



School desegregation
in Romania:
A systemic journey
toward inclusive
education

Case study

Romania learned that outlawing segregation was only the first step; true inclusion came from changing hearts, minds, and school support systems. One key insight from Romania is that high-level commitment must be matched by on-the-ground support – laws opened the school doors to every child, but training teachers, funding poor schools, and involving communities kept those doors open and welcoming. Romania's story shows that even after setbacks, a country can reboot and strengthen its reforms, moving ever closer to the ideal that every child, of every background, learns together in a quality school.

This case study describes the country's systemic journey, highlighting the interconnected building blocks of inclusive education, including legislative reforms, institutional innovations, data-driven monitoring, and stakeholder advocacy. Romania's approach features several unique innovations, such as codified definitions and sanctions against segregation, an integrated Education Management Information System (EMIS) for monitoring purposes which in Romanian is Integrated Information System of Education in Romania (SIIIR), and methodologies to identify intersectional vulnerabilities. These innovations together form a robust model for inclusive education. By analysing the key drivers of change in Romania, including legislative action, stakeholder engagement and advocacy, this study distils actionable lessons for other countries pursuing inclusive education and desegregation in their own contexts

Evolution of the legal and policy framework

A strong legal foundation has been central to Romania's efforts to desegregate its schools. This journey began with Ministerial Order No. 1540/2007, which prohibited the segregation of Roma children in schools for the first time. Although Order 1540/2007 was groundbreaking in intent, it had notable gaps: it provided only a general definition of school segregation without operational details; it lacked standardised monitoring or enforcement procedures; and it did not assign clear responsibilities or sanctions for non-compliance. Without concrete indicators and oversight mechanisms, this early policy had little practical impact on reducing segregation.

Recognising these shortcomings, Romania substantially revised its approach in 2016. Order No. 6134/2016 expanded protections to include all ethnic minorities and introduced four additional prohibited criteria for segregation: disability or special educational needs (SEN), socio-economic disadvantage, low academic performance and area of residence (urban or rural). Order 6134/2016 notably provided nine specific definitions of school segregation, capturing the various forms it can take, such as between different schools, between buildings within the same school, between classes,

and even within classrooms (e.g. segregating students to the back rows of seats). For the first time, it set out explicit obligations for stakeholders at school, county and national levels, and violations could trigger sanctions. This created a far more actionable legal framework, aligning Romania's policy with EU non-discrimination standards and the principles of the Race Equality Directive (2000/43/EC), which treats segregation as a severe form of discrimination.

Romania's commitment to desegregation was further strengthened by integrating these norms into primary legislation. The Pre-University Education Law No. 198/2023 enshrined the prohibition of school segregation in national law, representing a significant advancement beyond ministerial orders. Chapter VII of this law, entitled 'Inclusive Quality Education for All', guarantees non-discrimination in education and explicitly forbids the segregation of students on the grounds of ethnicity, disability/special educational needs (SEN), socio-economic status, disadvantaged background, residence or academic achievement. By defining segregation as the physical separation of students from protected groups such that their representation in a class or school far exceeds their proportion in the general population, Romania has set a clear legal standard by which schools can be held accountable. Incorporating these

provisions into an Education Law not only elevated their authority but also signalled the government's enduring commitment to upholding inclusive education as a core value of the system.

Most recently, Romania has consolidated and strengthened its policy framework through Ministerial Order No. 7701/2024, which entered into effect in January 2025. This comprehensive order consolidates previous regulations into a unified methodology for monitoring, preventing and combatting school segregation. Essentially, Order 7701/2024 incorporates the substantive protections of Order 6134/2016 and the technical monitoring procedures of Order 5633/2019 (described below) into a single, coherent policy instrument. By codifying all aspects – from definitions and data collection to intervention protocols – within one order, the Ministry of Education aimed to eliminate ambiguity and ensure consistency in application. The entry into force of the new order led to the repeal of the earlier orders (6134/2016 and 5633/2019), thereby streamlining the regulatory landscape. Thus, the evolution of Romania's legal framework illustrates a building-block process: initial principles set in 2007 were expanded in 2016, given legislative backing in 2023 and finally operationalised in 2024 as a comprehensive system. This trajectory highlights the importance of continuously refining policies to address gaps, adapt to broader inclusion goals and integrate lessons learned over time.

