

Good afternoon. Good afternoon Chairperson. Good afternoon Ms McDougall. It is an honour for us to express our views and to share a piece of our experience in regards to Roma education. Roma Education Fund is an initiative that was set up by the World Bank in close collaboration with the Open Society Institute in the year of 2005. Our main objective is to close the education outcome gap between the Roma and non-Roma. We also aim to influence the institutional changes in educational systems and policy reform for Roma inclusion. We fight for fostering Roma participation in all levels of implementation in the education policies in a region that our Fund is acting. And not the least we are trying to document and disseminate the best practices both on policy reforms and programs that show results in regards to Roma education.

Ladies and gentlemen, we welcome the core principles from the draft recommendations and we think that they somehow have in their attention almost all the circles of implementation of education policies. As you may get the insights from the other presenters the Roma population is one of the most discriminated in Europe. When it was speeches about segregation - Roma were given as an example. When the problems of the high drop-out - Roma again were given as an example. What is the main cause of all this negative outcomes in Roma education. And first of I would like to tell you that from our analysis the so-called open discrimination started to decrease, the hidden discrimination is the challenge that we are facing now. And the systematic discrimination is still very strong and most difficult to combat for us and for other stakeholders.

Of course, many of the governments stated that they have in place the anti-discriminatory measures. But from our analysis shows that at large are insufficient. Therefore we want to highlight that it is important to understand the impact of education policies in discrimination and when I am saying education policies, I am referring to the mainstream education policies or policies that are specific to minorities.

In the first bunch of the policies we find out that the [accessive] decentralisation without narrowing the school inspection have negative impact on the minorities. Therefore we suggest to have mechanisms of implementation of the legislative framework at the local level. Early tracking of the children and psychological testing in our vision is barrier to access education. In our work with the government we suggest to the to abolish the psychological testing. We have the example of Slovakia where 80 per cent of the special school population is the Roma population. In regards to enrolment, our experience shows that the district schools enrollment might have negative impacts of the Roma communities, and again we have the example of Slovakia. Where in the Roma neighbourhood the closest school is the special school. So in this regard, the district school will disadvantage Roma.

In regards to the free choice of school, we welcome this measure but we want to raise the issue that may occur without clear rules of the game in using this right. We recognise the free choice of school as a right. And in our experience we used to have a lottery. What does lottery mean? We believe in the core principle of having free choice of school, but we recommend to the local authorities to have aside a certain percentage of the places in a school to be distributed by a lottery. In this way we believe that the disadvantaged groups, minorities, Roma will have access to better quality school. Per capita financing is also a principle that we believe that might equalise the chances of all the kids. But we have to be careful when the per capita financing is higher for special school or for ghetto schools and this is the case where some states are spending three times more money for schooling in a special access and they produce unemployed people and they produce future socially dependant people.

In regards to so-called targeted policies we want to raise to attention material sensitiveness and the way that the multi-cultural education should be done. We have to ensure that the parent's role is there and we have to educate both the majority and minority parents in order to have success in multicultural education. Of course, we want to have reinforcing of a specific curriculum for minorities but this should not encourage separate education. Positive discrimination or affirmative action should have adequate support for students and they have to be definitely temporary measures not legal measures. It seems that the time is running, I will conclude that for us it is important to remember that good education policies are fostering everything and quality might be more efficient than anti-discrimination legislation with bad education policies. Thank you very much.