

Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Issues (CAHROM)

Thematic group of experts CAHROM on enhancing the effective realization of Roma children' compulsory school education as the most efficient tool towards the mid-term improvement of the situation of Roma communities, and added value of ensuring access to vocational education for Roma youth

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EDUCATION OF ROMA PUPILS IN POLAND

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Compulsory education in Poland

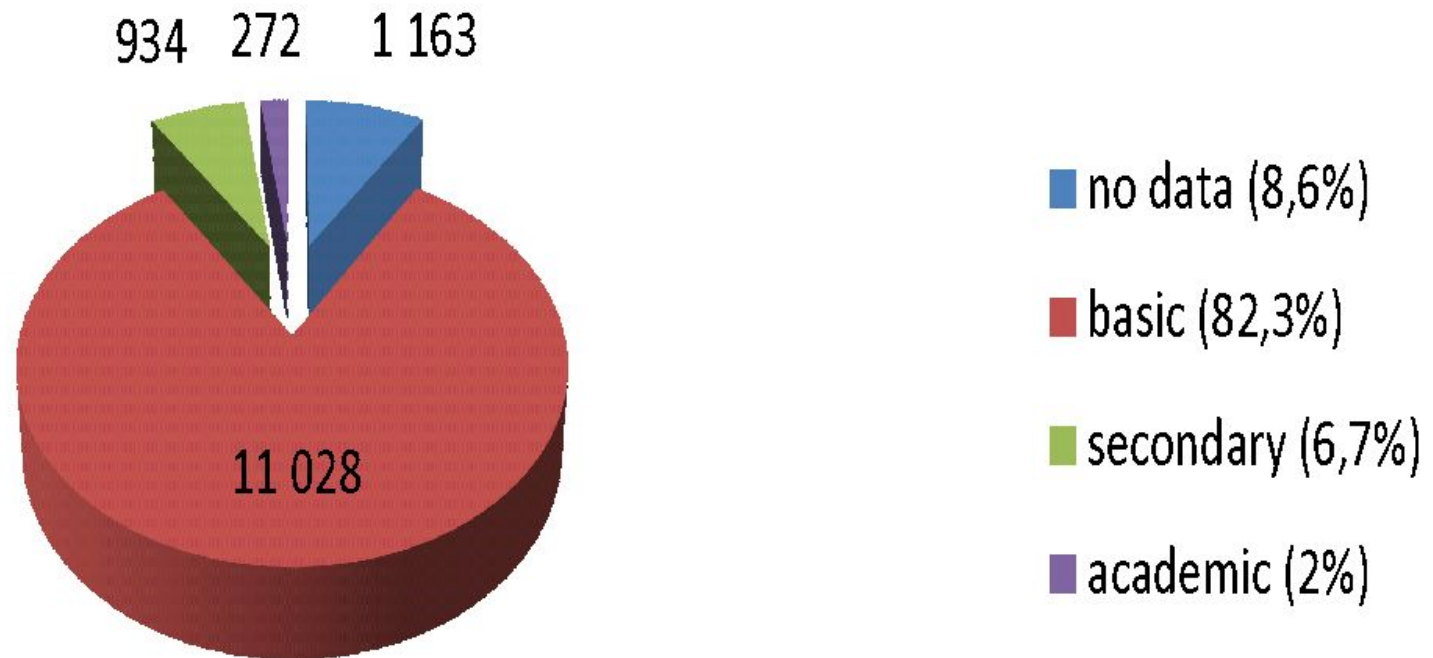
- Obligatory **one year of pre-school preparation** in age of **6** (*obowiązek przedszkolny*)
- **Compulsory education**, age **7-18**, two legal concept introduced in educational law:
 - **obligation to attend school** (schooling obligation - *obowiązek szkolny*) - from age 7 till the end of lower secondary school before reform 2017-2019 (primary 1-6 classes+ gimnasium 1-3 classes) and after reform till the end of 8 class primary school
 - **obligation to study** (education duty - *obowiązek nauki*) - after completing basic education (6+3 or after reform 8 classes primary school) up to age of 18
- **Compulsory education is not fulfilled if:**
 - no enrolling into the pre-school or school at all
 - absence higher than 50 % of lessons per month without relevant not justification
- **If compulsory education is not fulfilled:**
 - head teacher is obliged to react: written warning/admonition to parents or legal guardians
 - local authorities are entitled to demand the fulfilment of the obligation (under the threat of a fine)
 - if no improvement - the case should be reported to the Family and Juvenile Court.

