



HELSINKI
COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN
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MACEDONIA

ANALYSIS OF THE PUBLIC POLICIES
ON THE RIGHTS OF THE ROMA
IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Analysis of the Public Policies on the Rights of the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia

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List of abbreviations

AP - Action Plan

EARM - Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia

RM - Roma Inclusion Decade

SSO - State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia

PHI - Public Health Institute of the Republic of Macedonia

M&E - Monitoring and evaluation

MLSP - Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

MH - Ministry of Health

MES - Ministry of Education and Science

MLSG - Ministry of Local Self-Government

MTC - Ministry of Transport and Communications

NCIRDS - National Coordinator for Implementation of the Roma Decade and Strategy

Non-Roma - An abbreviation for the majority population living in the vicinity of the Roma, within the regional UNDP research on Roma. It is used in titles of tables and graphs.

HBO - Non-governmental organization

OSCE - Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe economic collaboration of developed countries

UN - United Nations

DIRSD - Department for Implementation of the Roma Strategy and Decade under the MLSP

Census 2002 - Census of the Population, Households and Housing in Macedonia, 2002

RM - Republic of Macedonia

REF - Roma Education Fund, Budapest Foundation

RIC - Roma Information Center

WB - World Bank

RM - Roma Strategy

WHO - World Health Organization

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

FOSM - Foundation Open Society Macedonia

HIF - Health Insurance Fund

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this analysis is to provide a holistic, comprehensive and systematic outline of the legislation and practices related to Roma inclusion in RM and provide data and evidence which would be translated into specific recommendations for improvement of the public policies affecting the Roma in the areas of social protection, employment, housing, education and healthcare.

The need to prepare an analysis like this emerged, first and foremost, from the fact that in spite of the implementation of the Roma Decade in the period between 2005 and 2015, and the drafting of the new Roma National Strategy 2016-2020, according to many analyses of the state of affairs the Roma continue to be the most marginalized community in the Republic of Macedonia. Apart from the research of CSOs and the reports of the Ombudsman, this is also established in the reports of the relevant international institutions, such as the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination “The Committee points to the restriction of basic freedoms and rights and their ineffective protection; the concern about the problem with Roma housing and the poor social status.”

In order to identify the disadvantages and challenges in the access to services on a local level, the research covered the following 10 municipalities: Chair, Shuto Orizari, Gostivar, Tetovo, Prilep, Bitola, Delchevo, Berovo, Vinica and Kumanovo.

METHODOLOGY

In the process of conducting the analysis of the public policies on the Rights of the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia, and especially in the municipalities of Chair, Shuto Orizari, Gostivar, Tetovo, Prilep, Bitola, Delchevo, Berovo, Vinica and Kumanovo, we relied on the national and local Roma policies.

The methodological tools for data collection were secondary data collection by means of statistical reports, publications and analysis, as well as through requests for information from the public and local institutions in the Republic of Macedonia.

Furthermore, in the process of conducting the analysis we took into consideration the possible regional and local policies tackling the issues of employment, social inclusion, education, housing, social protection and healthcare. In the drafting of the analysis we also took into account the legal regulations, the documents and action plans based on the National Roma Strategy in the Republic of Macedonia – 2014-2020 as well as the local action plans.

4 focus groups were conducted with various categories of citizens, as follows: a focus group with Roma women conducted in Skopje, a focus group with Roma information centers conducted in Skopje, a focus group with local citizens (mixed group) in Bitola, and a focus group with local citizens in Prilep. In each the following 10 municipalities: Chair, Shuto Orizari, Gostivar, Tetovo, Prilep, Bitola, Delchevo, Berovo, Vinica and Kumanovo we conducted interviews with 10 local Roma. We conducted 40 interviews with representatives of the National Coordinating Body, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy – the Department for Implementation of the Roma Decade, the Employment Agency, the Roma Information Centers, Cabinet of a Minister without a Portfolio, Roma NGOs, the Roma Education Fund, health mediators, and local government representatives.

The findings of the conducted analysis can serve to advance the national and local programs for the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia.

OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL ROMA POLICIES

The issue of the situation of Roma and their social inclusion is addressed in a large number of international legal acts. Some of them set the general principles and standards for protection of the rights of national minorities where the rights of the Roma as members of non-majority communities are also incorporated. The rest of them directly focus on the issue of the position of the Roma, proposing or laying down specific measures for improvement of their education, employment, healthcare, housing and culture.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, in Article 2 stipulates that everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms set forth in the declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other affiliation, national or social origin, property, age or other status. The Declaration regulates the protection of the fundamental rights of humans and citizens, as well as the civil and economic, social and cultural rights.

With the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights from 1966**, the member states undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the Covenant.

