

JÚLIA SZALAI

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN EDUCATION  
AND DIVERGING PROSPECTS FOR URBAN YOUTH  
IN AN ENLARGED EUROPE

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#### ABOUT EDUMIGROM

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CENTER FOR POLICY STUDIES  
CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

Nádor utca 9  
H-1051 Budapest, Hungary;

[info@edumigrom.eu](mailto:info@edumigrom.eu),  
[www.edumigrom.eu](http://www.edumigrom.eu)

## Executive summary

The EDUMIGROM research project has aimed to study how ethnic differences in education contribute to the diverging future prospects of minority ethnic youth and their peers in multiethnic urban settings. It made a departure by recognising that, despite great variations in economic development and welfare arrangements, recent developments seem to lead to similar disadvantages for certain groups of *second-generation immigrants* in the western half of the continent and *Roma* in Central Europe. Although formally enjoying social membership with full rights in the respective states, people affiliated with these groups tend to experience new and intensive forms of involuntary separation, marginalisation, social exclusion, and second-class citizenship. By selecting specific communities and schools in nine member states of the European Union (the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom), the project explored in a cross-country comparative perspective how existing educational systems, policies, practices, and experiences in markedly different welfare regimes contribute to these processes of "minoritisation". Considering that schools are key agents in knowledge distribution and socialisation, the project examined how educational practices in compulsory education conclude in reducing, maintaining, or deepening inequalities in young people's opportunities for advancement and their access to the labour market, and, concurrently, how they are forging the social contacts, interethnic conduits, and strategies of identity formation of adolescents from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

The research revealed that ethnic minority students living in multiethnic communities are largely educated amidst segregated conditions. Although segregation is partially a by-product of the given residential conditions, spontaneous processes of "white flight", local educational policies aimed at raising efficiency through inter- and intra-school streaming and tracking, and attempts by minority ethnic parents to protect children from discrimination through separation all intensify the process. At the same time, educational segregation often concludes in a significant downgrade in the quality and the content of teaching. This results in lowered performance and the accumulation of disadvantages in the advancement toward the secondary and higher levels, whereby segregation proves a key driver of inequality regarding educational and vocational opportunities and the reproduction of social deprivation on ethnic grounds.

Furthermore, segregated conditions in education tend to result in early ethnic enclosure and isolation. The research finds that, for the most part, young people from ethnic minority backgrounds have very limited contacts with their peers from the majority. While students and parents often note that segregation in school helps them feel safe and protected, they pay a high price for it: inclusion into the practices, routines, and institutions of mainstream society is often blocked simply by lacking the knowledge about how to proceed. Lowered aspirations and limited paths for mobility are evident implications.

The study revealed worrying deformations in interethnic relations and brought up their troubling impacts on identity formation. Ranging from playful, though depreciating, teasing to bullying and to exclusionary acts on ethnic grounds, being "othered" belongs to the everyday experience of ethnic minority youth in their contacts with peers from the majority. Additionally, unjust treatment and stigmatising school practices contribute to an early cognisance of ethnic discrimination being an inescapable constituent of

daily reality. In their relational and reflective nature, models of identity formation are forged by the involved ambivalences of studentship, the personal conduct and routines developed amidst the state of permanent poverty, and hopes and aspiration for breaking out. Although informed by important variations by diverse historical formations of interethnic cohabitation, the prevailing models of ethnic identity embrace a rather narrow spectrum, from resignation to developing obstructive oppositional responses to the majoritarian norms mediated by education, or to lonesome efforts for upward mobility through assimilation by cutting the ties with one's own community.

Based on the results of the macro-level comparative analyses and the empirical inquiries into schools and communities, detailed policy recommendations for improving social inclusion of ethnic minority youth through education were outlined in a series of reports and policy briefs. These reports and briefs are available at the project's website at: [www.edumigrom.eu](http://www.edumigrom.eu).

## Context, objectives, concepts, and methods

In the course of the past decade, European societies have experienced the growing importance of ethnicity in producing and reproducing the disadvantaged positions and relative deprivation of large groups among those of their members who come from backgrounds other than "white European". Magnified by the lens of culturally framed political conflicts – and underscored by frequent local clashes – people from "immigrant origins" frequently face dramatic marginalisation in the communities where they live and where many of them were also born; vocal groups within Europe's large Muslim community have made repeated public appeals against the intensifying Islamophobia that rules out earlier attempts at peaceful and trustful cohabitation according to multiculturalist principles and politics; likewise, news about the harsh oppression and institutionalised social exclusion of Roma call attention to deep racialised fault lines in the post-socialist social structures in Central and Eastern Europe; cross-country comparative studies on income and living conditions have found that ethnic minority communities – both East and West – suffer impoverishment and exclusion at substantially higher risks than their compatriots from the majority; furthermore, the enduring global economic crisis has turned the impediments of many migrant households into a terminal condition of destitution with little hope for improvement; labour statistics signal rates of unemployment among these same groups that are significantly and constantly above the corresponding indicators for people from the majority; moreover, those from minority backgrounds usually have to face several months or even years on the dole with the threat of ultimate marginalisation; finally, the subsequent PISA surveys turned public attention to the origins of the ills of ethno-social differentiation by indicating in measurable terms the striking disadvantages of ethnic minority adolescents in those core skills of reading, comprehension, and basic mathematics that are essential for entering the world of labour with a hope for regular and safe employment and that are also fundamental for meaningful social and political participation.

These worrying facts confirm a consistent trend that makes ethnic belonging the foundation of deep social divides: those from "immigrant backgrounds" (be they new migrants or the children or grandchildren of migrating ancestors) are for the most part deprived of opportunities for upward social mobility; moreover, the second and third generations often face worse conditions than their parents and grandparents some decades ago. These cumulative and troubling developments call for a thorough reconsideration of the prevailing interpretations that tend to see the divides as a transient concomitant of migration. It waits for fresh inquiries to understand how ethnicity gains meaning, influence, and power in becoming a powerful factor in forging people's social standing and how it contributes to the breaking up of once-universal notions of citizenship.

The EDUMIGROM research project was conceived in this briefly outlined context. Its aim was to reveal in a comparative perspective how ethnic differences in education contribute to the diverging prospects for youths from ethnic minority backgrounds and their majority peers in different European welfare states. With considerations on the diverse traditions in designing their educational systems and welfare regimes and also on representing different patterns of interethnic cohabitation, the project embraced nine member states of the European Union: the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom.

Choosing education as a lens through which ethnic distinctions can be revealed in their making seemed promising. This choice provided an opportunity to look at a sphere of social and institutional relations where all European societies consider equality a fundamental principle: compulsory education is universally meant to provide the basic knowledge, skills, and behavioural routines for introducing young people into successfully participation in the social, economic, cultural, and political domains of everyday life. Hence, ethnic differentiation in basic education highlights those factors and processes that prefigure departures in later participation along the measures of selection by culture and performance that are assumed to compel schools in their competition on the educational market. However, this way, not only unequal opportunities for advancement and later careers can be uncovered at their origins, but a window to the departing understandings of citizenship is also opened. Furthermore, ethnically informed inequalities in education reveal a mostly hidden process of social stratification: by providing differential knowledge and skills along the lines of ethno-cultural belonging, the process of schooling predestines departing positions on the labour market, and through these, preordains the rewards and recognition associated with different adult social positions. This way a study of ethnic differentiation in education helps us to understand how ethnicity becomes a constituent of social-class belonging and, vice versa, how differences in social-class positions appear in the garment of allegedly culturally informed choices and freely shaped "multicultural" arrangements.

In the light of these considerations, educational systems were viewed by the EDUMIGROM project in terms of the part they play in social reproduction, that is, as institutional arrangements embodying differential access to, and distribution of, socially relevant knowledge. Schools, in helping young people define the meanings of identity formation, family and community ties, and career aspirations, were viewed as key organisational locations, facing, relating to, and intervening in the broader social debates and practices on ethnic differences. In using such an encompassing approach, the research critically examined how schools operate in their roles of knowledge distribution and socialisation, and how they contribute to reducing, maintaining, or deepening inequalities in young people's access to further education and training, and also to the institutionalised and informally organised segments of the world of labour. In order to filter out the transient difficulties and impacts of immigration in scrutinising the role of ethnicity in shaping social structures, the study focused on those from ethnic minority backgrounds who, in principle, enjoy full membership and citizens' rights in the societies where they live: second-generation migrants and Roma.

Against this broad context, the research collective set the following objectives:

- To develop an integrated investigation into the factors that forge ethnic differences in education and their consequences for the lives of young people in ethnically diverse communities throughout Europe. To this end, a comprehensive conceptual framework was elaborated to explain the shared attributes and the potentially different causes and outcomes of the processes of "minoritisation" and social exclusion of *second-generation migrant* and *Roma youth*. Up until now, these cases have been analysed separately as distinct ethnic groups not alike in any sense; by reconsidering commonalities that follow from constituting the "other" in their respective societies, a set of key concepts grasping similarities and differences in the situational character of being ethnically

distinguished and responding to the implied challenges was developed to demonstrate commonalities as well as social and historical differences in the *ethnicised practices apparent in education* and reveal their contribution to the *marginalisation and social exclusion of urban ethnic youth*;

- To study in a cross-national perspective how *everyday interactions* in multiethnic urban communities generate *distinctive school practices*. These were understood in terms of their own complexities as well as part of more encompassing political and distributive structures. Local interethnic confrontations and clashes over and within schools were examined in the broader context of variations in interacting ethnic relations, educational policies, and welfare regimes across Europe. The study aimed to understand the processes of status deprivation through ethnicising *structural differences* and the associated hierarchical implications of *cultural diversity*. Through a multiculturalist lens, *recognition* was seen in this context as the means to affect powerful inclusion strategies within and beyond education;
- To examine how the discourses, patterns, and performances of *identity formation among* young people are constituted through school practices. The study particularly aimed to gain ample information on models of *identity formation among inclusive* as opposed to *ethnically segregating regimes* through insights into everyday socialising practices as parts of the schooling process. The research also aimed to reveal how and when ethnic categories become relevant, and these were explored with reference to alternative identifications such as gender, class, religion, family background, and peer subculture. Further, special attention was paid to variations in *reactive identity strategies* and their consequences for lifestyles, motivations, and prospects for ethnic minority youth;
- To study and compare how educational practices and identity formation contribute to *claims on citizenship*. The project intended to uncover how educational practices marking and crossing ethnic lines generate incentives to understand and claim citizenship among youth, and how schools themselves become subject of *citizenship claims* in interethnic contexts. Such claims were considered as the key to understanding changes in agency, empowerment, and social participation of ethnic minority youth at the stage of completing their compulsory education;
- To formulate evidence-based *policy recommendations* toward the inclusion of often marginalised ethnic youth in and through education. In this context, the research collective put particular emphasis on revisiting the principles of diversity and multicultural citizenship in shaping macro-level policies in education, and also on assessing the (non)inclusion effects of local educational practices, and on feeding this knowledge into decision-making over local schooling, and the training and in-service training of teachers, managers, and other personnel in education.

In order to bring these objectives into fruition, the project was built upon three phases that mobilised a complexity of quantitative and qualitative methods.

The first phase was comprised of two series of comparatively designed country studies that were based on secondary analysis of macro-level data and legal and policy documents. The first series provided information on the build-up of domestic educational systems and discussed the major policies affecting the conditions of ethnic minority students and their typical pathways in schooling and beyond. The second set of studies looked at the major socio-demographic and economic indicators characterising the social positions and living conditions of ethnic minority groups in each country; introduced the prevailing policies of immigration and minority rights; and discussed how majority/minority relations are presented in public discourse and how the claims for improving these relations are articulated and by whom. Besides assisting in developing a classification of the causes, manifestations, and functions of ethnic difference in educational arrangements in the context of the varying welfare regimes shaped by different historical and cultural forces, these two sets of studies established the ground for a multi-step selection of sites and samples for the subsequent two phases of empirical investigations.

In the second phase of the project, a survey was run among 14–17-year-old youth who were in the final year of compulsory education and attended the concluding grade in the selected schools of the chosen multiethnic communities. The main function of the survey was to gain quantitatively comparable information about young people's thoughts and experiences concerning the role of ethnicity in schooling and in their everyday lives. The survey was organised in the form of self-reporting anonymous questionnaires that were filled in by all students in the selected school classes. The questionnaire generated data about some of the most salient issues of the research: in addition to information on family background and home conditions, it enquired about school achievements and aspirations for further education and longer-term careers and status; the density and forms of interethnic engagements; notions on the self and the "other"; interpretations of conflicts in the school and on other public and private stages within the community. Given the broad scope of the survey, the 5,086 completed questionnaires provided a base for comparing the daily experiences and often highly departing views of the two large groups of students from ethnic minority and majority backgrounds, while it also revealed great variations in the conditions, aspirations, and prospects among the 25 ethnic minority groups that were represented in the investigated school communities.