Institutional mechanisms and monitoring systems

Alongside legal reforms, Romania developed an institutional infrastructure and monitoring system to implement and enforce desegregation. A key innovation was the establishment of a National Commission for School Desegregation, which was first proposed in the 2007 policy and formally established in 2016. Under Order 6134/2016, the Ministry of Education set up the Commission to coordinate desegregation efforts across the country. The Commission collaborates closely with relevant ministry departments, such as the Directorate for Education in Minority Languages, to ensure that policy directives result in changes at the school level. Its responsibilities include developing strategies and norms, overseeing the implementation of desegregation action plans,

and providing technical guidance to county and local education authorities. By formalising a dedicated body, Romania has ensured that there is a sustained focal point within the government to promote inclusive education, which is an important safeguard given the frequent turnover in political leadership.

At county level, School Inspectorates (CSIs) have been assigned specific responsibilities for monitoring and preventing segregation within their jurisdictions. Similarly, at school level, existing committees (initially those focusing on violence, corruption and discrimination) have been tasked with monitoring and reporting instances of segregation within their schools. This multi-tiered structure creates accountability at each level of the education system. However, the effectiveness of these bodies depends on clear roles and active engagement. Romania's initial attempt in 2007 to establish a permanent working group on desegregation was unsuccessful, as the group was never actually formed. Building on this experience, subsequent policies have explicitly mandated the above-mentioned commissions and linked them to specific duties and timelines.

One of the most distinctive elements of Romania's approach is its data-driven monitoring methodology. In 2019, the Ministry of Education adopted Order No. 5633/2019 with the technical support of UNICEF, which approved the 'Methodology on School Segregation Monitoring in Pre-University Education'. This methodology introduced 103 quantitative and qualitative indicators to diagnose segregation across various criteria and forms. These indicators included the ethnic composition of classes, the distribution of vulnerable students across parallel classes or school buildings, and even seating arrangements within classrooms. Compared to the 20 basic indicators proposed in 2007, the 2019 set was far more comprehensive and evidence-based. It enabled officials to capture subtle patterns of segregation that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Importantly, this monitoring was intended to be a regular, periodic process (to be conducted annually), thereby ensuring continuous vigilance. Research has shown that, without ongoing monitoring, initial desegregation gains can be eroded by 're-segregation' trends. Romania's strategy explicitly acknowledges this

risk and aims to continually diagnose and address segregation trends as they emerge.

In order to implement the monitoring methodology on a large scale, Romania expanded its national Integrated Education Management Information System (SIIIR) using technology. The 2019 Order mandated the use of SIIIR for collecting and reporting all segregation-related indicators. During the 2022–23 school year, the methodology was field-tested in a pilot involving 176 schools of various levels. With the support of UNICEF and EU experts, the Education Ministry developed a segregation monitoring module within SIIIR to automate data aggregation and analysis. By 2023, this SIIIR module was operational, enabling every school to input the necessary data and identify potential cases of segregation using built-in algorithms. This IT integration significantly eased the burden on schools and inspectors by utilising existing administrative data – a crucial factor for sustainability. Investment in such infrastructure was necessary, as collecting data on ~100 indicators for all schools would be a formidable task without automation. The Ministry's decision to upgrade SIIIR for segregation monitoring during the pandemic proved prescient. In the 2024/2025 school year, the national exercise for monitoring school segregation was conducted for the first time. As part of this exercise, all schools in Romania reported data through the specially prepared module within the Integrated Information System of Education in Romania (SIIIR). By the end of 2026, the reported data will be processed and included in the national report on school segregation, identifying the schools where the phenomenon of segregation is present and where school desegregation efforts will be undertaken. .