Roma people in Poland - characteristics

- Roma people are recognised in Poland as an ethnic minority
- **Census '11**
 - **16,723 people declare Roma origin** (est. 20,000-25,000 people)
 - Age group of 0-9: 2,689 (16,08%) people
 - 92 % of Roma = urban population = no problems with access to public services, including education; relatively evenly dispersed around the country,
 - **No “Roma classes/schools”** or majority of pupils of Roma origin in one class, **no Roma settlements**, so no problems with segregated education, or low quality education for Roma pupils
 - **Very traditional groups** (Polska Roma, Lovari, Kelderari – sedentary since '60 XX cent.; Bergitka Roma - less traditional, sedentary for ages):
 - Roma language used at home so fluency in Polish is weaker comparing with non-Roma peers,
 - low education level in families so no support from family members,
 - low education aspiration as the formal education is not a real value,
 - relatively low age of marriage and first pregnancy,
 - lack of trust towards state's institutions.

Level of education of Roma people in Poland – census'11

Level of education, census 2011

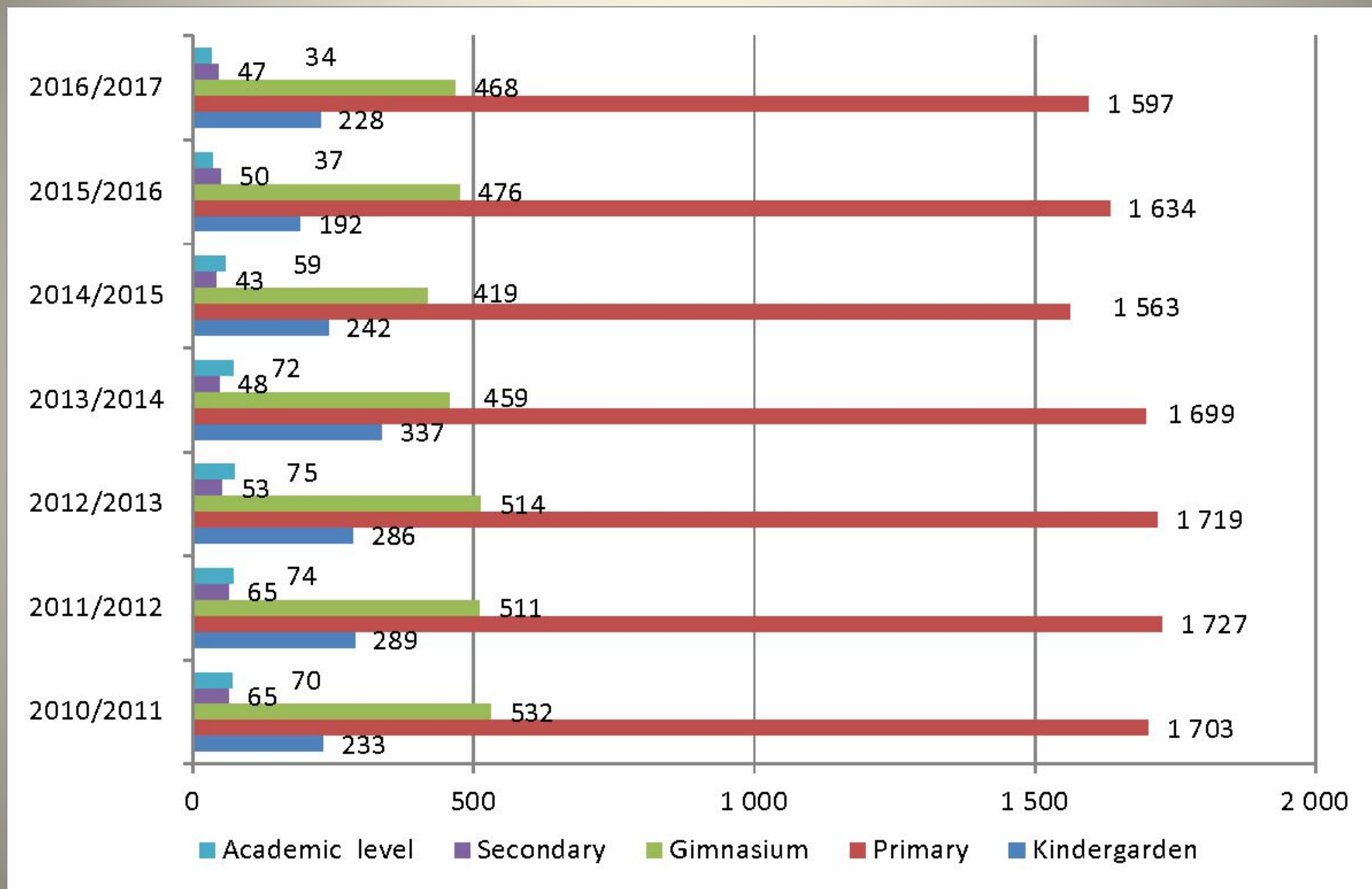


System of support of Roma pupils in Poland

- Roma educational assistants/mediators (92 people working in school year 2016/2017),
- supporting teachers (approx. 100 people),
- additional compensatory lessons, according to the needs,
- a network of integration dayrooms run by schools, to which Roma pupils attend,
- a network of approx. 50 additional dayrooms run by Roma NGOs all over the country,
- free: school transportation, meals at school, textbook and school equipment, insurances, etc.,
- scholarship system for all levels of education:
 - primary education (with gymnasium) – for talented pupils (on the basis of application, system financed by state and administrated by a Roma NGO),
 - secondary education – available for all pupils of Roma origin (on the basis of application, system financed by state and administrated by a Roma NGO, in practice: for all applicants),
 - tertiary education – available for all students of Roma origin (on the basis of application, system financed by state and administrated by a Roma NGO, in practice: for all applicants)

SCHOLARSHIPS	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
primary/talented	18	15	17	25	21	20	21
secondary	-	55	56	70	66	51	57
tertiary	70	74	75	72	59	37	34