The third phase of the research focused on the minority groups that were selected in the countries for in-depth investigation. By applying a combination of methods (personal interviews and focus group discussions with students, parents, and teachers; classroom observations; ethnographic work in and outside the schools; case studies on civil organisations), this qualitative phase intended to bring up the deeper motivations and dynamics of ethnic minority identity formation and the shaping of interethnic relations. It was a primary goal to reveal how ethnically divided localities and schools inform the iterative nature of identity formation and how the imprints of a multiethnic environment affect the perception of the ethnic self and adolescents' views on their own group as opposed to the "other". In order to meet these aims, the interviews and group discussions explored personal experiences on racialisation; ideas, notions, aspirations, and fears in shaping identity strategies; perceptions of parental expectations; imagery of adulthood; and the relationship of ethnic affiliation with alternative identifications (social background,



gender, faith community, peer culture). Furthermore, the some 500 personal interviews with students, parents and teachers brought out how young people from "visibly" differing backgrounds are affected by overt and covert forms of discrimination; how they and their families experience stigmatisation, "minoritising" categories, stereotypes, and discourses; how ethnic minority parents and children respond to the involved social, cultural, and political challenges of the widespread practices of segregation; and how ideas about the immediate future are shaped by and relate to the perceived ethnic departures in opportunities for advancement and longer-term adult careers.

The quantitative and qualitative studies were founded by a carefully designed procedure of sampling. Although the EDUMIGROM project did not aim to provide statistically representative findings, qualitative representation was, however, a primary goal.

In a first step, the ethnic minority groups to be put into the focus of the study were designated. In the participating Central European countries the choice was rather straightforward in the selection of Roma communities as representing the largest minority group in all four of them. However, an informed choice required more complex considerations in western and northern countries, where either the colonial past or large-scale migration processes motivated by economic needs in the 1970s and 1980s made the picture more colourful. In these cases, besides paying attention to the varying demographic weights of the groups, the ultimate decision was born by taking into account differences in social status, together with probable political distinctions made by the domestic majority in relating toward the different groups. Hence, the choices intended to bring up the prevailing cultural and religious diversity and implied a view on the departures in opportunities that people affiliated with the various ethnic minority groups face in the given country. As a result, the four distinctly differing prominent ethnic groups of Pakistanis, Caribbean, Maghrebis, and Black Africans were chosen in the two countries with significant colonial pasts (United Kingdom and France), while it was mainly the large Muslim groups of one-time economic migrants – Turks, Kurds, people from the territories of the former Yugoslavia, Somalis, or Africans – that were chosen for in-depth inquiries in Germany, Denmark, and Sweden.

Informed by the first round of selecting the groups, the second step implied the choice of the communities hosting the research. In each country, two urban communities were selected where the chosen minority groups were known to represent a substantial proportion of the local population. In addition to this statistical indicator, it was mainly the history of the community that mattered. It was aimed to identify established multiethnic communities that could be considered as "typical" in their occupational structure, living and housing conditions, and also in their composition by age and household formations. As a result, working-class communities with a high proportion of large households mostly living on or below the poverty line were selected, though their internal structures showed great variations with a significant presence of lower-middle-class families in some (e.g., in Denmark) or the frequent occurrence of chronic unemployment and extreme poverty in others (e.g., in Romania or Slovakia).

In the third step, the hosting schools providing compulsory education for children in the community were chosen. Given the great variation among the participating countries as to the structure of their school systems, the selection process resulted in a great diversity of schools. In the Central European countries, it was institutions of primary education that became the focus of the investigation, while practices of early tracking and the fundamental decisions that families have to make about advancement

in the early teenage years of their children created the need to choose the first years of secondary schooling in Germany or France, and, respectively, identifying general high schools as representatives of the strong tradition of comprehensive education in Denmark.

The actual fieldwork was comprised by students in classes in the concluding grade of compulsory education. The designated group in the focus of empirical inquiries was urban youth from "visible" minority backgrounds who were born, equally to their majority peers, in the country where they currently live (for the most part, holding citizenship) but who have certain socially interpreted markers of difference. In addition to the rich collection of findings about the experiences of these focal groups, the study provided comparable information on their peers from different ethnic origins and also gave a cross-country perspective on how ethnicised departures are played out in the prevailing majority/minority relations in the communities where these adolescents live.

## **Schools as sites of knowledge distribution: departures in performance and advancement**

### **Ethnic inequalities in students' achievements**

In the course of the past decade, mounting evidence has been accumulated in large-scale surveys about the disadvantages in educational performance and advancement that young people from ethnic minority backgrounds face across Europe. While the facts are generally acknowledged by now, the causes behind them are widely debated. Some argue that the recorded disparities by ethnicity are nothing but new manifestations of age-old divisions by social class; others identify the insensitivity of European schools as the source of Eurocentric cultural domination that marginalises ethnic minority students by its very nature; yet another group of scholars and policymakers apply a human rights perspective and reveal the manifold manifestations of discrimination as the major source of the hindrances that ethnic minority students experience in education.

In the context of this debate, it was a primary aim of the EDUMIGROM project to look at the components and processes that conclude in different perceptions of the achievements of students from varied backgrounds. By looking at schools in their threefold capacity as acting as agents of knowledge transmission, socialisation, and preparatory "filters" of later occupational and social positions, the project found unique ground on which to take a closer look at the "making" of ethnic differences in the process of schooling. Through inquiring about school results in the preceding semester, the study opened a window on the complexity of considerations, interests, values, and half-consciously applied conducts that influence how students are seen and then "labelled" by the stamp of grading. Knowing that grades are generally considered as the sanctioned and legitimate form of assessing achievement, subsequently assigning differential paths and positions to students, the employed approach of looking at school results as the "objectified" measures of accomplishment gave us a chance to develop a set of indicators for

comparing how assessments of performance are made by schools across the countries and whether the applied techniques and procedures produce similar degrees of social and ethnic departures.

By looking at the multitude of factors at play, our findings confirm the associations that have been brought up by the subsequent PISA surveys during the past decade: out of the composite impact of the parental home, it is especially the *cultural capital* of the students' families that matters. Despite huge differences in the systems of schooling and variations in the ways of instruction, institutionalised education everywhere proves rather inefficient in countervailing the inequalities in knowledge brought from home, in turn, considered the most important constituent of acknowledged performance. As our data show, *students from highly educated families* have close to a *five times greater chance to attain an "excellent" qualification* than fellow students from a very poorly educated parental background; worryingly, the ratio is roughly the same, though in the opposite direction, at the other end of the scale where "marginal performance" (sufficiency or failing) is measured.

While families' cultural capital directly translates into the stock of knowledge that is assessed by the school, it is their *material circumstances* that mould children's home conditions and how they devote themselves to studying and keeping pace with the requirements that are routinely rewarded by better or worse grading. However, the impact of physical facilities turned out to be *milder* than that of cultural backgrounds. Good home conditions are honoured by enjoying the qualification of being "excellent" for one-third of the students and very rare occurrences of poor marking among them, while those living under destitute conditions have less than half the chance of concluding their studies with outstanding results and being assessed as marginally acceptable the fate of more than 17 per cent of them.

Yet again, the differences are similar, if the families' *economic embeddedness* and the related regularity of income are taken into consideration. It is perhaps the complex impact of financial hardships, insecurity due to exclusion from access to work, and the consequent low motivations for respecting schooling as a "worthwhile investment" that are reflected in the very low (14 per cent) rate of "excellent" and the significantly high (13 per cent) proportion of "marginally performing" students among the children of families where neither of the parents have access even to partial and/or irregular work. Since the regularity of work is the strongest safeguard against impoverishment, and while loss of contact with the world of labour sooner or later concludes in deep poverty, it is no surprise that *the departures in their living conditions conclude in a rather substantial 22 per cent difference* in the average performance scores between students from well-embedded families and those coming from severe poverty.

While the conditions of the parental home are decisive for boys and girls alike, it is an age-old wisdom of education that, when it comes to attained performance, girls from all social classes and from all backgrounds outstrip their male peers. Our data also confirm these known associations though their impact seems relatively *mild*. The *low sensitivity of the local schools to the gender-specific departures* in advancement and later employment most probably reflects the "neutralising" effects of the *rather restricted perspectives* that the investigated poor working-class communities offer in a "gender-blind" way to their young members.

Finally, if students' *ethnic background* is considered, the data reveal deep divisions. *It was found that the impact of ethnic affiliation is close to that of the family's cultural capital, and in its intensity, it certainly surpasses the influence of differential living conditions or gender.* While close to one-third of

students from ethnic majority backgrounds attain an "excellent" qualification, only every tenth of their peers from "visibly" differing groups enjoy a similar chance. It is worth noting that the differences are smaller among those who are assessed as "marginally performing": though "visible" minorities take the lead here with 12 per cent, the 10 per cent ratio among children from the majority signals that upward ethnic differentiation is more pronounced as a filtering toward future educational careers than incentives for "devaluation".

As the breaking-up of the data by social and ethnic backgrounds clearly shows, ethnicity plays a distinct role in students' evaluation: *the clearer the signs of "otherness", the gloomier the perspectives of students to catch up in assessed performance to their majority peers coming from similar socio-economic conditions*. Furthermore, the better the indicators of the cultural capital that are brought from home, the greater are the differences to the detriment of ethnic minority students: while the deviation between the proportions of "excellently" qualified students of majority and "visible" minority backgrounds is six per cent in the case of those coming from poorly educated families, it jumps to 26 per cent among the children of highly qualified parents. The same trend is indicated by departures in the average scores where the data signal only a modest advantage of six per cent of students from the majority ahead their minority peers among those from the least qualified homes, however, the difference rises to a remarkable 25 per cent when the corresponding groups of students from the highest educated families are compared. The widening of the ethnic gap clearly indicates: *ethnic distinctions in evaluations become ever more intensified by moving upward in the social hierarchy*. These surprising trends suggest that the entrance of "visibly" different young people from well-educated backgrounds into the competition for the truly good positions in society would entail an "unwanted" risk for the majority – and their relative devaluation actually serves to keep them away from making even an attempt at crossing the invisible ethnic boundaries.

The introduced associations raise a further set of disturbing questions. On closer scrutiny, can one identify events and conditions in the life-histories and upbringing of ethnic minority youth that make them more vulnerable to aptly perform at schools than their majority peers? Or is it instead the still widely prevailing prejudices and discriminatory inclinations of the "host" societies that forcefully downgrade the ethnic "others", even if the latter were born in the same conditions and also share the dominant language of the country? Or is it a third set of factors that institutionalise ethnic differences by translating them to varied forms of organised separation within and among schools and then devalue those units where students from minority backgrounds are concentrated?

By considering, first, students' familial conditions, it becomes clear from a closer look that one induces some undue simplifications by using the level of parental educational attainment as the sole indicator of a family's cultural capital. Though it is true that children from highly educated parental homes usually acquire rich cognitive and linguistic skills by an early age, and moreover, experiences gained by moving between countries and cultures might even powerfully deepen children's general knowledge about the world, the new conditions only partially allow families to capitalise on these assets. First, in reflection of the new rigorous trends in immigration policies, the higher the level of education, the greater is the proportion of those who arrived relatively late in their new home country. This involves a great deal of uncertainties in matters of daily life: they can hardly help their children with books taken in a routine

manner from the shelves, or with information on the history, literature, civic life, politics, and institutional arrangements of the new country. Furthermore, intense energies are taken by organising daily life: even the best-educated and highly trained parents have to take jobs well below their capabilities, qualifications, and knowledge, and much of their time is occupied by mere adjustments. If one draws a balance sheet, all these imply certain "holes" in the parental cultural capital, a great part of which is forcefully set aside under the pressures of the new conditions and challenges of accommodation.

