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QUESTIONS FOR THE BURNING SESSIONS:

I would like to discuss the topic of language education of the Roma children living in the Czech Republic or in other countries too. Especially the question of what language these children should be educated in as a part of an ethnic minority and at the same time coming from socially disadvantaged environment.

As psychological researches have shown the Roma children in the Czech Republic know far less words when starting compulsory school attendance than their peers from majority. But this doesn't apply only for the Czech language, but also for the Romani language which can be considered as their mother tongue. They should have a right to be educated in their mother tongue, but on the one hand, they are not able to speak it and on the other hand, they are usually not even officially recognized as members of language and ethnic minority.

The question I'd like to discuss is then in what language the Roma children should be educated in Czech schools to really make their learning experience comparable to the experience of children coming from the majority, or how to provide the Roma children with the proper pre-school preparation in a way that would serve them and not bring up negative feelings of the Czech majority. The topic is quite complicated, because it's not only whether they should be taught in their mother tongue, but at the same time there is a problem of their very limited vocabulary in general, which makes them vulnerable and disadvantaged when first entering Czech educational system.