Roma pupils in different levels of education in Poland

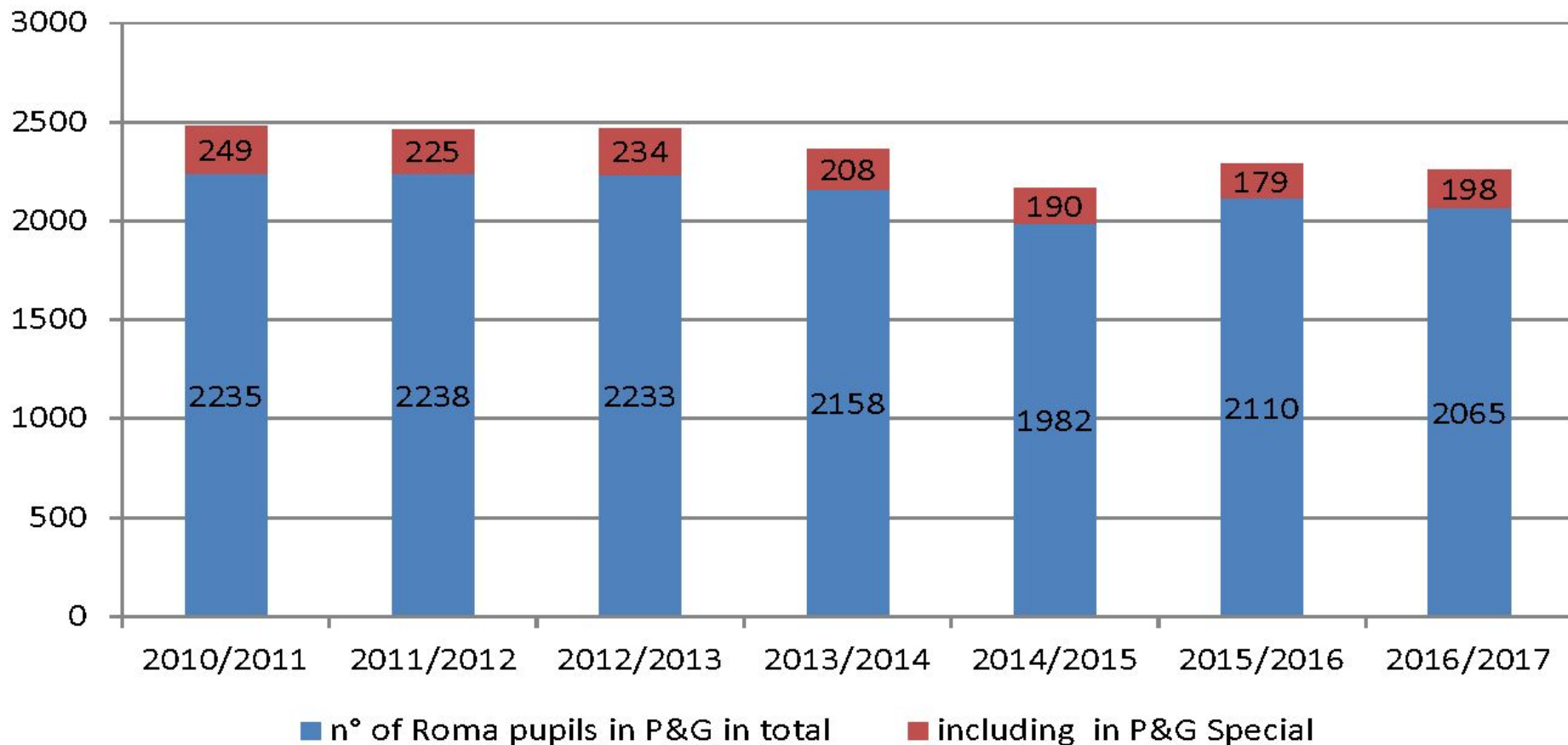


Roma pupils education in Poland – (rather) challenges

- enrolment of children into **preschool education is improving**, taking into account the fact that among traditional communities giving a child to the “gadje” institution is perceived as inappropriate and mother can be judged as “lazy” (does not want to take care of her child),
- enrolment into **basic primary education (1-6) seems to be a success (90/95% - 100 %)**,
- the **gap starts with gimnasium (age 12-14)** when “ marriage” becomes an option:
 - parents want to avoid „traditional hijack” – so girls are not allowed to go to school
 - or parents want to have their children traditionally married,
- **secondary** education - serious **under-representation** of Roma pupils,
- **tertiary** level – Roma students **underrepresented**; partially, the students originated from mixed Polish-Roma families (not from “typical” Roma community),
 - higher education is not perceived as an achievement ,
 - according to the tradition – graduated are still relatively “young” so no right to speak in front of elderly, no appreciation of higher education gives no motivation to study (no increase in social status within the community)
 - no influence of well educated Roma on the local community,
 - nonetheless they can serve as “role models”.