A further important component of the difficulties and disadvantages that appear in the form of ethnic "otherness" relates to the uses of language. Although some 90 per cent of our interviewees from immigrant ethnic minority backgrounds belonged to the category of "second generation", the change of language seemingly slowly accompanies their accommodation in their new environment. Given that the overwhelming majority (some 70 to 95 per cent) of recently arrived parents of children belonging to various "visible" minorities, at best, poorly speak the dominant language of their now home country, it follows as a natural outcome that the language spoken at home remains that of the country of origin for yet another generation: it will perhaps be the third generation that will find it more comfortable and appropriate to "unite" the languages of their public and private domains. However, our ethnic minority respondents clearly represented a typical in-between situation on this long road toward full accommodation which implies certain difficulties in acquiring the knowledge that the schools provide: native speakers proved to have nearly twice the chance of students with different mother tongues to receive "excellent" results and had just one-sixth of the probability to become assessed as "marginally performing".

In sum, coming from an ethnic minority background implies a good deal of vulnerability – even if paired with relatively favourable socio-economic conditions. Our data indicate that schools show little sensitivity toward the involved insecurities and difficulties: instead, teachers often read them as "easy excuses" for underperformance and a lack of true interest in the values that schools aim to convey, both by teaching and discipline. As it turns out from the rich material provided by classroom observations, focus group discussions, and individual interviews that have emerged in the qualitative phase of our research project, teachers coming from the majority often criticise minority ethnic parents for the lack of support they give their children to properly adjust to the "host" society: in their view, parents do not show up often enough in the school, do not help enough with homework, do not provide strong role models by making efforts to get acquainted with the world around them, and are inclined to close themselves within their own group. Looked upon from the perspectives of parents and students, such outspoken or implicit criticisms are often read as signs of non-acceptance, sometimes even as manifestations of prejudices and discrimination. At any rate, the systematic differences in performance by ethnicity indicate a good deal of unresolved conflicts: teachers and schools find it a "problem" to work with students from other than majority backgrounds, and vice versa, and even if acknowledging the outstanding importance of school in children's lives, students and parents from ethnic minority backgrounds often look at the school as an "alien" institution that embodies majoritarian prejudices and (open or coded) non-acceptance or, at least, blasting ambivalence toward ethnic "otherness".

Such feelings of ambiguity and distrust lead us to consider the role of teachers' biases and the discriminatory practices at school as probable explanations for ethnically-informed differences in assessing performance. Though the degree, intensity, and open manifestation of discrimination

and prejudiced attitudes differ to a large extent among the participating countries (with the dubious championing of widespread and deep anti-Roma sentiments in the four post-socialist societies), recent research has documented that schools are nowhere exempt of such phenomena: ethnic stereotypes and often masked, or otherwise disguised, racial distinctions are at work everywhere. In light of the widely prevailing experience, the exploration of how racial/ethnic distinctions affect the school lives and longer-term career perspectives of our students was of key importance in both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the EDUMIGROM research.

The rich material revealed a rather complex picture in which schools, as parts of an *institutional system*, are charged with discriminating against ethnic minorities; however, one's *own school* as a space of personified experiences is relatively safe from discrimination. Though complaints about teachers' racist statements or acts came up from time to time, these were always portrayed as insular individual actions, and for the most part, the school personnel were seen as being attentive and caring. The interviews and group discussions made it clear that ethnic minority adolescents already have elaborate views and logical explanations about what is termed as *structural discrimination*, and saw their educational disadvantages as manifestations of how the world around them keeps working. At the same time, they rarely experienced straightforward animosity in their immediate school environment, and rather looked at their teachers in the customary way, seeing them in their controversial roles as agents of power and providers of support.

At the same time, the research signalled dramatic departures by ethnicity in how *structural discrimination through institutional selection and segregation* affects assessing students' performance. By looking at the clusters of schools according to the ratio of ethnic minority students from better-off and poor backgrounds, respectively, school-level average grade scores made up a steep hierarchy with no less than a 35 per cent fall between the "top" schools visited by children of the local elite and the ones dominated by disadvantaged ethnic minority students. Obviously, these differences reflect the diverse compositions of the schools, and in this sense, one could say that the findings of sharp hierarchisation are a socio-ethnic "tautology": they simply reflect what has been discussed so far about the strong influence of social and ethnic background on school performance. However, a closer analysis of the results shows that institutional distinctions by social and ethnic background play a significant role in their own right: they accentuate individual differences by organising them into powerful institutional arrangements. This can be justified by a look at the sharply differing opportunities of students from the same backgrounds to attain "excellent" qualification and to end up among the "marginally performing" group, respectively. If attending one of the "top" schools, no less than 48 per cent of majority students from a highly educated family finish with "excellent" grades, while the corresponding ratio is as low as 18 per cent among those less fortunate members of the group who, despite the family's high standing, found themselves in the lowest ranked schools that were dominated by poor children from ethnic minority backgrounds. The distinctions by ethno-social characteristics also work strongly toward the other end: while one seeks in vain "marginally performing" students in the higher ranks of the institutional hierarchy (these students most presumably were transferred earlier to one of the weaker schools), 12–16 per cent of children of the least educated ethnic minority families find themselves among the "marginals" in schools attended in high numbers by poor students from ethnic minority backgrounds. Institutional differentiations in the average

grades reflect the same selective processes from another angle. As the data show, distinctions in grading work in identical directions for all the social and ethnic groups: depending on the position of their school in the hierarchy, students from similar social and ethnic backgrounds are evaluated differently, as if the value of the same social and cultural capital differed in different segments of the institutional market (such institutional distinctions induce differences among the best and the worst average measures in a range of 21 to 40 per cent.)

While the ordering by socio-ethnic belonging is maintained by students from well-educated families on the top in each category, and by children of poorly educated parents from "visible" minority backgrounds at the lower end of the scale, the type of the school powerfully refines the picture. It adds the "quality stamp" of the school to one's results and thereby accentuates the social meaning of individual grades. With these additions, schools help to fine-tune the socio-ethnic ranking that, without such contributions, tells a fainter and simpler story: the 0.8-point difference in average grading between students from highly educated majority backgrounds and those coming from the least educated "visible" minority families is stretched to 1.08 if the "institutional origin" of the grades is also taken into account. After all, such a filtering of the school results – that one fairly can characterise as double grading – fulfils important social functions. As the interviews with headmasters and local educational managers also confirmed, from the point of view of the receiving institutions of secondary education, it posts easily legible messages about the academic strength of the sending primary schools that provide orientation for all the involved parties: grades underscored by their institutional origin increase the probability of students applying to the proper school that has been set up "for them", and vice versa, given groups of families and students are automatically attracted by those secondary institutions that wait "for their kind," while distracting them from those other schools where their "pedigree" would not be welcome. In other words, with the help of tacit differentiation on the primary level, selection becomes an easy-going and conveniently objectified process for the next stage where departures by content, quality, and service are a professionally acknowledged and openly installed constituent of the system.

The "gateway" role that the school-level aggregation of students' results fulfils has further advantageous implications. Importantly, it hides sharp differences in social and ethnic compositions by converting their compound impact into objectified academic ranking and thereby creates the ground for comparisons in quality that seem fair by taking into account only one single attribute: the standing of the institution on the academic market. Hence, those aspiring to sending their children to the best institutions on the subsequent secondary and tertiary stages of education will properly "read" these messages well in advance, and already at an early age, they will make great efforts to enrol their child in one of the top institutions. Likewise, poor and uneducated parents – especially those from ethnic minority backgrounds – who often value the friendliness and non-discriminatory attitudes of teachers and staff more than the content and actual quality of teaching will "read" the message of lower expectations in schools run for minorities and the poor, and might find good reasons to send their children to such institutions. At any rate, this way, selection by institutional quality becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: the invisible institutional addition to assessments on the individual level boosts ethno-social differences in performance, and thus informs and legitimises further selections, while assisting in socialising all the involved actors to look at the distinctions as "natural" and "inevitable" givens carried by the impersonal structure of schooling.

Additionally, the average performance result of final year students serves as a useful indicator for important projections: it offers information about the students' chances for entering different pathways of continuation. In this sense, the aggregate performance score (together with statistics on the "success rates" of alumni) becomes the "brand name" of the emitting school, and as if it was on the market, actors in the educational arena devise their steps, pressures, and ways of expressing interest and disinterest accordingly. As the research revealed, depending on the position of their school in the invisible yet widely recognised institutional hierarchy of "trademarks" and attached "scores of institutional performance", students from similar social and ethnic backgrounds with formally the same good results have remarkably different chances on the secondary level. Taking the case of those from highly educated majority backgrounds, the likelihood for continuing in schools that provide graduation and that open the way toward higher education is as high as 83 per cent, if they conclude their primary studies in one of the "top" institutions, but it drops to the relatively low level of 52 per cent, if they happen to finish in the lowest ranked schools dominated by children from poor ethnic minority backgrounds. Likewise, it is probably the "brand name" of their school that, by carrying some promising alternatives, holds back "marginally performing" children of poorly educated ethnic minority families from leaving education behind. Against the otherwise worryingly high rate of 27 per cent for this group of students as a whole, the proportion of those planning to stop studying is only 21 per cent among those concluding primary-level education in one of the majority-dominated good schools, while it jumps to 33 per cent among those finishing in the most deprived segment, that is, in schools dominated by children from poor minority backgrounds. It is hard to read these latter differences other than indications of hopefulness and hopelessness: relatively good institutional backing probably somewhat countervails failures in individual achievement, while being unsuccessful in a school with a bad reputation rightly entails despair with regard to an acceptable educational future.

### **Diverging pathways of advancement**

Obviously, there are no one-to-one relations between the attained performances that grading measures and students' actual advancement. There are a number of important considerations put on the table of deliberations before families make the ultimate choice about where their children should go next, what the most appropriate type of school would be to select, and how to make sure that the choice fits longer-term plans. By facing the compound of their own and their parents' plans and aspirations, the perceived expectations of kin and the neighbourhood, the attractions of their friends, the orientations of their teachers, and above all, the given limitations dictated by their conditions at school and in the community, all the pros and cons are to be assessed. Ultimately, these difficult considerations have to be translated into a definite choice: should one try in a strong faraway high school with hoping for a precious diploma but with the foreseeable burden of day-and-night working and utter solitude? Or, should one attend the neighbourhood's technical high school providing a graduate certificate that qualifies at best for college attendance but that secures an additional three-four years of youthful enjoyment? Or, should one choose a track or school in the close proximity that offers a vocation without an academic certificate but entails the promise of a relatively early entrance to gainful employment? Or else, should one suspend school attendance as such – or at least, to do so for a while – with a



hazy outlook but temporary relief from academic obligations (though with obvious implied risks for the future) and with the dubious freedom to take up any kinds of work on offer?

The responses to the arising questions brought up a large pool of robust findings that point toward meaningful departures – sometimes it is perhaps more appropriate to call them *fault lines* – in students' prospects, expected adult conditions, and lifestyles. Apparently, choices at the young age of 14–16 years are far from being free: earlier achievements at school more or less define the "playground" for any deliberations; and it is only those coming from families in the best positions in their community who can be said to enjoy genuine freedom to correct earlier academic failures by approaching a strong and acknowledged institution for the next educational stage.

Notwithstanding, our data indicate a high degree of commitment to schooling: regardless of being poor or rich, coming from educated or uneducated backgrounds, leaving behind a stronger or weaker primary-level institution, and also irrespective of one's ethnic belonging, the overwhelming majority of adolescents think of a future of studentship. This indicates that staying on and being involved in education well into the second half of one's teenage years has become a *general norm* in Europe, and young people and their families observe this norm for the most part. At the same time, it is all the more important to pay close attention to those who fall through the cracks of continued education as the most potent safety net against marginalisation and social exclusion. This at-risk group of adolescents (of a magnitude of no less than 15 per cent in our sample) is in a sense the victim of the working of the prevailing highly competitive school systems in which they lost the capacity to keep up long ago – and neither their family, nor the school and the teachers, nor the immediate and larger referential communities have been able to help them.

As the research revealed, *earlier achieved performance* is one of the strongest constituents in shaping students' ideas about the next educational stage. The proportion of those imagining themselves in a secondary school that provides graduation and thereby draws the contours of a promising longer-term future (either with entrance to the labour market in the hope of relatively good middle-class positions or with securing the way toward higher education) is steeply declining along the line of the numeric grades: while more than four-fifths of the "excellently" evaluated students are determined to head in this direction, the corresponding proportion comes down by half among their "marginally performing" peers. Those who earlier failed to get into the "club" of good performers now face very gloomy prognoses: with an equally steep rise into the opposite direction, the ratio of potential dropouts jumps from five per cent among the "excellent" students to the outstandingly high index of 33 per cent among those who belong to the "marginally performing" group.