The European Social Charter (revised), 1996, stipulates that everyone shall have the opportunity to earn his/her living in an occupation freely entered upon and that everyone shall have the right to social security, the right to social and medical assistance, the right to use the social welfare services, the right to adequate social, legal and economic protection of children and youth.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities from 1997, in Article 4, bans any kind of discrimination on grounds of belonging to a national minority. The parties to this Convention undertake to adopt adequate measures to promote the economic, social, political and cultural life of members of the national minorities and, in that regard, to take due account of the specific conditions of the members of national minorities. Article 7 of the Convention stipulates that all parties shall take appropriate measures to protect persons who may be subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence due to their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and advance the possibilities for access to education at all levels for the members of the national minorities.

The resolution of the European Parliament on the social status of Roma and their access to the labor market in the European Union calls on the Member States of the European Union to improve the access of Roma women to vocational education and to take measures to adapt the vocational education to the needs on the labor market. The resolution contains a recommendation to prepare a program package for the promotion and motivation of Roma graduates to continue their careers in the societies they come from. Bearing in mind the pressing challenges faced by the Roma, the European Parliament believes active measures need to be taken towards creating policies ensuring social and economic inclusion, including ad hoc housing measures along with self-employment and micro-credit programs for the Roma.

With the **Resolution on the Situation of Roma in Europe and on Freedom of Movement in the European Union**, the European Parliament emphasized the legal basis for the prohibition of collective and mass expulsion, such as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. In this context, the European Parliament advises Member States to review their acts and policies that lead to direct or indirect discrimination against Roma on a racial or ethnic grounds. The resolution also urges the European Commission to develop a comprehensive European strategy for Roma inclusion.

The resolution of the European Parliament adopted at the second Roma Summit of 25 March 2010 calls on the Member States and European institutions to support measures aimed at creating a socially and politically favorable environment for implementation of the strategies. This resolution also calls

on the European Commission to prepare a European Strategy for Roma inclusion as an instrument for combating social exclusion and discrimination against Roma in Europe.

In the **Resolution on the European Union Strategy for Roma Inclusion from 9 March 2011**, the European Parliament emphasizes, inter alia, the need to eliminate barriers to the integration/reintegration of Roma women in the labor market and self-employment programs. At the same time, the European Parliament proposes introduction of specialized trainings for employees in education, in order to promote the employment of teaching staff from the Roma population. In doing so, the European Parliament points to the necessity of active involvement of the local authorities from the Member States and the non-governmental sector for the purpose of achieving the set goals.

With the **Resolution on the Progress in Implementing National Roma Integration Strategies from 12 December 2013**, the European Parliament proposed to the Member States to try to integrate their Roma inclusion programs into the programs promoting equal opportunities and prevention of discrimination and segregation. Furthermore, the European Parliament calls on the member states to work on removing the barriers to access to employment of the Roma population.

Within Europe 2020, the European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, when it comes to the issue of the Roma and their social inclusion within the Member States of the European Union, three major initiatives are of particular importance: the Innovation Union, the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs and the European Platform against Poverty.

The “European Platform against Poverty” aims at achieving social cohesion in the member states. At the national level, this initiative implies an obligation to undertake activities for promotion of collective and individual responsibility in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, as well as to define and implement measures aimed at precisely defined risk groups, such as: single parents, elderly women, Roma, people with developmental disabilities and homeless people.

In the **Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Council on Economic and Social Affairs and the Council of the Regions, Social and Economic Integration of Roma in Europe**, the European Commission proposes, inter alia, measures to improve the social and economic integration of Roma, such as: increased cooperation between the national and European representatives of the Roma community, more effective communication with the local authorities focusing on the most vulnerable micro-regions and including the Roma in the normal, general societal trends in the areas of education, employment, public health and housing. According to the European Commission, the Roma issues should be systematically included in all the relevant European and national policies. Policies that provide separate education and housing for Roma should, in turn, be abolished.

With the **Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Commission for Economic and Social Affairs and the European Committee of the Regions, the European Union Platform for National Roma Integration Strategies by 2020**, the European Commission urges Member States to ensure access of Roma children to quality education, as well as eradicate segregation and discrimination in schools. In the area of employment, and in connection to education, the Member States should ensure full access of Roma to VET programs, adult education, self-employment, micro-crediting and proportionate public sector employment. The access to quality health services, especially for Roma children and women, as well as Roma inclusion in health programs targeting Roma communities are also priority issues requiring the undertaking of specific measures. Member States are also obliged to actively promote a non-discriminatory approach in the area of housing, including social housing.