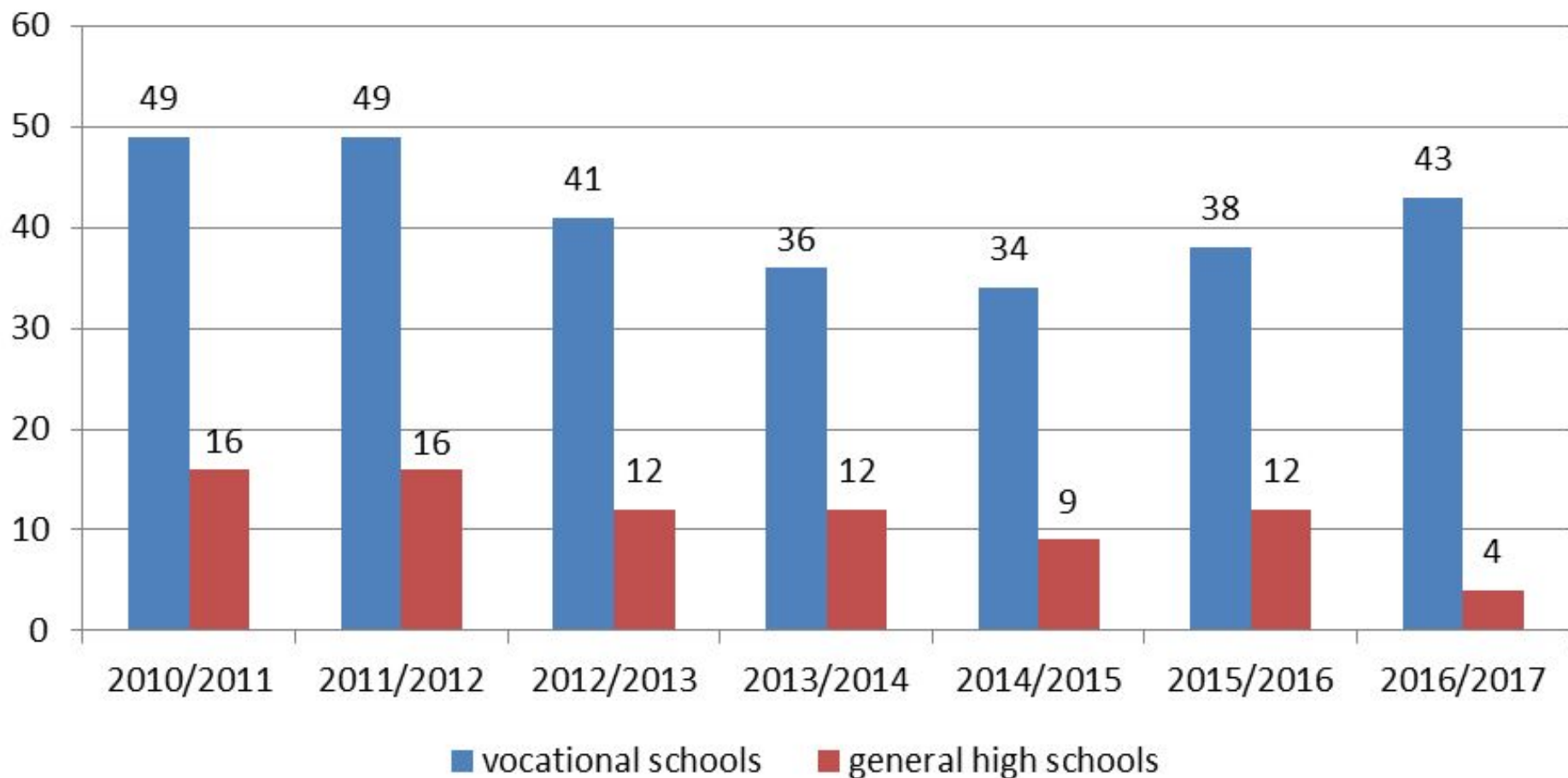
Any success/progress in the field of Roma people education in Poland since 2001?

- Roma educational/school assistant is an official job/profession (since 2004), hired as full time job by local authorities (responsible for education) on regular basis; established network of Roma educational assistants; a set of training provided by *Association of Roma Educational Assistants in Poland* in cooperation with regional authority
- Diminishing level of enrolment into the special school system (approx. 10 %)