Another noteworthy policy tool is the requirement for students to be randomly distributed into classes at the beginning of each educational cycle. Introduced as part of the 2019 monitoring methodology and later reaffirmed in Order No. 3945/2024, this procedure prevents school leaders and teachers from grouping students informally by ability, ethnicity or social background. By assigning children to classes through a random or algorithmic process, Romania is seeking to eliminate a common cause of internal segregation. Though seemingly technical, this measure

addresses the subtle practice whereby better-resourced parents or biased educators might cluster privileged children together, relegating disadvantaged students to separate classes. In the 2024/2025 school year, the Ministry made random allocation mandatory for all schools with multiple parallel classes in a year group. According to official reports, this step is intended to 'ensure compliance with the principle of school desegregation' by pre-empting the formation of segregated classes from the outset. These proactive measures, implemented before any monitoring data has been analysed, demonstrate Romania's commitment to preventing segregation rather than merely reacting to it.

Stakeholder engagement and advocacy as drivers of change

Romania's desegregation journey has been driven not only by top-down policy, but also by the sustained advocacy and engagement of key stakeholders. From an early stage, civil society organisations and international partners played a key role in raising awareness of school segregation. Since the mid-2000s, Roma rights NGOs and disability advocacy groups have exposed instances of segregated schooling and pressed the government for action. In 2007, a coalition of NGOs supported by UNICEF and the OSCE successfully lobbied for the first anti-segregation order, emphasising Romania's legal obligations to provide equal education opportunities. This alliance between domestic NGOs and global organisations exemplifies how external pressure and local voices can converge to spark reform.

The European Commission has also played a key role in driving change by enforcing anti-discrimination directives. In the late 2000s and 2010s, the Commission examined member states' progress on Roma inclusion, warning that school segregation could violate the Race Equality Directive. The threat of infringement proceedings – legal action by the EU against a member state for breaching EU law – loomed over countries with high levels of Roma segregation. Romanian policymakers were acutely aware that failing to address segregation might trigger EU sanctions, as had happened in other states. This external pressure provided additional impetus and a sense of urgency to strengthen national policy. Indeed,

officials have cited the threat of infringement proceedings as a 'powerful motivating factor' that helped to advance the desegregation agenda.

Throughout the desegregation drive, UNICEF has acted as Romania's strategic ally. First, it joined the NGO advocacy that secured the 2007 anti-segregation order. Then, it formalised a cooperation protocol with the Ministry of Education for the period 2017–2022. UNICEF's specialists have co-drafted important regulations (Orders 6134/2016, 5633/2019 and 7701/2024), devised a monitoring framework comprising 100 indicators and helped establish the National Commission for School Desegregation. Alongside this policy work, UNICEF undertook large-scale capacity building: by early 2020, every county inspectorate and thousands of school leaders had been trained to collect, interpret, and act on segregation data. UNICEF also funded and co-designed the SIIIR segregation-monitoring module and an online helpdesk, providing schools with user-friendly dashboards and real-time technical support. In the community, UNICEF developed the 2011 School Mediator's Guide for Roma Communities, trained Roma mediators and continues to bring together NGOs, parents, students and academics to draft the forthcoming National Strategy for School Desegregation. Crucially, by briefing ten successive education ministers between 2016 and 2023 and supplying comparative evidence, UNICEF's consistent presence has preserved reform momentum during political turnover, illustrating how external partners can reinforce national capacity rather than supplant it.