The **Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Social and Economic Committee and the Committee of the Regions, the National Roma Integration Strategies: the first step towards the implementation of the European Union Platform from 21 May 2012** sets out specific guidelines for acting in any particular area of

interest for Roma integration. Thus, for education issues, the Commission instructs the Member States to work on the elimination of segregation in schools, review the decisions to send a large number of Roma children to schools for children with special needs, promote the vocational education programs, increase the number of children enrolled in pre-school centers, increase the trainings for the teaching staff, and raise the awareness of parents about the importance of education. Furthermore, in the area of employment, the Commission recommends that the Member States establish measures to support the first employment of Roma, eliminate the barriers and discrimination, especially in relation to Roma women, and provide greater support for self-employment programs. In the area of health care, Member States are advised to improve the access of Roma to basic, emergency and specialist health services, to raise the awareness about the need for regular medical check-ups, family planning and the necessity of immunization. The European Commission also calls for improving of the living conditions and undertaking social housing measures, and emphasizes the necessity of registering Roma in the records of the competent institutions.

In the **Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, “Steps towards the implementation of the National Strategy for the Integration of Roma” from 26th of 2013**, the European Commission reports that it continuously monitors the activities of the Member States regarding the implementation of the national strategies for Roma integration. The Commission concludes that most member states need to improve the process of policy-making and implementation and evaluation of policies through the involvement of the local government. The candidate countries for membership in the European Union are given the recommendation to allocate sufficient resources to implement the Roma integration policies.

ROMA POLICIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Policies targeting Roma appeared in Macedonia in 2004 for the first time, with the adoption of the National Roma Strategy (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 2005). This strategy was complemented by NAPs, and in some municipalities even LAPs. Over the next ten years, the strategy and NAPs, as well as some of the LAPs were replaced. In 2009, Memorandum of Cooperation between the municipalities and the central government were introduced as an additional mechanism targeting the Roma at the local level.

The Roma Strategy in the Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020 was adopted in 2014 in order to replace the Strategy adopted in 2004, and is based on the need for continued efforts to improve the integration of the Roma, although certain progress was achieved in recent years (see Ministry of Labor and Social Policy 2014: 5, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 2005). The vision that the Strategy is based on is that “the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia who involved in the social trends have increased opportunities for a better life” (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy 2014: 31).

The most important essential parts of the Strategy are structured around five areas: culture, education, employment, health and housing. There is a lack of consistency between the Strategy and the National Action Plans in defining the priority areas, and although the European Commission has emphasized in its country reports that it is necessary to put more emphasis and work on inclusion of Roma women in all areas, the inclusion of Roma women was not defined as a special area in the Strategy. The notes from the European Commission are nevertheless taken into account, and in the drafting of the national plans, a NAP was prepared for Strengthening of the position of Roma women in society.

As shown below in Table 1, the Strategy sets a strategic goal for each of these areas.

Table 1. Strategic goals per area

AREA	STRATEGIC GOAL
Culture	Development and promotion of Roma culture, language and tradition
Education	Raising the level of education in the Roma community
Employment	Improving the conditions and possibilities for employment and decreasing the unemployment in the Roma community thus integrating it into social currents
Healthcare	Continual improvement of the healthcare of the Roma community
Housing	Decreasing the gap in the quality of housing between the Roma and non-Roma communities

The current National Action Plans (NAPs) on the Roma were adopted in 2015 and 2016. The areas covered by the NAPs are education, employment, health, housing and in addition to this, the area on inclusion of Roma women. Although the National Strategy for Roma also covers the area of culture, no National Action Plan has been developed for this area. The total number of measures included in the NAPs varies widely (from 17 measures on housing in the NAP, up to 32 measures on education in the NAP), yet all five were prepared according to a joint template, which makes it relatively easy to see how the different NAPs relate to one another. Another positive feature of the NAPs is the inclusion of baseline data, which effectively sets the foundations to measure the progress towards the goals. On the other hand, only the NAPs on housing and inclusion Roma women include specific timeframes for realization of the planned activities.

Once they were adopted, the implementation of the National Action Plans from 2015-2016, faced difficulties. This is mainly due to the allocated funds, i.e. the lack of funds for implementation of the envisaged activities according to the NAPs, and therefore the overall realization of these activities depends on donor funds. In fact, the harmonization of the planned programs of the line ministries with the NAPs, i.e. harmonization of the NAPs with the programs of the ministries is one of the key prerequisites for their implementation.

The table below shows the strategic goals and outcomes for each of the 5 NAPs – Healthcare, Education, Housing, Employment and Strengthening the position of Roma women in society.

National Action Plan	Strategic goals	Outcomes
Healthcare	Increasing the life-expectancy of Roma by 2020, in accordance with the National Action Plan of Healthcare 2015-2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Improved access of Roma to integrated, quality, preventative and curative health service 2.Decreased risks and prevented diseases related to the rate of mortality among the Roma, the prevalence of which is more typical among the Roma population 3.Preventing discrimination against Roma in the access to healthcare services
Housing	Decreasing the gap in the quality of housing between the Roma and non-Roma communities [1]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provided social housing for the Roma families from the socially vulnerable categories - Improved living conditions for the Roma families by preparing and conducting programs for integrated urban regeneration and eradication of the harmful living conditions - Provided systemic registration of the property and land owned by the Roma into the Cadaster.