The aggregate data on planned advancement provide a strong general characterisation of the student population of our selected working-class communities. They indicate that, despite widespread commitment to the continuation of studies, one has to be concerned if this distribution is taken in the wider context of the available European-level findings. It becomes clear from a quick glance at the indices of the highest attained level of education of the 25–64-year-old adult population in the OECD countries that the most optimistic predictable scenario for our students tells of *stagnation*. As against the 70 per cent ratio of completed secondary graduation in the preceding generations (with 34 per cent holding also a degree in higher education), the 68 per cent proportion of *planned* continuation toward this end is just about at the margin of closing, provided that one does not take into account the well-known facts of early leaving – that affects poor and minority populations in the first place.

As the details reveal, the families' *social status* as the bearer of greater or lesser magnitudes of social and cultural capital for building on the future careers of the subsequent generation is an important factor in shaping advancement. However, the parents' social and cultural capital chiefly come into play in the intense competition for potential entrance into the *higher echelons* of society. This is shown by the clear association between a family's status and the chosen path for advancement among those students who are finishing with "excellent" evaluations. If one comes from the upper ranks of society, it is an exception to enter any other pathway than continuing one's studies toward graduation: nine out of ten follow this route. At the same time, their equally well-performing peers from poorer social backgrounds seemingly have to take into account other concerns: the speediest access to work is a heavily considered option in their case. This is reflected in the fact that only two-thirds of the best performing students from poor households can dream of graduation, and nine per cent of the group opts straight for early employment with a quickly acquired vocational certificate in their pocket.

It is worth noting that socio-economic differences do not seem to imply similar departures among those who concluded the preceding level only with "marginal performance". Although there are minor deviations to the detriment of students from poorer backgrounds among the early leavers and their potential followers in the group of "undecided" students, the demarcation lines between them and their well-performing peers still seem to be more important than these small-scale divergences: regardless of their families' status, almost half of the group in question are at high risk of entirely dropping out from the system. Those from more affluent and better-embedded families apparently try to avoid such a fate by applying to a vocational school; however, knowing the insecure position of these schools in our educational systems, such a safeguard seems rather weak. The critically low rates (42–44 per cent) of those applying to a "proper" secondary school call again for a reconsideration of the implications that the current ways of assessment bear upon students' longer-term futures. As the data show, the harm that "marginalised" qualifications imply cannot be countervailed and certainly cannot be corrected by mobilising even the best familial social and cultural capital. In this regard, the "conductor's baton" is in the hands of the schools and the teachers.

A look at students' *ethnic background* adds important further details. The distinctions by ethnicity regarding access to those schools providing the best quality in teaching and the most freedom for future choices – secondary-level institutions with graduation at the end of studies – are remarkable: downhill on the socio-cultural hierarchy from students from well-educated majority backgrounds on the floor that is occupied by the group of poorly educated ethnic minority students, those who accomplished the prior level with "excellence" lose 18 per cent in their probability to opt for such a school (from 86 to 68 per cent), while the ratio of those considering a farewell to education jumps from four to 17 per cent.

Finally, if applying the *institutional prism* of schools' socio-ethnic composition, the data seem to confirm what has been said earlier about the secret "mission" of selection among the schools on the primary level: prior attendance to a "good" or a "bad" school wields important implication on one's subsequent educational career, and the departing antecedences greatly deviate the actual value of otherwise identical school results by "inflating" or "deflating" them. However, such a great impact of the invisible "scoring" that prior schooling adds to one's school certificate can be observed only among those – the well-performing students – for whom institutionalised selection makes sense by reducing

the competition for places in the most prestigious institutions on the secondary level that are generally in excessive demand. Apparently, poor performance results provide enough information on their own to make such refining scoring unnecessary: the involved careers conclude in risky outcomes in any case.

The tendencies discussed so far are powerfully underscored by students' responses to questions about their longer-term plans on attending higher education. The aggregate indicators by prior performance and socio-ethnic belonging show what one would expect: while such determinations are very intense among the well-performing adolescents coming from the upper ranks of the social hierarchy, those who have to seriously consider an early start to adult-like gainful work, and especially those whose prior history in schooling practically disqualifies them from catching up in knowledge and skills, demonstrate lesser degrees of clear commitment. Nevertheless, the relatively decent slope of the trend and, especially, the systematically *higher rates of dedication among students from ethnic minority backgrounds* in comparison to the referential groups of the majority are good news, indeed. Taken together, the figures signal that, despite all the limitations that they and their parents are well aware of, adolescents see their future with a rather high degree of freedom for upward mobility, and consider later entrance into the extended and democratised systems of higher education a path that is still open to them. A few key findings qualify this statement. While determination to go on toward higher education was understandably more intense among those whose choice of school on the secondary level had already been shaped by academic considerations, the proportions proved only some seven to 20 per cent lower among those whose primary concern for the time being was employability.

The described trends and associations seem to prevail across all the countries participating in the research. Nevertheless, the survey data signalled important differences in the depth of the involved ethno-social inequalities and, closely related to this, also in the motivations that guide adolescents and their parents in making their options for continuation. Additionally, the qualitative material brought up a perplexed picture about the multitude of social and ethnic constraints that young members from ethnic minority backgrounds face in deciding about their future, and it also revealed significant differences in the historically forged patterns of interethnic relations as to the degrees of freedom of choice when potentials for breaking out from poverty and marginalisation through continued education were considered.

If one draws an invisible scale of greater or lesser degrees of opportunities for upward social mobility, it is the Nordic countries that take the lead. In these countries (represented by Denmark and Sweden in the EDUMIGROM research), the widely shared and deeply internalised values of *equality* and *equity* shaping public discourse and also people's perception of daily personal relations seem to set the framework in which ethnic minority teenagers formulate their ideas for the future and claim rights for quality education in concordance with their native peers. Although they report painful cases of being unfavourably distinguished and devalued as "bilinguals", experiences about being "othered" apparently do not hold them back from struggles for highly praised middle-class positions. In their perception, structural discrimination in education and on the labour market concludes in relative hindrances, but certainly does not lead to exclusion on ethnic grounds nor does it conduce an emptying of the rich contents of citizenship rights set by the welfare state. In this framework of addressing unjust inequalities, ethnic minority families claim support and affirmative interventions by which they do not find it unimaginable for their children to successfully strive for top middle-class positions with high degrees of recognition, prestige, and material rewards.

The recurring argumentation makes equality amidst diversity the firm ground for claims for inclusion. Such a strong awareness of citizenship rights helps minority adolescents to engage in personal struggles for recognition: they successfully negotiate needs for extra attention and support – and though teachers often see such demands of students and families as undeservingly shifting the burden of ethno-social disadvantages on them– school administrators seem to be open enough to invent some solutions, and often respond by employing ethnic minority personnel for some special tasks at schools. However, the interviews reveal that the scope of opportunities is broader than what a school can offer: despite recent cuts in welfare spending and the spread of anti-immigrant sentiments in both countries, their welfare states are still strong enough to provide support for familial advancement. It is against this backing that strategies for upward mobility can be played out in a variety of solutions from moving to better residential areas to parents' changing employment and to smartly mobilising the social capital that is embodied in the surrounding multiethnic neighbourhood. Hence, schooling becomes a strategy for ethnic minorities, working much like it does for the majority.

The contextualisation of ideas about the future and of the educational strategies that should be followed to meet one's expectations is markedly different in the post-colonial communities of France and the United Kingdom. In both cases, it is people's firm visions about the *prevailing class structure* and the implications of low working-class positions underscored by a range of strong symbolic meanings (the social implications of one's home address, the culturally perceived behaviours associated with given neighbourhoods, the betraying linguistic patterns of the peculiar "ethnolect" that one speaks, and stereotypical views on "who those people are") that frame familial aspirations for breaking through the invisible walls of being downgraded. In this context, residential segregation stands out as a major source of frustration of adolescents and parents from "white" working-class backgrounds that recurrently comes up in their accounts of painful injustices of being confined to a poor multiethnic community and thereby suffering sharp exclusion from the mainstream where they principally would belong. Concurrently, these deprived groups of working-class students from the majority often engage in varied forms of revolting against the unjust "system" as such, which, in their eyes, is embodied by the school. As a result, absenteeism, truancy, and class repetition are frequent occurrences that are followed by referrals to one of the "collector" schools and from where one's path hardly ever leads to continued education. These pathways of downward mobility toward marginalisation and social exclusion are also shared by teenagers from certain ethnic groups that traditionally have been seriously devalued in their social environment, exemplified in our research by the fate of Black Caribbean students in Britain and North Africans in France departing early from education. However, widely experienced apprehension among these latter groups of young people has sources different from their white working-class peers. These students and their parents consider outright *racism* as the primary root of marginalisation and see themselves as victims of white supremacy – be it phrased in ethnic terms as in Britain or framed as a matter of conflicting cultures as in France.

Those who do see opportunities for breaking out from poverty and attaining an acknowledged status in society also frame their ideas and claims in social-class terms. However, their perception of the prevailing class relations and their own future positioning seems more refined than that of the above marginalised groups. Without question, the model to follow is that of the upper segments of the urban

middle class: one has to go to a good secondary school or attend a track that "speaks for itself" and the name of which sounds good enough when applying to university. All efforts have to be made to remain on the ascribed path – if one fails, future life in its entirety might be risked. Interviews with students and parents reinforced such portrayals by emphasising that it is, first and foremost, credentials that matter, and the actual professional content of the skills that one acquires comes next. Such a strong belief in having a degree that alters one's life also proved rather widespread among Pakistani families in Britain whose parental generation had focused on embedding themselves in British society, often at the price of low-prestige occupations and modest ways of living, but for whom the reconstruction of an acknowledged familial position was seen through mobilising all means in order to help their children into the professional ranks by providing them with good educations.

Another clear strategy promising a way out from an endless reproduction of multiple ethno-social disadvantages is demonstrated by families that are instigated by the invisible "ethnic ceiling" to invent alternative routes of accommodation within their own ethnic group. The traditions of kinship-based migration and the successful establishment of a local ethnic market in a significant Turkish neighbourhood at one of the sites in France and, likewise, in important parts of the investigated Pakistani community in a northern city in Britain provide entrepreneurial perspectives, a decent living, a good reputation, and a protective and solidaristic social environment for many among the young generation. These adolescents use the same frame of reference of social-class belonging but balance external discrimination by working out clearly upward-pointing pathways within what can best be called an "ethnic enclave".

Concerning the macro-social framing of longer-term perspectives and immediate educational outlook for ethnic minority youth, a distinct example is represented by Germany. The EDUMIGROM research clearly reflects the tense relationship between the majority and the dominantly Muslim ethnic minorities that one learns about day after day in the German media. The tensions certainly have multiple sources. First, up until very recently, Germans' self-perception as being open and tolerant toward ethnic minorities has been coupled with their tacit expectation toward immigrants to return home and thus allow their "hosts" to maintain ethnic and cultural homogeneity in their country. Second, the drive to create a homogenous German nation-state was burdened by the post-1990 unification process that turned out to be far more troubled and difficult than had been expected and that, ironically, has induced painful rivalries for employment and welfare between large groups of impoverished "Ossies" and their Turkish, Arab, and Eastern European fellow countrymen. The involved economic struggles often became phrased in conflicts of cultures, moral standards, and the conduct of daily life that portrayed "visibly" different minorities as uninterested in progress and disloyal to their hosts. Third, ethnic differences have become heavily laden by deep cleavages in the social structure: ethnic minority belonging increasingly has been identified with marginalised working-class positions and social exclusion in the form of sharp residential segregation. Thus, the arising conflicts inseparably carry ethnic and social-class implications that are topped by constant cultural clashes on religious grounds.

In this multilayered understanding of majority/minority relations, it is the conceptual creation of sharply differing *cultural entities* of "Us" and "Them" that guides ethnic minority families in defining their position and, especially, in orienting their children toward given pathways of education and occupation. Teenagers' ideas about their adult lives are distinctly less clear than those of their peers in the studied

communities in the other participating Western countries. Future careers are seen in broadly perceived cultural terms and are painted in the context of militant engagement in the struggle for Muslim ways of thinking and living to be acknowledged and respected. Turkish and Lebanese adolescents in the selected neighbourhoods clearly see that they have to make a choice between two contrasting alternatives, either by accepting the strong assimilationist pressure that is mediated by the majority of their teachers, or by following the rules and patterns of their own community and establishing themselves in a "closed world" of Islam that is defined as a "parallel universe" to that of the Germans. In daily reality, children are often torn between these two contrasting ends: the permanent exposure to criticism and clashing requirements contributes to their uncertainties and often concludes in downward mobility across schools and tracks. For those who do not give it up, self-protection and the struggles to maintain open doors toward "German-like" occupations with rewarding status and material wealth require a constant involvement in a two-sided struggle for rights and respect. However, it is not easy to attain a balance: one either keeps striving for some respected position at all costs of adjustment and gives up loyalty to the community, or abandons high aspirations and frames schooling, working, and living according to the customary norms of the community.