Within Romania, certain institutional stakeholders have taken on crucial roles. One such body is the National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD), an autonomous agency that adjudicates discrimination complaints. Individual cases of school segregation, especially those involving Roma students, have been brought to the CNCD by NGOs and parents over the years. The CNCD has the authority to investigate and issue rulings or fines in confirmed cases of discrimination. However, prior to recent reforms, the CNCD's impact on desegregation was limited by a lack of clear definitions and evidence – many schools could deny intent to segregate and data was scarce. The new legal framework and monitoring system promise to bolster the CNCD's

effectiveness by providing objective evidence (in the form of SIIIR data and defined indicators) to substantiate complaints. Going forward, if a school is identified in national data as being segregated, this information could inform CNCD investigations, strengthening enforcement. Thus, Romania's strategy envisages a synergy between administrative monitoring and quasi-judicial enforcement: systemic data can trigger accountability through anti-discrimination law.

The pace of implementation has been significantly influenced by political leadership – or at times the lack thereof. There has generally been an official stance against segregation, with multiple Ministers of Education in recent years voicing support for inclusive education. Nevertheless, Romania had ten different Education Ministers between 2016 and 2023, which posed challenges in terms of continuity. Each change in leadership risked derailing ongoing initiatives, as new ministers had to be convinced of the importance of desegregation and brought up to speed on technical processes. During these transitions, UNICEF played a crucial role in maintaining momentum – the UNICEF team in Romania repeatedly briefed incoming ministry officials, provided evidence on why tackling segregation is essential, and advocated sticking to the reform roadmap. Without this external champion of consistency, the policy might have stagnated amid shifting political winds. While high-level political will was present in principle, it needed to be translated into sustained administrative action, which could only be achieved through persistent advocacy and support.

Ultimately, it is the stakeholders on the ground – school administrators, teachers, parents and local authorities – who make or break desegregation efforts. Romania's experience has shown that legal mandates alone are insufficient without buy-in from these stakeholders. Some school principals and teachers initially resisted desegregation measures, such as random class assignment or transporting students from marginalised neighbourhoods, often due to misconceptions or convenience. Better-off parents, perceiving differences in school quality, sometimes oppose measures that would mix their children with students from disadvantaged groups, fearing that this might compromise academic standards.

Meanwhile, disadvantaged parents may lack the resources or confidence to demand better educational inclusion for their children. To address these attitudes, raising awareness and providing training have been key. UNICEF and the Ministry have engaged in public information campaigns about the benefits of inclusive education, emphasising that diversity in classrooms improves the social skills and cohesion of all students, not just vulnerable groups. There is also an ongoing effort to improve quality across all schools (through equity funding, infrastructure upgrades and teacher incentives in schools in areas of need) so that parents feel less inclined to ‘vote with their feet’ and send their children to a few elite schools. Romania recognises that, as long as stark quality gaps exist between schools or classes, social pressure for segregation will persist. Thus, desegregation must go hand in hand with levelling up educational quality system-wide.

Local government officials, such as mayors and municipal councils, oversee school infrastructure and can influence school zoning and resourcing. Their support for desegregation varies. While some have championed inclusive policies, others perpetuate segregating practices quietly (for instance, by maintaining ‘Roma annexes’ in separate buildings or not investing equally in all neighbourhood schools). The question of local political will remains unanswered in Romania. In order to secure local alignment, the National Commission and Ministry have included local authorities in consultations and disseminated data highlighting segregation issues in their constituencies. It is hoped that objective evidence and community pressure will encourage mayors to view desegregation as a positive and necessary goal rather than a political risk.

Addressing intersectional vulnerabilities in education

A notable feature of Romania’s approach is its recognition of intersectional vulnerabilities – the idea that certain children experience multiple, overlapping forms of disadvantage that can exacerbate their risk of exclusion. School segregation in Romania does not occur solely along ethnic lines; in practice, many segregated settings concentrate children who are poor, Roma, from rural areas, and/or have special educational

needs all at once. For example, a Roma child from a low-income family in a remote village may face a much higher risk of being in a segregated class than a Roma child from a better-off family in town. Understanding these layered vulnerabilities was crucial for designing effective interventions.