Education	Improved educational structure of the Roma community, especially when it comes to girls and Roma women	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved access and successful completion of pre-school education of Roma, especially Roma girls 2. Improved access and successful completion of primary education of Roma, especially Roma girls 3. Improved access and successful completion of secondary education of Roma, especially Roma girls 4. Improved access and successful completion of university education of Roma, especially Roma girls 5. Increased number of adult Roma who have completed their primary and secondary education 6. Decreased number of Roma student in the primary and secondary special education schools in R. Macedonia
Employment	Improved employment possibilities for the Roma at decent workplaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved access of Roma to Government Employment Programs, especially to Roma women, by 2020 - Increased revenues and sustainable jobs for Roma, especially Roma women, by 2020
Strengthening the position of Roma women in society	Women and girls from the Roma community to enjoy human rights, free from gender inequality and discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased access of Roma women to means and opportunities for development and participation in the economic, social and cultural life, - Decrease in the level of domestic violence against women, - Decrease in the prevalence of marriage/cohabitation between and with juveniles, and their impact on education, health and the gender roles.

CONDUCTING THE ROMA POLICIES AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL

The situation of Roma depends based on their location, as well as the thematic area. However, the municipalities do show certain significant similarities. Bearing in mind these similarities, this part of the report provides an overview of the situation in the areas of education, employment, healthcare, housing and infrastructure and social protection.

EDUCATION

The primary and secondary education in Macedonia is mandatory and is regulated by laws that apply to all citizens equally.

The Law on Primary and Secondary Education guarantees that education is a right of every child. Both levels of education are free, mandatory and applicable to all citizens equally. Moreover, any kind of discrimination on grounds of sex, race, skin-color, national, social, political, religious, economic and social affiliation in the exercising of the rights to primary education is prohibited in accordance with this Law (Article 2). Primary school lasts 9 years and offers the parents the opportunity to get counseling in order for the child to achieve as good success in education as possible. Pursuant to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, the pupils of the members of the communities whose language of instruction is other than the Macedonian and its Cyrillic alphabet, are taught in the language and alphabet of the respective community, in a manner determined by law. (Article 9). The **Law on Primary and Secondary Education** stipulates that the students from the communities instructed in a language and alphabet other than Macedonian and its Cyrillic alphabet shall get textbooks in the language and alphabet that their instruction is carried out in.

Roma Strategy: Education related strategic objectives:

- In the period between 2014 and 2020 the number of Roma children included in pre-school education to increase by 25%.
- Increased employment of Roma caregivers/teachers in the institutions of pre-school education by 2020.
- To cover at least 98% Roma children who will start 1 grade of primary education, improve their success and achieving a minimum of 75% transitioning into the next grade by 2020.
- Increase the transition from primary school to secondary school, improving the academic success and significantly decreasing the drop-out rate among Roma students by 2020.
- Increase the number of Roma student graduating from university by 2020.
- Increase the number of Roma studying at the faculties of pedagogy along with other faculties producing teaching staff.
- Adult Roma to complete their primary and secondary education in order to be able to earn their livelihood, achieve personal development and satisfy other needs that they had not been able to satisfy because they failed to finish their education on time.
- Decrease in the number of Roma students taken to special education schools by 20% by 2020.

Pre-school education

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in collaboration with the Roma Education Fund (REF) has been implementing the Roma Children Inclusion Project in the Public Municipal Institutions – pre-school education centers, for 11 years. The project has been implemented in the municipalities: Chair, Gazi Baba, Karposh, Bitola, Kumanovo, Gostivar, Tetovo, Veles, Prilep, Vinica, Kochani, Delchevo, Berovo, Kichevo, Shtip, Pehchevo, Shuto Orizari and Centar.

The total number of children enrolled in all the pre-school centers in the Republic of Macedonia is 34,521, and 718 or 2.07% of them are Roma. Outside this project (parents who are independently covering their children's pre-school fee on the level of the entire territory of R. Macedonia) a total of Roma 204 children are enrolled in pre-school education.

Within the Roma Children Inclusion Project, in the course of the academic year 2017-2018, a total of 514 Roma children out of the planned 628, i.e. 83% of the set target, were enrolled in preschool centers in 19 municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia. Out of the total number of 514 enrolled children, 54% children regularly go to preschool.

The main goal is to prepare the Roma children to adjust to the teaching curriculums and start primary school. In parallel, efforts are made to raise the parents' awareness about the importance of children's enrollment in preschool education, including the teaching staff, in order for them to overcome the existing stereotypes and prejudices towards the Roma. Within this project, 19 Roma caregivers have been permanently employed, and have become part of the staff in the preschool institutions. In addition, three more caregivers are paid from the Roma Education Fund and their employment status has not been resolved yet.