Finally, the case of the four Central European countries stands out for a caste-like exclusion of Roma that, at best, allows for scattered individual attempts at integration by accepting and internalising the assimilationist arrogates of the norm-setting groups in domination, but that, as a rule, keeps the minority community far apart from the opportunities and positions available for the majority. Generationally-transmitted deep poverty, joblessness, confinement to separate ghetto-like areas in dilapidated one-time industrial towns or under premodern conditions of communal deprivation in the rural surroundings are the usual experiences of the majority of Roma from an early age. The shared fate of being cut off from a world ruled by "*gadjo*" people establishes a certain degree of commonality that – despite important divisions by ethnic subgroups and also by certain degrees of internal stratification along well-remembered earlier achievements, material possessions, and varying personal histories of being integrated through employment – uniformly designates an appallingly limited scope of future paths for new generations of Roma. Looked at from a majoritarian perspective, these conditions of utter deprivation are perceived as the Roma-specific traits of the "culture of poverty" that Roma are morally responsible for maintaining and that provides the *ultima ratio* for their distinction and ensuing separation. In these abasing contexts of suffered deprivation and "justified" ethnic discrimination, Roma adolescents and their parents frame their claims for advancement in the language of *human rights* and *integration*. Unlike the case of ethnic minorities in the northern countries who, on the grounds of attained civic and political inclusion, struggle for equality in the economic and social domains, the claims of Roma target the fundamentals of democracy: their struggle is launched for the basic human rights of dignity, respect, and personal safety. Education is seen as the battlefield of such struggles where many are harmed and defeated from the outset. An early departure from schooling (which involves Roma in a proportion exceeding all other ethnic minority groups) is a self-explanatory response to the gradual disaffection that students develop and that is deepened by the accumulated experience of the community about the depreciating workings of all majority institutions.

Despite the widespread occurrence of early departure from education, the majority of Roma youth and their parents are dedicated to a continuation beyond the elementary level. However, the

plans are shaped in consideration of a low "ethnic ceiling". For the most part, adolescents dream of vocations where experience has shown the majority tolerating the presence of Roma: in construction work, in traditional industrial occupations, and in certain services where the ethnic community itself would provide the consumers with the necessary purchasing power, like hairdressing or cobbling. At the same time, all the mentioned vocations imply an inferred hope for moving toward becoming integrated through compromising but decent work with a modest level of living.

However, there are a few who try to break out of the disadvantaged conditions and aspire to attain a degree in higher education. Those brave girls and boys coming from better-situated families in the Roma community who have good enough performance results from schools with some reputation to hope for a success in striving upward in the social hierarchy usually aim for practice-oriented professional careers, like becoming nurses in hospitals or geriatric care, medical doctors in general practice, economists at a firm, primary school teachers, etc. However, their high-striving aspirations are often broken down by the teachers who intend to "protect" them from future disappointments by mediating the perceived refusal of the majority.

In sum, the research has yielded a rather controversial picture about the potentials and limitations that govern minority youth in their educational careers and that forge their future opportunities. On the one hand, the structural determinants, regulating advancement toward adulthood with a high degree of rigour, designate strikingly unequal positions for students along the socio-ethnic hierarchy and assign disadvantaged educational paths and adult careers for the great majority of youths from ethnic minority backgrounds. Despite important differences in the depth and magnitude of hindrances that these young people are faced with across the participating countries, their citizenship rights are set at a significantly lower rank than those of their majority peers – and such departures signal dangers for the securing of the fundamental values of equality and equity in European democracies. On the other hand, important adjustments beneath the prevailing structures point toward a gradual change. Although the framing and phrasing of claims for inclusion differ according to the histories and acknowledged foundations of the welfare states that are represented in the EDUMIGROM research, our findings indicate a clear striving for recognition and democratic participation within the domestic contexts and the European community-at-large.. Such silent struggles for recognition and the widely internalised values of modernisation among the adolescents of today's deprived social and ethnic communities might provide the ground for enhancing meaningful social inclusion well beyond its current state.

## **Schools as sites of socialisation: interethnic relations and the shaping of adolescent identity**

By looking at everyday life at school and asking students about the values and expectations that drive them in shaping relations with their peers, the EDUMIGROM project provided new insights into how interethnic relations are affected: partly by the structural conditions that work as "givens" for mixing versus separation – partly by those experiences of practices and routines of distinction that contribute

to the early cognisance of "being inescapably different" – and that thus invoke self-protective responses that often point toward ethnic insularism. This picture was complemented by listening to the voices of teachers as respected adult authorities in the school environment, whose attitudes, notions, and relating have an outstanding impact on moulding the opinions, values, and aspirations of their teenage students from minority backgrounds.

### **Interethnic peer relations**

Considering that, other than family, school is perhaps the most important scene of socialisation of adolescent youth, the studying of peer relations and friendships as formative in terms of basic social values, identity formation, and general attitudes took a central stage in the EDUMIGROM project. Forms of togetherness were mapped by classroom observations and ethnographic work in youth communities, while personal experiences were disclosed in interviews and focus group discussions.

The research found that young people's ethnic background and the historical patterns of majority/minority relations in their country have a strong impact on the intensity and quality of interethnic relations. Deeply ingrained in their relating by the prevailing ethno-social fault lines in society-at-large, it is majority students, in particular in the Central European countries, who expressed the greatest reservations towards engaging in meaningful contacts with their Roma peers: they stood out (negatively) with respect to the frequency of interethnic activities as well as expressed the highest level of refusal of interethnic friendship or partnership when they were asked about their considerations influencing such choices. This was not the case for students in the western communities where – despite prevalent inequalities, prejudices, and trends of "minoritisation" – multiculturalism is a widely accepted governing value of interethnic cohabitation and where the prevailing democratic patterns seemed to be reflected in a more receptive relating to ethnic "otherness" from both ends. However, friendships and forms of togetherness were deeply affected by social-class relations that often proved more important than the actual cultural backgrounds of the interacting ethnic groups.

In the communities in countries with a post-colonial history, it appeared that the importance of neighbourhood affiliation clearly oversteps that of ethnic belonging. Both in France and the United Kingdom, students readily referred to their neighbourhoods when distinguishing themselves, which was most frequently symbolised by their dress style and preference for certain kinds of music. Major factors behind the formation of peer-group relations were somewhat different in the multiethnic urban communities inhabited mostly by the descendants of labour migrants (Denmark, Germany, and Sweden). Residential segregation of migrants is a dominant pattern in these localities and ethnic separation is further reinforced by the schools where one hardly finds students from a majority background. As a result, the chance for meaningful and enduring interethnic friendships is rather limited. In Sweden, it is not ethnic background as such, but rather the experience of "not being a Swede" that stands as an important foundation for closer relations in the community, regardless of the country of origin. When asked, none of the adolescents from minority backgrounds said they had any "Swedes" in their circle of friends or acquaintances. However, it was underscored that the immediate community provided enduring and efficient protection against discrimination. Young people identified strongly and positively with the neighbourhood they lived in: they felt good and comfortable about having relations with people sharing



the same experiences. Neighbourhood was described not only as a residential area, but as a social world that was often similar to the one migrants (or their families) used to live in back in their country of origin.

Not all ethnic minority students felt, however, confident or expressed pride regarding their residence in an ethnic neighbourhood. In the Danish case, a group of adolescents, mainly girls with mixed ethnic identities, eloquently argued for distancing themselves from troublesome immigrants and the neighbourhood they lived in. Still, a tendency for social groupings to follow ethnicity, or distinguishing their companions in terms of "majority as opposed to minority belonging", was more than evident in their cases, as well.

In contrast to experiences of migrants in the western communities, the vast majority of whom positively identified with and felt comfortable about living in a predominantly ethnic minority environment, Roma in the Central European countries, with a few exceptions, perceived their position in terms of exclusionary ethnic divides that evidently existed and were forced on them by majority society. It became obvious from the in-depth interviews that the lack of interethnic relationships is less an issue of residential segregation than a matter of ethnic distancing on the side of those from the majority.

The differing experiences were tellingly reflected in the weight that adolescents in the various countries attached to the perceived importance of ethnicity in their everyday relations. In post-colonial countries, neither majority nor minority students considered ethnicity as an important factor in forming friendships; in countries of economic migration, there was a small gap in the responses between majority and minority students (minorities considering it relatively insignificant but somewhat more important compared to their majority peers); and in the post-socialist communities both minority and majority students valued the presumed ethnicity of the potential friends and partners as an important factor. The personal testimonies highlighted the effects of sharp ethnic separation in these latter cases: Roma students were often denied having any meaningful relations with peers from the majority and experienced frequent betrayals and outward rejections by their "white" fellows at school. Most of them were also aware of and talked about severe stigmatisation driven by deep-seated negative stereotypes of their ethnic majority peers (and also adults).

When considering the ethnic composition of the school and its smaller units, the class or the study group proved to be another important factor influencing the extent and quality of interethnic relationships and, more generally, tolerance towards classmates from different ethnic backgrounds. This is a core issue since students have their first in-depth experiences about the "other" at school. Hence, schools may – willingly or unintentionally – greatly influence interethnic relationships and the formation of the sensing of the self, including one's ethnic identity. Our cross-country study demonstrated that school structures and policies based on ethnic mixing versus separation create conditions that importantly impact any experiences of cooperation across ethnic boundaries and have great significance in the formation of friendships based on mutual cultural understanding and shared activities.

A powerful finding of the research was the difference between the three country groups representing various traditions of interethnic relations in how the ethnic composition of the school and the class environments affect interethnic activities and preferences in making friends. While peer-group relations of students attending segregated schools and classes in the Central European communities differed to a great extent from those of students in ethnically mixed or majority school environments,

differences along the same divide were not identifiable in the two post-colonial countries and were only minor in Denmark, Germany, and Sweden. It is important to note that the worst environments in terms of interethnic contacts seemed to be those where separation of students along ethnic lines was practiced within the walls of the school: that is, where students of various ethnic backgrounds were separated into parallel streams and classes. Students attending schools with a dominantly ethnic majority student body demonstrated the smallest degree of openness towards diversity.

Our research findings support the assumption that an ethnically mixed school environment significantly enhances acceptance of the "other" – be it defined in social or ethnic terms. At the same time, an ethnically homogeneous environment deprives adolescents from experiencing the "other". Besides impoverishing the content and quality of peer-relations, the arising fears from the unknown further supply the need for keeping distance from those who are conceived as "strangers".

### **Ethnic minority students in their teachers' eyes**

The positions taken by the teachers on the issues of ethnic diversity at school showed a certain convergence across countries. In spite of the national particularities of different welfare regimes, immigration histories, and formal conditions, or of the ethnic compositions in the different countries, the research found that the interviewed teachers addressed the same problem sources in the selected schools. Such a convergence followed from a widely shared attitude: for the most part, teachers considered it a "problem" to teach and educate students from other than a majority background, or more accurately, from backgrounds that fit the prevailing social and cultural norms. This problem-oriented attitude was reflected in the list of complaints that came up with the highest frequency: ambivalences around ethnic separation in schools; the effects of "white flight"; lowering standards and issues of the evolving "island culture"; difficulties in working with ethnic minority parents; teachers' undue political responsibility in modelling and shaping interethnic relations at large.

Despite of the fact that different policies for the integration of minority youths have been followed in the studied countries, the research found that there was an overwhelming perception among many teachers that these integration efforts were illusionary, and that educational separation along the lines of the majority/minority population groups was a fact of school life. The extent to which teachers saw within-school ethnic separation as a byproduct of streaming varied among the communities. However, in most cases, it was simply taken for granted or perceived as an unavoidable outcome. Our interviewees rarely considered that teachers and school management could have an opportunity to be the active agents in the process of integration. This was especially the case in the studied Central European communities where the norm of integration remained an abstract idea and strong segregating mechanisms evolved to prevent any change. In the western countries, the teachers either stressed that special classes were only built on purpose in order to foster educational integration (like in the shape of preparatory classes), or they refused to apply segregating practices, and thus implicitly – or maybe just officially – confirmed the aim of integrating minority students through education – even when the situation in their schools belied this notion. After all, cases of factual ethnic separation within the walls of the school were frequently identified across the countries, although these appeared to have been caused by mechanisms of choice (as opting for occupational streams in French secondary schools), or

due to a distinct educational agenda that was chosen to be followed (like in the voluntarily separated Muslim schools in Denmark or Germany).