Historically, Romanian policies had compartmentalised vulnerable groups (Roma, disabled, poor, etc.) without considering their overlap. The 2016 Order marked a turning point by explicitly covering multiple criteria and thus implicitly acknowledging that a single child might fall under more than one category. Building on this, recent reforms have tried to operationalise intersectionality in concrete terms. The monitoring indicators developed with UNICEF assistance include combinations of factors – for instance, they track not only how many Roma students are in a class, but also how many of those Roma students are from low-education families or live in poverty. By doing so, the data system can flag “hotspots” where disadvantage is concentrated to a degree that certain classes or schools become segregated by multiple factors at once.

Romania’s new legal framework even leaves room to expand protected criteria as needed. The 2023 Education Law lists the main grounds (ethnicity, disability, etc.) but allows that additional characteristics can be added if evidence emerges of segregation on those bases. This flexibility is forward-looking; for instance, if gender-based segregation or other forms were observed, policies could adapt accordingly. Already, policymakers are noting new vulnerabilities that merit attention, such as children of underage mothers or refugee children (the example given is Ukrainian refugee students in Romania). These children may not have been traditionally considered in “at-risk” definitions but clearly face educational marginalization. The desegregation monitoring now incorporates such status markers, reflecting an evolving understanding of who might be left behind.

Data from recent studies underscored the need for an intersectional lens. The 2022 Population and Housing Census in Romania, along with the European Commission’s Education and Training Monitor 2023 highlighted that Roma children in Romania often simultaneously experience deep poverty and residential segregation, compounding

their educational segregation. Nationally, statistics have been alarming: as of 2022, approximately 51% of Roma pupils attend schools where all or most of their peers are also Roma – a steep increase from 26% in 2015. This trend indicates growing isolation of Roma communities in certain schools, which often correlates with high poverty rates and lower resource schools. Indeed, a 2008 UNICEF-supported survey found that in two-thirds of surveyed schools, Roma students were segregated in some form; in one-third of the schools, Roma comprised the majority of students, while in another third they were separated into Roma-only classes. Such schools tended to have worse facilities and less qualified staff, demonstrating the overlap of ethnic segregation with quality deficits. Romania's commitment to inclusive quality education recognises that simply mixing students is not enough – the schools they attend must be equipped and staffed to meet all learners' needs. Thus, desegregation efforts are coupled with broader inclusive education reforms (curriculum adaptation, teacher training in diversity, etc.) to ensure that vulnerable children not only learn alongside others but truly belong and succeed.

One concrete methodological advancement is the development of a segregation intensity scoring system. The latest monitoring framework doesn't just identify whether segregation exists; it also measures its degree. For example, a school where 100% of children in certain classes are vulnerable (and 0% in other classes) would score as highly segregated, whereas a school where distribution is somewhat uneven would score lower. This allows for prioritising interventions at sites of acute segregation. The scoring takes into account multiple criteria – effectively, a child who ticks several vulnerability boxes contributes more to the intensity score if concentrated with similar peers. Such a tool is fairly innovative internationally and gives Romania an edge in targeting resources (e.g. extra teacher aides, grants, or inspections) to the most segregated environments first.

Addressing intersecting vulnerabilities also required better data collection at enrolment. It was observed that the standard student enrolment form did not capture all the information needed to monitor segregation

(for instance, whether a child is from a single-parent family or has a parent working abroad). Efforts are underway to enrich administrative data and ensure that, with appropriate privacy safeguards, schools report key socio-economic and demographic variables into SIIIR. This way, the *moment a child enters the education system*, their various needs and potential disadvantages can be recorded (confidentially) and later used in aggregate to detect patterns of segregation. While issues like personal data protection and reluctance of families to self-identify (especially for ethnicity, due to lingering stigma) present challenges, Romania is working to balance data needs with privacy and trust. Roma organizations have been encouraged to assist in sensitively improving ethnic self-identification rates so that the data reflects reality. Ultimately, acknowledging students' intersectional identities is key to designing inclusive practices that reach those who most need support.