A total of 21 local mediators have been selected, i.e. one mediator from Berovo, Delchevo, Pehchevo, Prilep, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Debar, Kisevo, Kochani, Gazi Baba, Centar, Chair, Veles, Vinica, Karposh, Shtip and Bitola each, and three mediators in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari. The role of the project mediators is to enable fulfillment of the project objectives when it comes to the set target number of children which need to start attending pre-school.

Within this project, apart from the obligations undertaken by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, both in administrative and financial terms, the preschool facility and the municipality also support the attendance of a certain (lower) number of Roma children in preschool centers, by signing an agreement with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The municipalities also provide transportation for the Roma children to and from the preschool facility.

Despite the progress achieved in terms of inclusion of Roma children in preschool education, the discrepancy compared to the inclusion level from the national average which amounts to about 30% is still enormous. Even more so, if we take into consideration the EU2020 target which is set at 95%.¹ For this purpose, we need to expand the coverage of preschool education. Taking into account the importance of preschool education for children from marginalized and vulnerable communities and the low level of enrolment of Roma in comparison to the general population, at least one year of free preschool education in ethnically mixed groups needs to be provided. For this goal it is necessary to open new facilities in those areas where the objective demand exceeds the provided coverage.

1 EU Strategy 2020; benchmark within education is that by 2020, 95% of the children at age 4 are enrolled in preschool education.

Although in general there is satisfaction with the results of the project implementation, still:

- The status is still at a “project” level, meaning that there is no genuine institutionalization;
- The inclusion of Roma children should not and must not be limited to the number of children included in this project;
- The inclusion of Roma children must not be limited by the child’s age (the project only covers children aged 3.5 to 5.5);
- Some of the women that we interviewed stated that they had not managed to enroll their children in preschool because the “quota for Roma children had been filled”;
- In some of the municipalities it was reported that the municipality did not cover the organized transportation in the course of the summer months, which may hinder the successful socialization of Roma children in kindergarten (they need to restart the adaptation process several times).

Primary education

The Ministry of Education and Science, through the Directorate for Development and Promotion of Education in the Languages of the Members of the Communities, at the start of each academic year and in the course of the months of August and September, in collaboration with the Roma NGOs and the Roma Information Centers, organizes an action to inform the Roma population about enrolling their children to the first grade, as well as at the other levels of education. This action is organized through informative workshops and direct visits of Roma families in their homes. The goal is to raise the parents’ awareness by informing them and helping them enroll their children in primary and secondary education. Although the nine-year-long primary education is mandatory for all citizens, the information from field indicates that this is not fully implemented in practice. All the stakeholders emphasized the fact that the biggest drop-out of Roma children occurs precisely in primary education. Unfortunately, although it seems that everyone is aware of this fact, there has been no official notification about this on the part of the institutions. What is a cause for even greater concern is the fact that the reason for lack of notification is not always the concern about whether families can pay the fines in accordance with the law, but rather the attempts of the schools to avoid laying-off teaching staff due to the low number of children and classes. The reasons for the drop-out among Roma children are multiple, but are all mainly related to poverty. Among the main obstacles are the unavailability of books and school items, lack of adequate clothing, poor living conditions and lack of infrastructure, the expectation that children must contribute to the family income and/or care for their younger siblings, etc. meaning that it is difficult for the Roma families living in substandard improvised houses near the local landfills to think about and provide conditions for their children to study. In addition, seasonal and internal migration is also a problem. In these cases, children start skipping classes before the end of the academic year, and then many of them simply drop-out.

Another problem with the drop-out and the infrequent attendance of primary education is also the frequent departure of families to European countries in order for them to seek asylum. In many cases, as a result of not getting adequate documents, the families are forced to come back to Macedonia and continue their life here, and thus put their children back into regular education. A problem occurs when a child has skipped one or two academic years in the process and needs to continue with his/her education in a grade inadequate for his/her age.

In this direction, a positive step is that in the local action plans it is envisaged that the schools will run records on these cases and act in coordination with the line ministries in order to find a solution.

Good practices:

Introduction of Roma education mediators in the educational system

The introduction of Roma education mediators in the primary education in the Republic of Macedonia followed soon after the experience gained with the implementation of the activities from the campaign for Roma education, financed by the Roma Education Fund in Budapest, as a positive model to provide quality and equal education of the students from the Roma communities, implemented by the National Roma Center from Kumanovo. The first Roma education mediators were included in the education system in the academic year of 2014/15.

In general, the role of the Roma mediators is considered to be positive because, according to the information from the Roma Education Fund, the success of the Roma students has started to improve, and their parents' attitudes have started to change. Especially bearing in mind that by completing at least secondary education, their children have increased employment opportunities or opportunities for further education. At the municipal level, some of the representatives of the RICs still point to the need of an increased number of education mediators, especially in particular subjects, bearing in mind that not everyone is competent enough to provide support in all school subjects.