The flight of better-off families was something that teachers feared – and had to cope with – in all schools with a considerable share of ethnic minority students from less privileged family backgrounds. The difficulty of teaching many students from weak socio-economic backgrounds was reflected upon throughout the interviews, and the fact that resourceful parents tended to remove their children from a school with too many ethnic minority students was likewise described to be a problem in all cases. A common opinion among the teachers was that teaching in a school with many students from poor families makes their work extremely hard and calls for special measures, including the rendering of additional financial resources. This experience of the study underlines that teachers feel they get too little support in terms of finances to cope with what they feel to be an additional hardship. In addition to the ample material conditions, the lack of political support was widely criticised as well.

The school staff, whether head teachers, teachers, or teaching assistants, described more or less the same problematic habitual behavioural patterns of students to be the characteristics of the "minority ethnic" schools or classes: a low capacity for concentration during class, loudness, hyperactive behaviour, immediate expressions of personal views and feelings, that is, a general lack of discipline. As these disturbances mount, the teachers adapt their expectations. It was found that most of them tend to tolerate minor transgressions that would be sanctioned in "normal" school situations (e.g., shouting in classes, interrupting teachers and fellow students, bad language), but react harshly to more serious activities (like physical assaults, thefts, drug abuse). What the teachers described – yet again with great concordance across countries – as a lowering of their standards was not restricted to the students' social behaviour. They also admitted having reduced the teaching content in order to cope with the particular situation in this setting. Curriculum content was cut to the utmost minimum, just to make sure that the students succeed in proceeding to the next grade. Concurrently, most of the teachers who worked in such an educational environments showed great frustration over this problem. According to their personal testimonies, usually too much effort is invested into the students' socially disadvantaged situations, leaving too little time and space for increasing their knowledge in the taught subjects or for further improving their skills.

A result of this adjustment is the development of an "island culture" that is found in many of these schools: ethnic minority students feel safe and comfortable because they are not marginalised there; teachers tend to expect less from them, so that even weak students may experience a certain level of success which they might not have elsewhere – at least that seems to be a fear among students. These troubled developments were articulated in the most pronounced forms in the French, German, and Swedish cases. Teachers' accounts revealed that even high-achievers among the students are hesitant to leave the confines of their socially detached context. They fear a confrontation with the majority society because they expect (more) discrimination but they also expect to be unable to meet the requirements. It was also a widely shared experience among teachers that, at the same time, peer pressure within the "island culture" contributes to limiting aspirations for social mobility: those striving for a breakthrough by investment into learning are viewed rather negatively by their classmates, while the most undisciplined and oppositional students tend to have the upper hand as far as power relations among their peers are

concerned, and these relations gain an ethnic twist. This tendency is also gendered: although girls from the ethnic minority groups tend to perform better than their male peers, their aspirations for upward mobility are (even) lower. Such differences in learning motivation and a lack of role models were described by many of the interviewed teachers to be significant in limiting students' aspirations and school success. In this context, they reflected on the positive experiences of ethnic mixing: if teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds were part of the staff, they not only helped to untangle interethnic tensions, but provided cherished role models for ethnic minority students for a successful breakout, and thereby offered an alternative option to the destructive tendencies of the "island culture".

In addition to the work within the walls of the school, cooperation between teachers and families could, in principle, provide support for ethnic minority students to catch up and also to make steps toward a future based on successful inclusion. However, the research found severe problems in this segment of school life. Teachers in schools with a high representation of minority students shared the view that the parents of the "problematic" students are insufficiently involved in their children's educational careers. The reasons for this were seen on many different levels, and reactions from the schools differed as well. While some teachers attributed the virtual absence of their students' parents from school life to a lack of abilities in the first place, others perceived it as a sign of a lacking consciousness of the importance of parental engagement that generally characterises socio-economically weak families. A common opinion among teachers seemed to be that poorly-skilled parents tend to have either no or very unrealistic expectations concerning their children's school careers, and that they do not really know what is required by the school. Since many of the concerned parents either did not enjoy much schooling, or – in the case of immigrants – went to school in countries where traditional concepts of authority may see the teacher (and only the teacher) in charge of all school matters, criticisms over parents' habitus, their knowledge, and their culturally informed role concepts were conflated in these problem assessments as factors influencing the availability of parental support. For many teachers, the notion of ethnic minorities' "cultural otherness" thus comprised a number of negative judgements and even derogative aspects. The key narrative around cultural diversity was the "different worlds" among which the children move. In all the countries, teachers expressed with this phrase their view that the school symbolises something very different from minority students' home environments, yet there seemed to be a certain East-West divide in terms of what moral judgement was implied in the concept of "cultural difference". While some of the teachers stressed that minority families' economic hardships and poor educational background were the major causes behind parents' low participation in school activities, others referred to a "culture of poverty" in the background, and yet others saw habitual factors – like a different pedagogical agenda, or expectations about the role of school versus that of parents – as the main source of the problem. It was simply expected without exceptions and reservations that parents should support their children by assisting them with homework, attending the parents' evenings, and meeting the teacher at least once in a term to talk about their children's achievements and future. If they failed to do so, it tended to be treated as their own fault. Interviews with parents testified to this troubled relationship with the school from their own end: it was a general complaint that teachers look down at them and are too ready to shift all responsibilities on the home. Additionally, they do not invest into relations of mutual trust and only call on them if "problems" occur.

At any rate, it is hard to evaluate how far teachers' moral judgements of the families' living conditions and presumed cultural habits also influence their assessments in class. In many interviews, the low performance of students and their seemingly dead-end educational careers were regarded as the evident outcomes of the poor social conditions of the families, suggesting the low educational level of the parents who do not motivate their children and simply do not care. In one form or another, all the interviews with teachers concluded in characterising the school and their own activity as having limited influence on the educational careers of children when compared to the impact of their family backgrounds.

### **Experiences of unjust treatment, discrimination, and 'othering'**

Although students are certainly aware of discrimination and many already have been targets to such conducts, the school is most typically sensed by them as a safe place to be. Most of our young interviewees from ethnic minority backgrounds thought that they were more safe in their schools than they were in the broader society, and that their teachers were generally fairer than the adults of the majority. Nearly three-quarters of the students responding the survey questionnaire mentioned that they experienced some kind of discrimination in their life, but they least frequently pointed to their teachers' engagement in such deeds. Most typically, it was peers who were reported behaving in a discriminative manner, followed in frequency by adult actors outside the schools. Along the line of gender, significant differences were found: boys more frequently reported being unequally treated at school than girls (26 versus 18 per cent), while girls experienced insults more often from their peers than boys did. According to the repeated accounts of teachers (that are also supported by the pedagogical literature), male ethnic minority students often behave in challenging ways in the classroom, engage in creating a certain counterculture of resistance, and thus cause teachers to view them as "problem" students.

The perceived unfairness of teachers does leave its imprints on students' attitudes toward the school and more generally, towards studying. The research demonstrated that it is poorly performing students in the first place who give frequent accounts of discrimination, and the association between one's assessed achievement and perceptions of discrimination is particularly strong at the Central European sites. The explanation appears to be rather obvious: in countries where pedagogical traditions based on discipline, hierarchical relations, and frontal teaching prevail, teachers are more inclined to express their overall assessment about students' behaviour with the "labels" of numeric grading than their colleagues working in more relaxed and – in general – more democratic environments where numeric assessments are routinely used with the sole purpose of measuring achievements of academic performance.

Additionally, through the accounts of Roma students in Central European countries, the qualitative studies brought up a wide range of examples of regular and severe discrimination and openly prejudiced and even racist remarks of teachers, peers, and others in the close surroundings. Still, interviews with students and parents' showed that Roma adolescents often did not interpret such behaviour as being discriminated against but as something that is a regular, and therefore "natural" concomitant of daily life. While the British, Danish, French, and Swedish school staff seemed to be very conscious about the role of the teachers in managing conflicts and injuries arising from troubled interethnic relationships, their Central European colleagues declared that this was not their duty. In all four Central European countries,

students gave accounts of cases of racially driven harassment (oral or physical) among peers that was not being punished by teachers at all. The interviews with teachers suggested that they usually did not even voice these confrontations. When referring to racist or prejudiced incidents among their students, most of them thought that the school had little to do with changing cultural habits and presumptions (though they thought otherwise if the "perpetrators" were Roma). Sometimes, even worse, teachers themselves reproduced the anti-"Gypsy" attitudes and prejudice by routinely making humiliating comments with racialised contents.

The situation in the western communities and schools proved rather different. However, great variations were also observed among them. In France, young people reported very few experiences with racism. Students abstained from portraying themselves as victims of "othering" and were very circumspect in their answers to direct questions regarding their personal experiences of being discriminated against due to their ethnicity.

Among the worst and most oppressing forms of racist perception, criminalisation tends to characterise people living in ethnic slums as "deviants", especially in the Central European communities of our study, though similar manifestations of depreciating views were also encountered in some western urban ghettos (in particular, in Sweden). In the United Kingdom, Blackness was found to be symbolically threatening due to its assumed association with a drug culture and involved criminal acts. As a consequence of such perceived danger, young people from Caribbean and other Black backgrounds were frequently humiliated by being avoided or shunned in public spaces. In Denmark and France, criminality was more linked to certain neighbourhoods, and through this it was associated indirectly with minority or migrant backgrounds.

A special form of discrimination is the lack of recognition of the right to difference. The most salient manifestation of this is when people are devalued for openly showing their religious or cultural identity. According to their testimonies, Muslim students and their parents often experienced unfair treatment and discrimination due to their faith and traditions: schools and teachers tended to refuse tolerating the displaying of religious symbols or the observance of Muslim behavioural rules and habits. Several Muslim girls gave account of disputes at school because of wearing their headscarves. Parents in our Danish and German sites protested against the schools' pressure on their children to break the rules of their ethno-religious community by requiring participation in extracurricular activities that are arranged in a culturally insensitive way, dominating, and against their own principles. Students in these communities criticised their teachers for not showing any intention to enter into open discussion about religious and cultural values important for Muslims in their everyday lives, instead just wanting to make their own perspectives clear.

In addition to such sharp conflicts around ethno-cultural differences, the EDUMIGROM research unearthed widespread practices of "othering" that culminate in a deepening of the ethnic divides in and outside of school, while also profoundly affecting the identity development of those young people who, for the most part, seek integration into the majority-dominated world around them. These "lighter" forms of distinction are usually routinised in daily interethnic communication and as such, often are not even considered as harmful acts of depreciation by those affected. Nevertheless, even good-humoured teasing or apparently innocent joking about "otherness" serve to maintain those borderlines that designate the

differential positions of minority students, unless they distance themselves from their own group and strive for fitting the norms and expectations of those in domination.

### **Identity models and strategies of identity formation**

By exploring the dynamics of how adolescents from ethnic minority backgrounds view themselves and define their positions through various models of identity development, the EDUMIGROM project aimed to gain insights into how the structural conditions of daily life, the frequent experiences of being distinguished as the "Other", and the involved latent or manifest conflicts around "minoritisation" affect young people's aspirations and their visions about the attainable adult positions, and how early cognisance of "otherness" figures out in their strategies for identifying with certain groups while distinguishing themselves from others.

A set of background circumstances characterising students' families (socio-economic and educational background, different family forms and ways of life, relation to religion and traditions, language use, embeddedness in the local community and the broader environment) were taken into account as having potential impact on the construction of ethnic identity. It was assumed that identity models mediated by the immediate environment, especially by the parents, can be analysed in terms of ethnicity; and vice versa, ethnic identity should be understood as being related to other social identities, derived from all sorts of circumstances. Rather than presupposing that fixed and stable ethnic identities are inherited or acquired by birth, the research focused on the process of identity formation. Ethnic identity was not understood in and of itself as a prescribed "given"; instead, its relational aspects and its constructed nature were underscored, mainly by showing how personal experiences contribute to the formation of sensing the self. Speaking about adolescents, the essentially unfinished nature of their identities acquired special significance; consequently, many of the questions regarding identity formation aimed at eliciting responses regarding their future plans and aspirations. In dealing with minority existence, facing and reacting to tough experiences and offences, like threats from stereotyping, stigmatising attitudes, and discriminatory practices, constituted important elements of our inquiry.