Innovations and unique aspects of Romania's approach

Romania's desegregation architecture stands out due to the way in which six innovations come together to form a coherent, mutually reinforcing system – one that goes far beyond the incremental or piecemeal approaches commonly found elsewhere in Europe.

Firstly, it begins with exceptional legal precision. While many countries rely on broad anti-discrimination clauses, Romania's regulations spell out segregation at four levels – school, building, class and even the last rows of benches – and prohibit it based on five criteria: ethnicity, disability/special educational needs (SEN), socio-economic status, residence and prior academic performance. By conceding no grey areas, this typology prevents administrators from claiming that pupils placed in a separate wing or parallel class are technically 'in the same school'. This clear language also underpins enforceability: inspectors and the National Council for Combating Discrimination can cite specific clauses rather than arguing abstract principles, making it more likely that sanctions will be enforced and remedial action will follow.

Second, legal clarity is combined with real-time, data-driven oversight. Segregation indicators –

over one hundred quantitative and qualitative items – are embedded in Romania's Education Management Information System (SIIR). As schools already submit enrolment, attendance and achievement data via the SIIR system, incorporating desegregation metrics has transformed monitoring from a special project into routine administrative work. Each autumn, school directors enter class composition data and the system applies pre-set thresholds to flag any building or classroom whose share of vulnerable students far exceeds local population benchmarks. County inspectorates and the National Commission then access automated dashboards that pinpoint where interventions are required. There are two key benefits: policy decisions are based on evidence rather than anecdote, and the practice is institutionalised, so it is unlikely to disappear when donor funding ends or political attention shifts elsewhere.

Thirdly, Romania moves beyond the binary question of whether segregation exists by scoring its intensity. The monitoring algorithm calculates how concentrated vulnerable pupils are within each unit, producing a normed index ranging from minimal to acute segregation. This nuance is important because it directs scarce resources, such as teacher assistants, mobile counsellors and infrastructure grants, to the most severe hotspots first. Equally importantly, it tracks incremental progress. A school whose index shifts from 'severe' to 'moderate' can demonstrate improvement long before achieving perfect parity, which sustains local motivation and provides ministry officials with credible success stories.

Fourthly, the framework does not rely on ex-post correction alone; it incorporates prevention. A nationwide ministerial order now requires schools with multiple parallel classes to allocate pupils by random draw (or an equivalent algorithmic process) at key intake points. By eliminating teacher or parent discretion in class composition, Romania cuts off the common pathway by which well-connected families cluster their children into 'strong' tracks, leaving poorer or Roma pupils in 'weaker' ones. The rule is administratively straightforward – schools publish the randomisation procedure in advance and

videotape the draw – but politically bold, signalling that the ministry will abandon customary practices if they perpetuate inequity. Early evidence from pilot counties shows that random allocation, when paired with supportive teacher development, yields more balanced classrooms without reducing overall achievement.

Fifth, these technical instruments form part of a robust governance framework. The National Commission for School Desegregation and Inclusion (NCSDI) links ministry departments, county inspectorates and school-level committees via clear reporting lines and annual work plans. Rather than creating a stand-alone project unit vulnerable to budget cuts, the ministry has embedded equity duties into existing structures. Inspectorates must now include segregation metrics in their routine quality reviews and every school's anti-violence or ethics committee must log desegregation data each term. This 'mainstreamed' accountability sends a powerful cultural message: dismantling segregation is part of every education official's day job and not the remit of a special task force. In practice, the NCSDI serves as both a coordinating hub and an institutional memory, which is crucial in a political environment that has seen ten education ministers in seven years.

Finally, Romania ensures the system is future-proofed with adaptability and strategic vision. The 2023 Education Law explicitly permits the addition of new protected criteria as and when evidence emerges – an important safeguard in a rapidly changing society which is now hosting large numbers of refugee pupils and recognising new at-risk groups, such as children of underage mothers. Alongside this legal flexibility, the ministry – again with UNICEF support – is drafting a 2025–2035 National Strategy for School Desegregation. This strategy will combine legal enforcement, data analytics, teacher training, infrastructure investment and community outreach into a single roadmap complete with costings, milestones and evaluation cycles. Few countries have attempted such a granular, equity-specific action plan. If it is fully implemented, it could become a template for integrating multiple strands of inclusive education policy on a national scale.