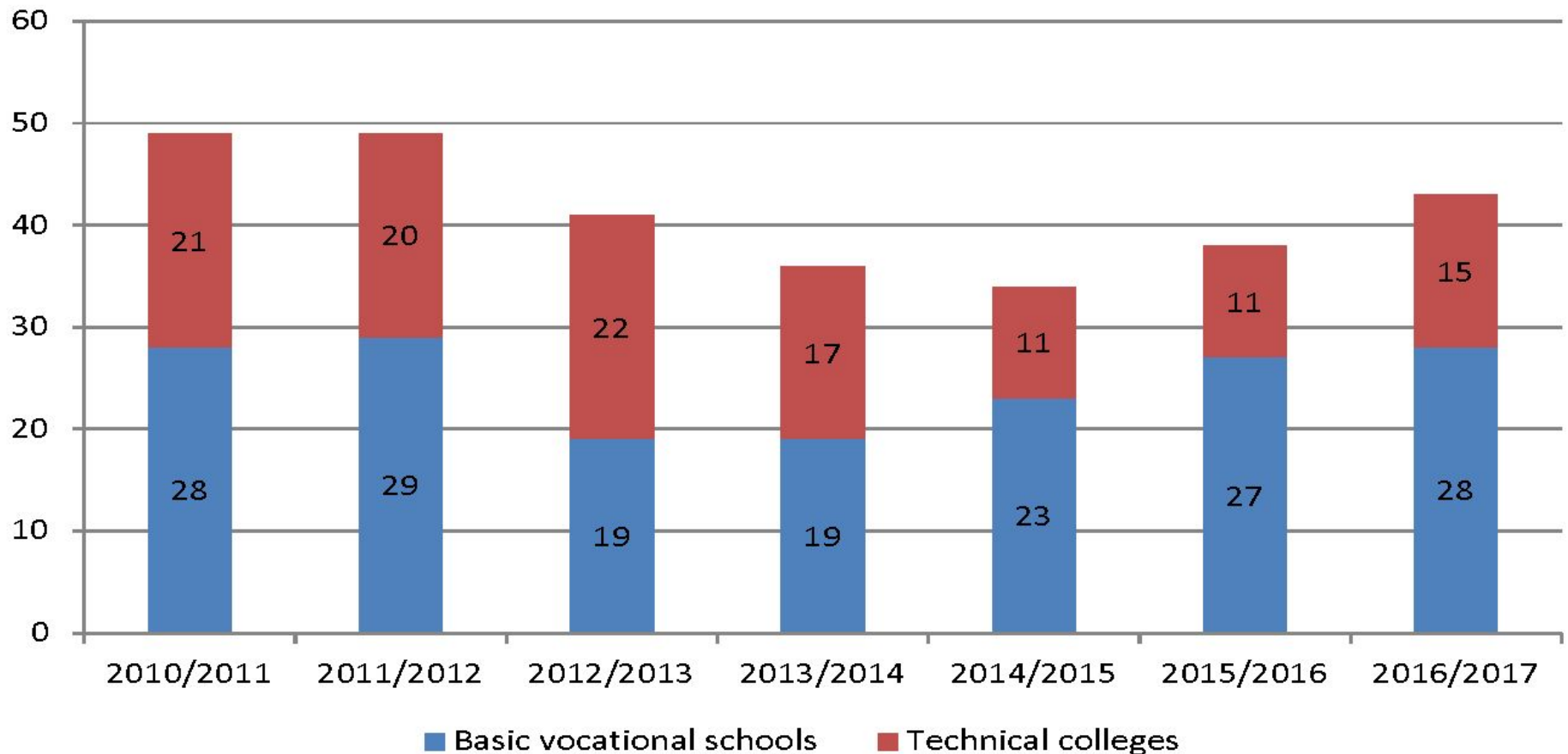
Secondary vocational education of Roma pupils in Poland (a little bit of optimism) 1/2

Roma pupils on the secondary level - the vocational schools seem to be much more popular than general high schools



Secondary vocational education of Roma pupils in Poland 2/2

Within the **vocational education** - the **Basic Vocational Schools** (2 or 3 years, no high school certificate - *matura*) are more popular than **Technical Colleges** (4 years, high school certificate - *matura*)



Conclusions

- It is expected that the current **reform of the Polish education system** from 6+3+3 into 8+4 **will limit the drop outs among Roma teenagers**,
- **family environment** (habit, conditions) is not **“education friendly”** – the Roma NGOs may help in this area, their role should be improved,
- nonetheless, the **attitude towards education slowly changes** in some communities - according to independent evaluation of the governmental “Roma Programme 2004-2014” - **Roma people perceive school more and more as the basic integration centre and the only friendly & safety public institution (!)**,
- “standard” working methods of school and local authorities are not successful in case of these communities as their culture and situation is different – tailored methods are needed
- systemic infrastructure is needed - financial, legal and organisational - to reach significant improvement of education situation of Roma people (no “project to project” approach, but stable financial support for local authorities to ensure Roma educational/school assistants, scholarships, free kindergartens, etc.),
- poverty is not the only obstacle in school enrolment and continuation of the education,
- vocational education should be promoted to attract Roma youngsters as it gives chance for economic independence, enable to bring money home at the early stage and can be first step for family business establishment in the future

Thank you for attention!