Exemption from payment of the administrative fee for submitting a certificate of immunization

In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science, through the Department for Promotion of Primary and Secondary Education and the Directorate for Development and Promotion of Education in the Languages of the Members of the Communities, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, exempted Roma from payment of the administrative fee to confirm the immunization which is one of the necessary documents for enrollment in the first grade of primary education. This release was mostly felt by Roma families for whom this cost was a serious obstacle to the enrollment of their children in primary education.

Project for scholarships, mentoring and tutoring of Roma secondary school students

The Directorate for Development and Promotion of Education in the Languages of the Members of the Communities continuously implements the Project for scholarships, mentoring and tutoring of Roma secondary school students. The overall goal of this project is, through positive interventions, to increase the prosperity and success of Roma students in the first, second, third and fourth year of all public and private secondary schools in the Republic of Macedonia. This project includes scholarship-awarded students from around 84 schools and 28 municipalities across the Republic of Macedonia. The project takes place in three stages: granting a scholarship, mentoring and tutoring.

Free textbooks, transportation and accommodation in student dormitories

The discrimination of Roma in education persists and is still widespread. One of the most severe forms of discrimination is segregation which, according to the field findings, occurs in several municipalities. In all of the reports from 2010, the Ombudsman has repeatedly pointed to the segregation in education on a linguistic and ethnic basis.² Particular emphasis was placed on the segregation of Roma pupils in separate schools and classes. The disproportionate representation and segregation of Roma in

2 Ombudsman's report. Information on the state of enrollment of Roma in first grade and their placement in classes among children from other ethnicities in the academic year 2014/15. Available at: <http://ombudsman.mk/upload/Posebni%20izvestai/2015/Informacija%20RomiObrazovanie-2015.pdf>.

special education schools was also stressed. The Ombudsman's reports underline the problem of non-compliance with the decision for residence-based enrollment in several primary schools in the country, and the fact that the children are enrolled based on the requests and wishes of their parents.

One of the most blatant examples of segregation in education on grounds of ethnicity is the "Gjorgi Sugarev" School in Bitola, where exclusively children of Roma nationality are enrolled, which is a violation of all laws on human and children's rights and international conventions that our country has signed and ratified. According to the number of Roma students in the Municipality of Bitola, most of them are enrolled in the "Gjorgi Sugarev" primary school. The total number of students is 604, 474 out of which are Roma, or 80% of the students in this school are Roma. In the "Gjorgi Sugarev" primary school, from 2011 to 2016 the number of enrolled pupils in the first grade of non-Roma population has dropped drastically, especially in the last two years. In fact, in the academic year 2015/2016, only 8 students who are not of Roma nationality were enrolled, and in the academic year 2016/2017, during the first enrollment period, five students who were of non-Roma nationality enrolled, and were then transferred to another school, which means that in the academic year 2016/2017 only Roma students got enrolled in this school. According to the decision for residence-based enrollment, almost all the children from the "Bair" residential area, which is predominantly populated with Roma people, should enroll in the "Gjorgi Sugarev" School, although the school "Todor Angelevski" is also in the immediate vicinity. On the other hand, parents of non-Roma children do not abide by plan for residence-based enrollment and enroll their children in primary schools in other residential areas.

Once again, the cause for greatest concern is that no institution has alarmed or taken any measures to prevent and react against this type of discrimination against the Roma. In fact, the institutions turn a deaf ear to the fact that the existing law on residence-based enrollment essentially leads to segregation. In the Municipality of Prilep it was also emphasized that "there is a growing trend of withdrawal of children of Macedonian ethnicity from a school with a majority of Roma students".

In some of the municipalities the problem of placing Roma children in special education schools and classes was also mentioned. According to the information, the existing system of diagnosing and categorizing has proved inadequate and stigmatizing in practice. In order for a child to enroll in a special education school he/she must possess a categorization document. This piece of regulation is not complied with in our system and the Roma children get enrolled in the special education schools or classes within regular schools without categorization and without any tests of their abilities.

In the context of cultural barriers, the early and child marriages which were reported in nearly all municipalities, as a negative growing trend, must be mentioned. The cases of Roma girls who were married, or practically sold as brides aged 12 or 13, were reported in the municipalities of Shuto Orizari, Bitola, Shtip, Kumanovo. This was also confirmed at the meetings with the representatives of healthcare institutions, especially in Shuto Orizari where they gave us information about 16-year-old Roma girls who already have 3 or 4 children. Once again, this is a violation of the children's rights and a form of gender-based violence against girls, yet unfortunately there has still been no institutional response to this phenomenon, with the exception of several Roma NGOs.

Although the Roma have the right to learn in their own language, most of them are taught in Macedonian. What is also striking is that in the textbooks in Macedonian, no special attention is paid to the specifics of the ethnicities, including the Roma, and on top of this, no educational content treating the issue of discrimination is included in the educational programs.

CONCLUSIONS

When it comes to Roma inclusion, the progress in the area of education has exceeded the progress in all other areas. At the same time, there are still challenges at all levels:

-At the level of preschool education, despite the significant progress as a result of the project implemented by the municipal authorities in cooperation with the MLSP and supported by the Roma Education Fund, the rates of enrollment among the Roma remain more than six times lower than the national average.

