

CASE LAW MOSAIC

QUARTERLY INFORMATION BULLETIN OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN HUNGARY, 2021/4

Complaint about repeating a year due to lack of inclusion in digital education

A petitioner of Roma origin complained that their child, who was studying in the second year of the Vocational Training Bridge Programme, could not be adequately prepared for the exams in several subjects due to the lack of access to the digital education system, and therefore could not meet the requirements of the year, and was forced to repeat the year on the basis of the institution's decision. The complainant wrote that they were informed of the steps to connect to the digital education platform introduced due to the coronavirus pandemic only on 23 June 2021 by the deputy head of the member institution, and therefore they could not support their son in connecting to the online education system earlier. According to the complaint, there were several Roma pupils who were unable to connect to the digital platform, and the complainant considered that they were not receiving adequate education. The complainant repeatedly stressed that they considered it essential for their son to obtain a basic education and subsequently find a job in the labour market.

The complainant found it unacceptable that their child was obliged to repeat the year and contacted his class teacher and the deputy head of the member school to report the difficulties experienced. The father requested that the school help to resolve the situation and provide a make-up exam for the child, but the school allegedly refused to provide any meaningful assistance.

Following the complaint, the Minority Ombudsman contacted the director of the vocational training institution and asked for full information on the circumstances of the case. The director of the institution did not respond to the request after ninety days, and the Minority Ombudsman contacted them again, asking for the missing information. Although the head of the institution replied urgently, the reply was incomplete, therefore, sending a further request to the head of the institution was necessary. After receiving and analysing the replies in full, the Minority Ombudsman found no breach of fundamental rights and, according to the information available, the institution had properly informed the pupil of the steps to be taken to engage in digital education and had also warned parents in writing of the consequences of the pupil's failure to participate in distance learning. In the meantime, however, the institution launched a programme to develop pupils' basic skills, which the complainant's son joined and this way has not dropped out of school.