;

- *An overview of education and school services in the country, including pre-school provision.* This description should be short, focussing on official goals, organisation, access and performance levels (PISA or TIMMS if relevant) and the place of Roma children in education;
- *Major European and international agency initiatives for Roma education in the country since 2005;*
- *Roma professionals and paraprofessionals in education;*
- *Segregation and desegregation of Roma children, with respect to early childhood services;*
- *Opportunities for early learning during the earliest years from birth to three (both formal and community based initiatives) and participation of Roma children;*
- *Availability of family and community based initiatives.*

- ***Chapter 4 – Priority challenges and issues faced by Roma children and families during the early-childhood years***

This chapter is critical and should be based on data and evidence presented in the previous chapters, supported by the team's fieldwork research findings. We would suggest that authors do not attempt to treat more than 8 issues in total, giving no more than two pages to each issue. Authors will describe these issues objectively, without any attempt to propose solutions – that is the purpose of Chapter 5. As an example, six challenges (cultural and attitudinal challenges; economic and social challenges faced by Roma parents with young children; challenges to the health and well-being of young children, 0-3 years; the early education challenge; the data collection challenge; other issues affecting inclusion, child-rearing and education outcomes), are all suggested as headings for Chapter 4, however authors are encouraged to identify what they consider (based on evidence from their fieldwork research) to be the most relevant issues.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 5 is devoted to conclusions suggesting feasible policy initiatives likely to improve the living conditions and aspirations of Roma families with young children and to ensure the enhanced life and educational chances of Roma children during the critical early childhood period. Recommendations will stress inclusion and dialogue and co-operation, and be framed in such a way that they can resonate with policy-makers. Intermediary steps that might be taken to reach more long-term goals will be proposed, in particular if they help to facilitate how progress toward objectives might be measured.

Methodological context

A **detailed fieldwork research plan** and the required **interview questionnaires and lists of questions for focus group meetings** will be developed by the contracted university/institution in coordination with the coalition of partners to guide the substantive structure and content of the national Report. The methodology will undergo an ethical assessment in accordance with UNICEF's procedure for ethical review of studies involving human subjects.

The design will stipulate clearly the baseline data to be collected. It will also suggest key areas of focus such as the situation regarding early years and primary education of Roma children and progress of national Roma integration strategies 2014-2020, national plans for the post 2020 agenda or other documents on Roma inclusion.