

NEW SURVEY FINDS ROMA PARENTS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Prague, Czech Republic: Contrary to long-held beliefs, many Roma parents in the Czech Republic are committed to formal education and want their children to receive at least a secondary education. Yet they do not understand that their children's chances of advancing to secondary school will be hindered by going to special schools.

These are the findings of new research by the Dženo Association, a Prague-based Roma news service and partner of the Advocacy Project (AP). Ivan Veselý, President of Dženo, presented them at a recent conference in Prague on Roma education.

In May 2005 Dženo conducted a survey of 300 Roma parents from six Czech towns and asked them about education, housing, politics, the job market and child-raising. More than 65 percent of the respondents replied that they wanted their children to go to secondary school. Only about 13 percent said they wanted their children to leave school after the elementary years.

This contradicts a long-standing perception that Roma parents do not value formal education. This grew in part because of the discrimination many educated Roma face when seeking employment. Mr. Veselý told the conference that the survey is particularly credible because the interviewers were Roma.

About 20 percent of the parents surveyed expressed the hope that their children would attend university. Another five percent hoped their children would study at technical college.

In spite of this apparent enthusiasm for mainstream education, Dženo notes that many parents raise no objections to their children attending special schools, where the students are predominantly Roma. Dženo's research suggests that this separation may hinder their chances of going on to secondary school.

Dženo also questioned Roma children aged 15 and older about their attitudes toward school. More than two-thirds said they liked going to school. About 35 percent thought their teachers treated them worse than their non-Roma classmates.

The results of the survey were analyzed at a new think-tank that was launched by Dženo in August. The organization also plans to publish an action agenda based on the findings.

Meanwhile, AP has nominated Mr. Veselý for the 2007 Yale World Fellows Program, a 17-week program that brings leaders from different institutions to Yale from around the world every summer.

Lynne Engleman, from the University of Calgary in Canada, interned for AP with Dženo this summer.

- Read more information on [Dženo](#).