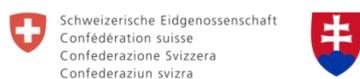


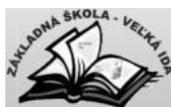


Centre for Sustainable Development

Let's Learn How to Learn



Tento projekt je podporený prostredníctvom programu švajčiarsko-slovenskej spolupráce v rámci rozšírenej Európskej únie



FEUERSTEIN INSTITUTE
step forward



Koninkrijk
der Nederlanden



Pilot Implementation of the Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment in Segregated Romani Ghettos

Based on Atlas of Romani communities (UNDP, 2013), in Slovakia there are about 215,000 people, who were born and for generations have been living in shameful poverty of segregated Romani ghettos: usually in shacks or dilapidated housing with no running water, electricity or sanitation, equipped with only a few pieces of furniture lacking tables, chairs, and suitable beds.

Half of the ghetto population are children. In Slovakia, each September, at the beginning of school year, around 5,500 children from Romani ghettos start their first year in primary school. Majority of them have never attended nursery or kindergarten.

The lives of children in ghettos are in many respects very different from the prospects of the majority population. Often their home lives are instable; their parents are disengaged, long-term unemployed living off social benefits. The children rarely have games or toys; their diet is poor and inadequate for their development and growth. All of these challenges prevent children's progress and keep them from reaching their potential, developing cognitive skills, command of Slovak language and nonverbal analytical thinking. In formal psychometric tests done by psychologists before children start first year of primary school children from Romani ghettos show huge delay compared to children from non-Romani population.

The public-education system in Slovakia has failed to engage and teach the children whose personal, social, neurological and cognitive skills are substantially delayed compared to their peers from mainstream society. Pedagogues and educators teaching in primary schools are not professionally trained or equipped with appropriate methodological tools to teach children from segregated ghettos.

As a result, six years old children (an age to start compulsory school attendance) from less stimulating Romani ghettos usually end up in schools for children with special needs, special classes or "zero" classes in order to learn missing skills and catch up with their peers from majority.

The results over the period of last decades have shown that children from segregated ghettos very often drop out of school and finish compulsory education at the age of 16, in fifth or sixth grade, with rather limited prospects to continue their studies at secondary schools where they could gain adequate skills to get a job. Without a proper assistance from early childhood, the ghetto residents are not given opportunity to develop their full potential and are condemned to live in appalling poverty for the rest of their lives.

ETP Slovakia's profound experience in providing comprehensive social and educational services in dozens of marginalized Romani communities in Slovakia over the period of last fifteen years has shown that due to above mentioned reasons children from ghettos require altered teaching approach.

Therefore, ETP Slovakia with the grant support from EEA Grants as part of the NGO Fund Active Citizenship and Inclusion Programme piloted, tested and evaluated an innovative special-pedagogy method - *Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment* (FIE) - in educating a group of randomly selected 21 pupils in their first year of primary school attendance in two primary school in Veľká Ida and Košice-Šaca, and 49 children of pre-school age in pre-school clubs in community centres operated by ETP Slovakia.

The aim of the project was to improve educational level of 80 children from ten Romani communities and help them to unlock their cognitive potential through introduction and regular use of the FIE method.

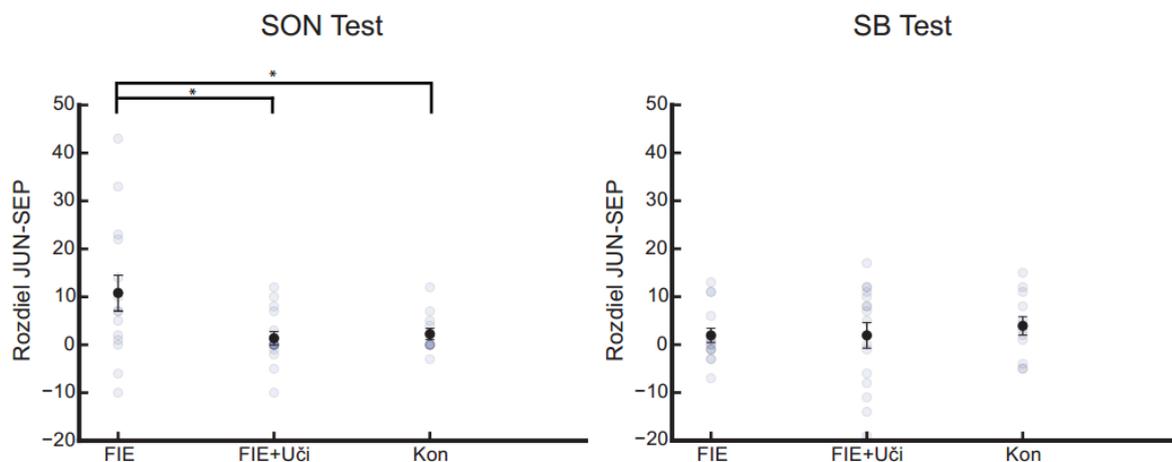
The overall purpose of the FIE project was:

1. to prove effectiveness of the FIE method in developing cognitive skills in conditions of:
 - a. ten preschool clubs in community centres (58 children)
 - b. two primary mainstream schools (21 children)
2. to introduce the FIE method to policymakers and relevant stakeholders
3. to encourage the policymakers to consider the use of the FIE method in state education program for all children from socially deprived communities.

FIE method is a strategy for learning to learn. It uses abstract, content-free, organizational, spatial, temporal and perceptual exercises, or so called instruments, that involve a wide range of mental operations and thought processes. The overall aim of the FIE instruments is to turn children with a reduced ability to be modified—to learn and adapt—into much more flexible and reflective operators in the world. An ultimate formative goal is to change the individuals in order to enhance their adaptability to fit environment, and face new situations. By changing and enriching a child's structure of thinking, FIE method makes them more receptive to stimuli and experience, and increasingly able to cope with new conditions and situations confronting them in life and, of course, in school. As FIE instruments, are as nearly as possible free from academic content, to achieve desired results, it is sufficient to apply FIE method a couple of hours a week for minimum of three years.

ETP's FIE project was designed to implement FIE method in two primary schools five days a week for four academic hours in the form of afterschool clubs, and in ten ETP's community centre four days a week for minimum of one hour as a part of preschool education.

Due to complications with random selection of pupils in primary schools included in FIE project the results of the quantitative assessment of psychological tests are not clear. Nevertheless, they do suggest that development of cognitive skills of children who were included in FIE afterschool clubs was more rapid in comparison to their peers from other classes.



Teachers, psychologists and other experts involved in the FIE project implementation agreed that participating children benefited greatly from the FIE education. The participating children, compared with children who were not involved in the project, had an increased appetite for learning, stronger intrinsic motivation and significantly developed cognitive, social and emotional skills.

According to pedagogues teaching FIE within pre-school clubs in community centres, children involved in the FIE project were much better prepared for school attendance than other children, not participating in the FIE education.

The following improvements were observed in children involved in the FIE project:

- Developed cognitive processes
- Increased intrinsic motivation to work and learn
- Better command of Slovak language (compulsory school language)
- Improved fine motor skills
- Better work in teams of peers
- Significant decrease in unexplained absences (none of children, who participated in FIE clubs had unexplained absences)

Moreover, the parents of children became more interested in their children's education and achievements. Parents of children who started attending school the following academic year 2014/2015 were inquiring about the possibility to enrol their children in FIE afterschool club.

Municipality where the pre-school clubs in Community Centre is located	Number of children in FIE education in pre-school club 2013/2014	0. class 2014/2015	1. class 2014/2015	Number of children enrolled in mainstream kindergarten 2014/2015	Children continuing in FIE education in preschool clubs in CC 2014/2015
Rankovce	6	5	1		
Veľká Ida	5	5			
Stará Ľubovňa	9		7		2
Moldava nad Bodvou	5	2	3		
Rudňany	4	4			
Ostrovany	4	4			
Košice-Šaca	9		2	1	6
Spišské Podhradie	7		4	3	
Sabinov	5	1	3		1
Krompachy	4	4			
Total	58	25	20	4	9

None of the children involved in FIE clubs in community centres was enrolled to the school for children with special needs or to special classes in primary school.