Individuals belonging to distinct types of minorities revealed characteristic ways of relating to their minority situation, which corresponds to background factors that range from socio-economic indicators to the degree of adherence to certain core values by the community or the level of interethnic contacts. The adoption of identity strategies depends on conditions determining individual opportunities and aspirations (including further education, employment, and family life) as well as the possibilities of, and benefits involved in, socio-cultural integration and community development, implying unequal potentials with respect to the formation of positive identities. Based on these compound dynamics – that also may be understood as ordering principles – and in describing ways of identity formation with respect to the (intended) significance of ethnicity, a two-by-two scheme was devised:

## Types of identity formation in "minoritised" communities

<i>Genesis of minority group and its members' attitude to its ethnic character</i>	<i>Orientation to being "other" than the dominant group</i>	
	Maintenance of difference	Trivialisation of difference
Involuntary group: members' non-reflexive attitude to ethnicity	Ghetto life	Lumpenproletariat
Voluntary group: members' reflexive attitude to ethnicity	Ethnic pride	Assimilation/Cosmopolitan

This typology served as a theoretical construction highlighting certain key constituents of identity formation that have particular relevance for "visible" minorities. Thus, the involuntary/voluntary dimension underscores the fact that, despite commonalities in their conditions and their unequal positions vis-à-vis the majorities, certain groups' minority statuses originate in oppression and enforcement, while in other cases a degree of personal and collective freedom is involved in the genesis of the given community. As a tendency, the group's "ethnic character" is usually externally defined for involuntary minorities, and their members take it as a given, without attempting to reformulate the collective's ethnic traits as parts of their own identities. By contrast, in working out their own identities, members of voluntary minorities enjoy a certain degree of freedom to reflect on the "ethnic" component of their group belonging.

At any rate, being different might involve serious struggles for the members of all kinds of "minoritised" social groups. This idea stands in contrast both with the notion of unproblematic or unproblematised collective identities relying on widely accepted social values (like dominant national identities) and with the idea of a "free play" of identities assumed by certain post-modernist approaches in talking about the multiplicity of attachments as a terrain of unconstrained identity acts or performances.

The other axis of the matrix, that is, personal orientation toward the maintenance as opposed to the trivialisation of difference, underlines that outside pressures allow for some extent of variation in identity strategies, whether exercised consciously or adopted unconsciously. Far from reflecting the free choice of concerned minority individuals, the resulting categories show that identities are mainly reactive, working upon the given circumstances. Differentiation, in the case of "minoritised" groups, is always already there, and should be regarded as a given social fact. However, partially depending on the social status of the given minority, and partially on individual aspirations, difference becomes either supported and maintained, or refused and trivialised in identity strategies.

### *'Ghetto life'*

Ghettos, as residential areas forcefully separated along ethnic lines, are characteristically populated by extended families, where parents are mostly uneducated and do menial jobs. Due to limited educational and employment opportunities and the marginalised status of the inhabitants, these "socially excluded localities" show a high concentration of social problems, like poverty and unemployment. Life in the ghetto is characterised by permanence, yet a great deal of instability. The future appears unpredictable



and impossible to control. It is precisely insecurity and the lack of anything solid to hold on to that, precluding the possibility of having ambitions or making plans for the future, which condition a general sense of immovability. Simply, there is no exit. Thus, ghettos have a particular propensity in reproducing low and excluded social status, including educational disadvantages. Due to its marginalised status, ghetto society lacks an interest in self-enforcing capacities and thus depends on outside agencies for help, the influence of which is usually insufficient. Destitution and experiences of refusal by majority society result in a conflict-ridden life within the ghetto, marked by distrust and envy, rather than a sense of belonging together. If there are any feelings of being different, these, at best, function as a source of compensatory self-esteem, and are played out against fellow ghetto dwellers. As a result of the deterioration of community life, adherence to traditions or ethnic consciousness does not thrive in the ghetto. Thus, conventional ethnic markers, like language, customs, or religion, have only very limited significance, if at all. Instead of communal ties, feelings of not belonging anywhere dominate. The socio-ethnic division from the surrounding society becomes reinforced as the symbolic structures and representations – conveying experiences of dispossession and depreciation – are incorporated to form the core of identities. The coercive means of holding a collective together result in a kind of weak self-determination that fails to produce positive self-esteem. Still, in the face of outside threat, the ghetto community, in particular the extended family, may function as a protective shield. The lack of future prospects also enhances the importance of family values and expectations (like marital rules or those related to gender-specific career choices), so that eventually many ghetto youth decide to stay in the familiar environment and continue with the way of life they have witnessed at home.

Consequently, even though a product of negative conditions, some level of group cohesion and common values do exist in the ghetto. The supportive network of the family and the role models provided by the immediate environment help young people in coping with difficulties and orienting in life. Compensatory self-esteem, developed in reaction to hardship and humiliation but also incorporating elements of the accumulated knowledge, passed down by elder generations, concerning the ways of survival in the ghetto, comprises the germs of what could become, in more favourable circumstances, a sort of ethnic pride. The best examples for the state of affairs characterising ghettos are provided by the countries of post-socialist transformation: the Roma minority, representing the largest ethnic group in this region, is probably the most disadvantaged and destitute minority group in our sample. At the same time, certain minority communities in societies characterised by a post-colonial past, like Algerians in France or Caribbeans in the United Kingdom, also manifest the symptoms described above.

#### *'Ethnic (or religious) pride'*

By contrast, when separation from the majority society occurs on a voluntary basis, self-enclosure of the community correlates with ethnic or religious consciousness, and differences on such a basis are filled with mostly positive contents. This is the case with well-settled immigrant minorities, the members of which manage to achieve favourable social and housing conditions and respect, or at least tolerance, from the majority without giving up their collective identity. In fact, it is precisely owing to their ability to utilise communal resources that the residents of these typically metropolitan neighbourhoods can thrive. Like in the ghetto, extended families are also characteristic here; however – as opposed to a lack

of family planning – high fertility is rather the result of the accommodation of ethno-cultural or religious norms. The family represents not only the basic element of community life, a socially desirable model, and a resource of cultural and social capital for the young generation, but also an important economic unit, as indicated by the high ratio of family-run businesses. While also producing for outside markets, the economic profile of these neighbourhoods, especially in terms of employment, is marked by self-reliance. The overall impact of economic demands and community expectations supports gender distinctions: small enterprises are managed by men, while the female members of the family usually work there as assistants. As a consequence, while education is usually valued highly by the parents wishing for a better future for their children, attitudes towards schooling differ in the case of boys and girls. As girls gain less support and opportunities for self-development to meet parents' expectations for attaining successful careers, they are ironically left with more freedom to adopt a broader perspective about the future, involving some degree of detachment from the original community.

The particularly strong sense of solidarity and group cohesion characterising these minorities that manage to get on relatively well is manifested in a variety of forms including family enterprises, peer networks, religious congregations, or schools managed by the community. As for education, integration into the school system of the majority is also welcome as a way of advancement. It is important to note that communal solidarity remains high in an accepting and tolerant society allowing for multiple attachments, while negative influences from outside tend to result in severing the ties to the group of origin. While acknowledging the essentially voluntary nature of the adoption of group identity and the positive contents it involves, the moment of coercion should not be dismissed here. At least in part, positive group identity is produced as a reaction to external pressures, represented by anti-immigration policies and majority attitudes. This kind of responsiveness also indicates that these communities possess significant means to protect themselves and are thus much less vulnerable than ghetto populations. Furthermore, membership in the community does not only depend on individual will but, to some extent, is coerced by a certain self-disciplining mechanism within the community. Thus, the expectations of the family and the larger community exercise pressure on individuals, and group membership becomes posited as the guarantee to have a decent life in the future. In this sense, beyond representing an attribute of personal identities, "ethnic pride" should be interpreted as a collective response to a particular situation or group status that may be regarded either as a transitory state in terms of social integration or as a relatively permanent solution reflecting the ideal of a society made up of a multicultural mosaic.

Typical candidates for this category are Muslim minorities in Western European cities, in case of the EDUMIGROM study, those in Denmark, France, or Germany. In such religion-based communities, ethnicity and language also are important factors of identification but religious faith and belonging seems to override other types of community ties. The growing distrust and hostility affecting Muslims in the West heighten a sense of group cohesion and solidarity, while leaving ruptures within the community caused by unseen modernising influences. Although usually not based on religious foundations, some Roma families, typically living in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods, having training in certain respected vocations and a history of continuous employment in esteemed working-class occupations, also represent this category.

### *'Lumpenproletariat'*

The state of living in a "lumpenproletariat" community resembles, in many ways, the ghetto. It also involves forced separation from the majority society amidst the conditions of a severely deteriorated urban neighbourhood. However, the nature of the two formations differs at an important point: while *ethnicity* is a strong organising principle in the ghetto, "lumpen" urban slums are distinguished from the surroundings on *social* grounds and ethnicity does not play a significant role in their composition. The main identifying markers of such slum neighbourhoods are poverty, destitution, low social status, and troubled internal and external relations that invoke frequent police interventions. Alongside social pressures, like the lack of education or the absence of employment opportunities, the origins of these collectives have to do with administrative and policy measures leading to the uneven territorial distribution of resources, including shortages in a whole range of public services, and also education and employment opportunities. As a consequence, residential areas devoid of essential means for individual and collective development come into being and continue to exist, owing to a downward spiral of social decline reproducing inequalities. The severe socio-economic disadvantages of families become reinforced by cultural projections expressing aversion on the part of the majority society, so that, as a consequence, marginalised collectives are driven virtually below the social hierarchy, which is reflected by the quasi-extra-legal status of inhabitants. Segregation is experienced in all walks of life, including education, although not on ethnic grounds but due to the stigmatisation of poverty and the associated ways of life, involving competitiveness and conflicts, the struggling for scarce resources, rather than mutuality and cooperation.

Given the lack of common cultural grounds and group cohesion, as well as due to the complex family formations and unruly patterns and practices of community life, individuals born into such "lumpenproletariat" urban slums develop weak and uncertain identities that are informed, to a large extent, by experiences of discrimination and marginalisation. The awareness of stigmatisation, exclusion, and discrimination is high among them, leading to a sense of shame or even self-hatred. While ethnicity is not thematised, interethnic differences easily become stereotyped with reference to negative prejudices. Instead of multiple attachments, characterising people who manage to develop ethnic pride, the position of people "in exclusion" and their relations to their environment are characterised by amassed experiences of expulsion and the lack of positive ties. The resulting identities are unstable, effectively situational and reactive in character, and negative in their effects. The chaotic background of the children predestines them for low educational performance and very limited perspectives regarding the future education necessary for obtaining better lives. As a response, just like children in the "ethnic ghetto", most of them entertain futile hopes of getting away, either to a distant place in the same country that represents great fame and fortune, or to the country of origin embodying nostalgic yearning, or maybe a third country standing for utopian desires.

Examples of "lumpenproletariat" neighbourhoods could primarily be found in areas that are heavily populated by recently arrived immigrants in the selected British, French, and, to a lesser extent, the Danish and Swedish cities. Certain ethnically mixed neighbourhoods in some deteriorating and economically decaying Central European cities, where the common denominators of inhabitants are deep poverty and social exclusion, also fit this paradigm.

### *'Assimilationism/Cosmopolitanism'*

Neither traditionalism nor poverty determines the lives of minority adolescents whose families managed to avoid or escape the ghettos or slums and establish decent working-class or lower-middle-class lifestyles on their own, without having to rely on the extended family network or the support of the original community. Such parents are usually much better educated than minority adults in the other categories, yet their educational attainment still falls short of reaching a correspondingly high position, or at least the average standard of living of the majority society. While proud of their own moderate accomplishments, they push their children to achieve even more in life, and the way of progress is usually seen to lead through quality education and the adoption of majority values and lifestyles. Students belonging to this category typically reside in ethnically mixed, established neighbourhoods with better-off living standards and good majority schools where internal selection either on social or on cultural grounds is not practiced and the atmosphere is determined by multiculturalist tolerance or ethnic blindness. Given their secular character and westernised perspectives, families are usually more emancipated in terms of gender than those under the influence of community values marked by ethnic pride or repressed socially and culturally due to poverty and marginalisation. Nonetheless, as it is usually the father who functions as the driving force in migration and social mobility, it is boys, rather than girls, upon whom hopes for further upward mobility are invested.