-In primary education there is significant drop-out rate among Roma, which is the result of a combination of poverty, discrimination and in some municipalities even child marriages.

-Ungrounded enrollment of Roma children in special education facilities for children with intellectual disability continues to pose a problem, especially in Skopje.

-Segregation in primary schools, as a phenomenon in Bitola and Prilep.

In line with the interviews conducted on field, the level of education among the population is not at a satisfactory level, although the changes can already be felt, especially when it comes to the parents' attitudes who are increasingly deciding to include their children in the education system. This change is a result of the support provided by the Roma Education Fund and the NGOs, especially to those who managed to complete university education – the MES scholarships, as well as the Roma Information Centers which manage to provide both support and scholarships for the children from other sources, along with hygiene packages and other types of support to the families.

The illiteracy rate is still high, especially among the working-age population. The fact that most of the interviewees had completed primary, and rarely secondary education puts the Roma on the margins of social life. The employment options are minimal (women are primarily engaged in cleaning other people's homes), men – mostly living by collecting plastics, iron, cardboard for recycling. Only a small part of the interviewed persons had attended trainings from EARM with the goal of self-employment.

Developing and implementing a program to prevent primary education drop-out is a necessity stemming from the increased number of dropouts among primary school students due to the parents' travel to EU countries. A special problem is their return because schools do not keep records of the students' progress and they are accepted back to school without previously providing evidence that they had continued their education in the country where they were staying. The poverty, the need for active involvement of the entire family in order to secure a livelihood, but also begging, are also the reasons for the high rate of school drop-out. In rare cases of recorded child marriages, the young girls, sometimes even mothers at the age of 14, are forced to leave their education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

-Expanding the access to preschool education. Taking into account the importance of preschool education for the children from marginalized and vulnerable communities and the low rates of school enrollment of Roma in contrast to the general population, at least one year of free preschool education in ethnically mixed groups should be provided. For this purpose, it would be necessary to put into use additional preschool facilities in those areas where the objective demand exceeds the present coverage. Free transportation, moreover, should be provided over the course of the entire year.

-Promoting the inclusion of Roma in primary education. The Roma educators should be involved in the primary school enrollment processes in order to create better conditions for appropriate testing. The local (as well as national) budgets should contain separate slot for educational inclusion.

- Providing a hot meal for the children shall serve to improve their focus on the one hand and, on the other hand, motivate parents and children to participate in extra-curricular programs.

-Providing educational support outside regular school hours. As the recent pilot project offering tutoring in the late years of primary education has shown, the consequences poverty has on education inclusion may be mitigated by extra-curricular programs and aid in doing homework, or additional lessons in the subjects of key importance. It is also worth considering the possibilities of combining these forms of support with a hot meal as an additional way to mitigate the effects of poverty on participating in education.

-Continuous decrease in the number of Roma children in special education. The activities at the national level should make the processes of testing the children for inclusion in primary education more culturally sensitive. Reintegration (in standard education) of children who are inappropriately enrolled in special education should be complemented with field work at the local community level to raise awareness among Roma families about the educational deficiencies and curbing of the career prospects arising from enrollment of children without special needs in schools for children with special educational needs.

-Doing research on and addressing the discrimination in education. The frequency of segregation and other subtle, or not so subtle, forms of discrimination in education should be documented systematically as a basis for development of appropriate measures for their resolution, with findings forwarded to the Ministry of Education and Science for proper collection and monitoring. Apart from the issues related to discrimination against Roma by non-Roma, attention should also be paid to gender differences in the rates of compulsory education completion, and juvenile marriages should be treated as a violation of the rights of Roma girls.

-In the course of enrollment of pupils in the first grade, the schools and municipal authorities should take into account the number of Roma students and their adequate and balanced placement among students from other ethnic communities. The decision for residence-based enrollment should be complied with by all primary schools on an equal footing, but at the same time additional activities should be undertaken by the local self-governments for the purpose of revising the existing decision on residence-based enrollment in order to eliminate the possibility of segregated classes, i.e. schools where there are only students from the Roma community.

EMPLOYMENT

According to the data from the Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia (EARM), by the end of January 2016, the total number of unemployed was 116.601, 5.920 out of whom were Roma, and 2.128 of whom were Roma women. It is assumed that the number of unemployed Roma is much higher because not all Roma are registered as active or passive job seekers in EARM. The socio-economic problems and discrimination faced by the Roma further complicate their integration. This is confirmed by the European Commission (EC) in the Progress Report on the Republic of Macedonia for 2016 which emphasizes "... segregation, stereotypes and other forms of discrimination remain prevalent. Most of the Roma are unemployed, lack adequate healthcare, live in segregated places and inadequate living conditions and are socially excluded from society". A relatively low number of Roma use the programs and measures to promote employment and entrepreneurship, in comparison to the number of Roma who have applied for their use.