Lessons learned and actionable insights for other countries

Romania's experience highlights ten interconnected lessons for any country seeking to dismantle segregation.



Firstly, a clear legal ban must be adopted that defines all forms of segregation and covers all grounds of protection, while assigning sanctions. Clarity in the law is essential for enforcement. Romania's multi-tier definitions spell out segregation at school, building, class and seating-row levels, while prohibiting discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, disability, poverty, residence or achievement. This level of precision leaves no loopholes and empowers watchdogs to impose sanctions the moment segregation is detected.



Secondly, monitoring should be institutionalised by incorporating a comprehensive set of segregation indicators into the Education Management Information System (SIIR). Automatic annual reports now highlight disparities that were previously hidden, ensuring that policy is evidence-based.



Thirdly, it is important to recognise that desegregation will fail if families still perceive stark differences in school quality. Romania combines its equity initiatives with targeted investment in better infrastructure, teacher incentives, and learning materials so that every neighbourhood school becomes a viable option, thereby reducing the 'flight' dynamic that fuels segregation.



Fourthly, ensure stakeholder buy-in. Pupils' and parents' national councils, teacher unions and municipal leaders were involved in consultations, public awareness campaigns and diversity training. This transformed inclusion from a top-down directive into a collaborative effort.



Fifthly, develop new technical capacity. UNICEF and other partners provided expertise in designing indicators, coding the SIIR module, and training inspectors and teachers – a level of support that will also be required by most countries when shifting from abstract commitments to daily practice.



Sixthly, create structures that can withstand political change. For example, Romania's National Commission for School Desegregation was backed by cross-party endorsement and EU human rights obligations, enabling it to maintain reforms through ten education ministers in seven years.



Seventhly, adopt low-cost preventative measures, such as Romania's mandatory random allocation of pupils to classes, to prevent segregation before it can take root.



Eighth, apply an intersectional lens. By mapping the overlaps between ethnicity, poverty, disability and rural isolation, the authorities can allocate scholarships, transport, teaching assistants and counselling services to pupils facing the greatest number of barriers.



Ninth, embed change within a long-term strategy that includes milestones, budgets and annual reviews as part of the broader education sector plan. Romania's forthcoming National Strategy for School Desegregation will embed reforms within a multi-year timetable.



Finally, safeguard data privacy and community trust. While ethnicity and income data are important, they must be collected under strict confidentiality. Meanwhile, Roma leaders should explain to families how accurate self-identification leads to better services. Taken together, these ten strategies will transform isolated policies into a self-reinforcing ecosystem.

This will demonstrate that clear laws, rigorous data, sustained resources and persistent engagement can dismantle deeply rooted segregation and enable every child to learn in a diverse and equitable environment.

The Romanian case study shows that inclusive educational reform is a complex undertaking requiring legal action, administrative systems, human resources and community attitudes to be aligned. Romania has created an interlocking ecosystem in which each component reinforces the others to support inclusion by pairing laws with enforcement bodies, integrating data systems with training programmes and linking advocacy to policy change. Other countries should assess their own contexts across these dimensions, adapt

lessons accordingly and begin with targeted pilot schemes, such as a regional monitoring system or random class allocation, to build momentum for wider implementation. Although challenges remain – such as sustaining political and public support, eradicating subtle segregation, and improving quality in all schools – Romania's progress is evident. This is marked by a robust legal ban, nationwide monitoring, and a growing appreciation of inclusion. It shows that deeply rooted segregation can be dismantled through a holistic, data-driven, and rights-based approach. Ultimately, Romania's experience provides practical guidance and hope, demonstrating that meaningful progress towards equitable and diverse learning environments is possible with vision, collaboration, and perseverance.

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