Beyond these sociological characteristics, those squeezed into this type do not share all that much. Obviously, there is a great deal of uncertainty as to the possible outcomes of the described social constellation in terms of identity strategies of the students. The main criteria employed in defining the category have to do with the fact that, for one reason or another, adolescents belonging here have turned their back to the traditions of their original ethnic or religious communities so as to melt into some other collective, whether it is represented by the national majority or some supranational entity. The type of schools attended by these adolescents, dominated by the social majority and blind towards ethnic differences, reinforces the attempts of the families to trivialise their ethnicity. It is partly personal traits and partly contextual features that determine such aspirations, while the pushing forces derive from a sense of incompleteness and instability regarding the "mobility project" initiated by the parents or earlier generations. Projections about the future (education, employment, partner, and family) reveal a heightened sense of individual autonomy and the adoption of majority values and/or modern ideals. However, continuous adjustment requires a permanent preparedness and an unceasing mobilisation of attention and energies – it is a weary task, indeed. Thus, both assimilationism and cosmopolitanism are nourished by a kind of anxiety or practical considerations regarding social inclusion, marking pragmatism and conformism, rather than reflecting personal convictions – though the latter also may take their share in rejecting the significance of ethnicity as one's important personal trait. In any case, high numbers of interethnic relationships, anti-prejudiced attitudes, and tendencies to reflect on social problems are typical among students in this category. The downplaying of ethnicity helps in breaking down walls and establishing groups of solidarity based on other sorts of values, more responsive to actual personal experiences and needs. At the same time, this type of openness and initiative also may be an effect of constraints and coercions, in case intolerant attitudes are experienced on the part of the majority society against ethno-cultural or religious differences or, for that matter, if there is a scarcity of demands for

traditional professions characterising the economic niche of the given minority. In such circumstances, ambitions to assimilate are instigated by fears and anxieties, which demonstrate that even this category is not exempt from the influence of the prevailing power relations.

This compound category is typically filled by new immigrants from Asia and Africa and recently urbanised Roma families. As opposed to earlier guest workers, today it is mainly highly qualified people (usually men) who act as the motor of migration and make efforts to become self-reliant as soon as possible in the new place. Whether full social inclusion through assimilation or cosmopolitanism will be achieved by the next or the coming generations or will remain an illusionary project is, for the most part, beyond their will and left to larger-scale socio-political trends within the nation-states and across Europe.

## **Closing remarks: multiculturalism revisited**

Overall, the EDUMIGROM research painted a rather gloomy picture about the lives, opportunities, and future perspectives of ethnic minority adolescents in Europe. Our findings revealed that the prevailing systems of schooling work toward producing and maintaining their disadvantages in access to quality education, while tending to devalue their performance on cultural grounds, and consequently diverting their paths to advancement. Furthermore, minority students' daily lives at school proved to be deeply imbued by extensive practices of "othering" that lead to frequent endangerment of their identity development, while concurrently rendering a powerful institutionalisation of curtailed notions and patterns of inclusionary citizenship. Whether looked at through the lens of institutional structures in education or through the lessons drawn from their accumulated life experiences, young people from second-generation migrant and Roma backgrounds share a common fate of being marked with labels carrying dubious associations and implications for coming from "other" settings than most people – the majorities – around them.

As the discussions showed, ethnic "othering" is an all-encompassing phenomenon in the nine investigated countries, though its social functions and implications vary to a great extent. At one end of the scale, the distinctions that are expressed this way remain confined to the terrain of cultural (at times: also religious) diversity which does not necessarily imply social, economic, and political devaluation of the involved individuals and communities. Although "othering" always carries the risk turning into stigmatisation and social marginalisation, the societies in question make strong efforts to positively observe the boundaries of distinction and invest into countervailing it by provisions, services, and established conditions driven by notions of equal citizenship and social inclusion. In our sample, it is the case of the Nordic countries (Denmark and Sweden) that best demonstrates the indicated ambiguities and also shows the dedicated societal efforts to overcome the implied disadvantages of the prevailing ethnically informed social distinctions.

At the other end of the scale, "othering" becomes deeply institutionalised and serves as a "self-explanatory" principle for constructing and maintaining sharp divides in the social structures as well as differential rules in access to provisions, services, and opportunities. This is the case in the post-socialist

societies of Central Europe where "othered" Roma are kept apart from the majority in education, on the labour market, and also in the paths that drive access to welfare, housing, or healthcare. In these societies, ethnic "othering" is often used as the ultimate argument for justifying the bifurcation of citizenship and for creating visible ghettos of social exclusion that keep ethnic minority people away from even attempting to strive for integration on equal grounds. The mainstream needs for ethnic segregation are rooted in massive uncertainties and lasting frustrations of large groups of the majority who fear the loss of their fragile advantages and who gain assertions for socio-cultural superiority by pointing to the disadvantages and downgraded positions of an entire collective that is identified in stigmatised ways of "othering" like "the Gypsies".

Needless to say, there are substantial differences as much in the forms as in the immediate and longer-term implications of "othering" at these two ends and also in-between. Nevertheless, it seems important to emphasise the shared traits and also the commonality of the dangers that they entail: for "othering", even in its milder forms, becomes a *condition* that tends to attract inequalities of all kinds. Furthermore, distinctions made on the foundations of "obvious otherness" are fertile ground for turning class differences and the related social, economic, and political conflicts into the manifestations and struggles of hierarchically-valued cultures that appear to be constructed and continuously reproduced along the allegations of "ever-lasting traditions" and "biologically-conditioned inheritance". Through such transformations, ethnic "otherness" becomes a mighty metaphor for maintaining the status quo – that is, for justifying the arrangements of majority-ruled power and the "natural" deprivation and subordination of all those who are considered the "others".

The results of the EUMIGROM research showed the mightiness of "othering" also from another perspective. It became clear through the analysis of interviews with students and their parents that being "othered" becomes an important constituent of the self and a significant point of departure for adolescent identity development. As it turned out, ethnic minority youth perceives the world around through the lens of "difference". Whether accepting and internalising the derogatory contents that are assigned to "otherness" or entering a personal struggle to overcome them, whether giving up early aspirations for betterment or utilising "otherness" as a drive for attaining outstanding achievement, whether expressing desires for the safety of ethnic enclosure or striving for full-fledged integration into the majority – the point of reference always remains the deeply ingrained experience of inescapable "otherness".

At the same time, our study showed that awareness of "being different" also can provide the foundation of new forms of social cohesion and solidarity. In this sense, the potential disadvantages that are associated with ethnic distinctions can be transformed into clear advantages and lasting sources of togetherness. True, the possibilities of such a positive turn are open only for a minority among the minorities: for those who belong to networks with a relatively high concentration of cultural and social capitals. Even for them, it might well be a case of "sour grapes", but the more ethnic minority adolescents of these groups experience forceful separation and exclusion, the more they express dispositions that refer to the unique strength of the bonds and the rich potentials of cooperation that the shared fate of refusal and exclusion has brought about in their immediate communities.

Beyond the interplay and mutual determinations between experiences of being "othered" and the elaboration of reflexive responses as parts of adolescent identity formation, our research results revealed

the tough conditions that the socio-economic and power structures in the nine investigated societies create by institutionalising "othering" and the accompanying manifestations of ethnic discrimination. The most prevalent occurrences of institutionalised discrimination appear in the varied formations of segregation on ethno-social grounds. While ethnic minority families may often live in commixture with majority households, it is still justifiable to state in the light of our findings that wherever ethnic minority people represent a substantial part of an urban community, one tends to find them in spontaneously or deliberately designated segments that are often set up "just for them". Such separated urban areas inhabited dominantly or exclusively by ethnic minority people have become self-containing arrangements that embody the intersection of poverty and ethnic marginalisation in all our societies. As the wide array of parental histories showed, families tend to remain confined to their given conditions, and thus the intergenerational reproduction of marginalised positions appears to be self-sustaining. Breaking through the walls of the emerging ghetto necessitates a good deal of social and financial capital, and also requires a network of contacts and support. It is thus no surprise that there are only a few families in such communities that actually succeed in moving geographically outward and socially upward; at best, the rest can hope for some outstanding individual performance – and this is exactly what parents of adolescents expect from their children and what the most dedicated young ethnic minority students consider the primary goal for their adult lives.

The hopes and ambitions to escape from capture by ethnic "otherness" and the accompanying socio-economic downgrade provide the context where education enters the stage with prominence. After all, ethnic minority youths and their parents are equally aware that successful advancement in schooling is the one and only chance for leaving behind one's marginalised conditions and aspiring for meaningful integration into society-at-large. However, schools that principally should serve this goal demonstrate a catch-22 for the most part. Affiliated with the communities where ethnic minority people make up a substantial part, public schools that "othered" students attend tend to be as equally segregated as the surrounding neighbourhoods. As schools serving the immediate locality, they mostly provide education for children living in their proximity. Or if their set-up makes them open for a broader community, it is often the recurrent processes of "white flight" that turn them into designated "minority" institutions. As such, these schools hardly can escape the usual concomitants of declining quality in teaching, high turnover of the teaching staff, a sinking reputation, and a self-sustaining flight of all those – both from the majority and the ethnic minorities – who have the energy and the contacts to search for other, better schools for their children. This way local schools serving ethnic minority youth are captured by the very processes and forces that they should assist in overcoming. The inescapable marginalisation of the schools implies an inescapable marginalisation of their students as well: this way, local educational institutions of the ethnic minority communities become potent mediators of social and cultural disadvantages, and instead of countervailing them, contribute to deepening the fault lines that maintain the distinctions between "ordinary" young people and their "othered" peers.

True, local school policies aiming at genuine diversity in their student bodies and teaching staff can make an important difference. Our findings show that dedicated local leadership at schools and in the municipal administrations can assist ethnic minority students to catch up with – often even outperform – their majority peers; furthermore, innovative teachers can demonstrate remarkable achievements in

assisting their students in successful advancement, while they also contribute to strengthen their self-reliance and self-esteem. However, these attempts usually remain isolated and ultimately prove ineffective against the strong countercurrents of ethnic marginalisation and inclinations for social exclusion. At best, the heroic attempts of local school personnel and the civil organisations that support them are enough to engage in the start of a struggle for recognition on behalf of the communities that they serve and represent. However, their capacities are too limited to turn the wheel around by allowing for a gradual diffusion of the values and practices that they embody, and thereby expanding the local struggle for recognition to initiations of genuine reforms. Due to their in-built limitations, such promising local initiatives usually remain admirable exceptions that work against the mainstream currents but that are actually confined to being captured by their very exceptional traits: after all, they end up in isolation, and as such face increasing pressures to adapt to what is considered the general "norm".

The scarce examples of schools that follow the principles of multicultural inclusion orient one's attention toward larger-scale associations that forge the schooling of ethnic minority youths. Given the fundamental functions of education in distributing knowledge and, together with it, providing justification for the prevailing socio-political order, the working of education is largely determined by the structure and prevailing power relations in society-at-large. If the ethnic implications of these strong associations are considered, one resignedly can establish that the poor quality of their education is a "natural" concomitant of the "othered", discriminated, and downgraded standing of ethnic minority youth in the society that they are part of. Consequently, schools as agents of representing diversity and equal opportunities against the main currents of socio-ethnic distinctions are destined to become marginalised despite their grand attempts. Hence, the solutions lay outside the realm of education. It is coordinated policies toward (re)establishing the foundations of multiculturalism on the level of political representation as much as in the day-to-day relations within the communities that might provide the framework and the conditions for schools to attain the still widely-held goals of equal opportunity, equity, and colour-blind inclusion in and through education.

However, such a (re)turn to multiculturalism and the praising of diversity requires conditions and structures that place majority/minority relations on utterly new foundations and that provide new safeguards against the emergence of ethnic hierarchies and the accompanying widespread practices of "othering" and discrimination. The outlining of the manifold social, political, and institutional conditions, the sequencing of transformative interventions into education, and the working of the diverse welfare regimes is beyond the scope of the current report: we made some attempts for drafting the framework, the guiding principles, and the contours of the necessary – at the same time, feasible – reforms in our series of policy briefs and in the detailed final report on the project. Here, our goals were more modest: by utilising the strength of comparisons, we aimed to call public attention to the need for deconstructing the systems and routines that penalise certain groups simply because of their different origins. As one can conclude from our inquiries, the need for mobilisation for attaining interethnic equality and equity and the preparedness for acting toward these ends has become apparent for ethnic minorities as much as for majorities. After all, through the study, large groups of young people gave voice to being well aware that their entire future is at stake, entwined together with the workings of the established democratic order within and between the nation-states.



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