Employment policies

The employment policies in the Republic of Macedonia are mainly aimed at improving the quality of the offered workforce and boosting demand for labor. When it comes to supply, the measures aim to improve the skills of the unemployed, retrain and train the unemployed people for occupations which are in demand on the labor market, internships in order for the unemployed young people to acquire adequate skills, measures in the field of education (career counseling in secondary vocational education), modernization of the National Qualifications Framework, Lifelong Learning, etc. When it comes to demand, in addition to the general measures for improving the business environment, measures are also implemented to reduce the labor costs by reducing the tax gap and subsidizing employment, financial assistance for support and development of innovative businesses through the Fund for Innovation and Technological Development, support to fast-growing companies, so called "gazelles", support for self-employment through exemption from payment of social security contributions for a certain period of time.

Roma Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020 (area of employment)

The main strategic determination of the strategy in the area on employment is improvement of the conditions and possibilities for employment and decrease in the unemployment of the Roma community and, consequently integration into the social trends in the Republic of Macedonia. The problems and needs that are targeted by this Strategy are identified in the sub-areas:

1. Institutional support for employment of the Roma and
2. Increasing the employability of the members of the Roma community.

National Roma Employment National Action Plan 2016-2020

The National Roma Employment Plan breaks down the measures, results, indicators, targets, budget and competent institutions, into a matrix in order to achieve the main strategic goal – increased employment opportunities for the Roma at decent jobs through the following two outcomes:

1. Improved access for Roma, especially Roma women, to the Government Employment Programs by 2020
2. Increased income and sustainable jobs for the Roma, especially Roma women, by 2020

On the other hand, it should be noted that the **National Employment Strategy 2016-2020** does not recognize the Roma and Roma women as a vulnerable group which requires specially tailored measures

based on their needs and only mentions broad categories of women, youth and social welfare users help as vulnerable categories. This is especially true for the Roma women, although this issue is regularly noted in the country progress reports of the European Commission.

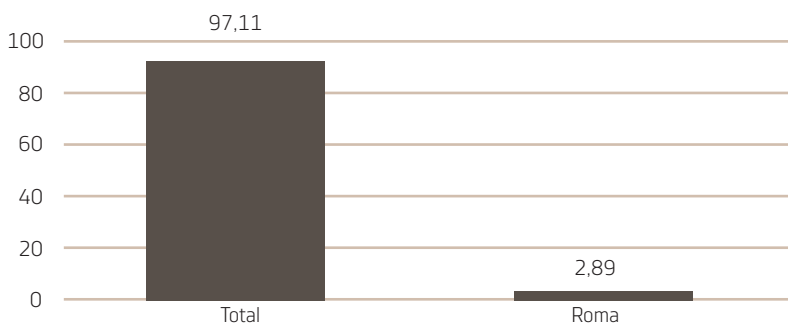
Operational plan for labor market services and active employment programs and measures

Starting from 2007, a system of planning and implementation of active labor market measures has been implemented in the Republic of Macedonia in order to respond to the different needs of the vulnerable groups of unemployed persons and possible employers, which include services for the unemployed, trainings, job creation programs, working clubs, internships, etc. On the other hand, there are also passive employment measures in place, as stipulated in the Law on Employment and Insurance in Case of Unemployment.³ Bearing in mind that the transition period to the first stable / satisfactory employment is nearly three times longer for those young people who have completed secondary education compared to those who have completed higher education (37.1 and 12.5 months, respectively), and the state of the young people who have only completed primary education is the most alarming as they need up to 62 months to complete the transition from school to their first employment.⁴

The Operational Plan for labor market services and active employment programs and measures for 2017 sets out the employment programs and services and, through their implementation, aims to improve the functioning of the labor market, support the creation of new jobs and increase the employability of the unemployed. The Operational Plan for 2017 defines the types of services and programs for employment that will be implemented, the terms and conditions for each of the programs, the target groups of unemployed, the necessary funding and possible sources, as well as the institutions responsible for implementation. The Operational Plan for 2017 places special emphasis on young unemployed persons and gives a clear overview of the participation of young people in each of the services and employment programs, which is set out to consist of a minimum of 30% for each program/employment service of young unemployed persons up to 29 years of age.

The eligibility criteria for all the candidates for any of the measures within the Operational Plan for Employment are completed primary education and the status of an active job-seeker, as categorized by the Employment Agency. Both criteria are limiting for a vast number of unemployed Roma.

According to the statistical data provided by the Employment Agency, from 2007 by the end of 2015 a total of 108,794 unemployed people were successfully included in some of the employment programs in the country. 50.22% of them were women. **Out of the total number of employed/self-employed/ or trained people, 3.153 or 2.89% were Roma.** Roma women constitute 37% of the Roma users included in the programs and **only 1% of the total number of users.**



Percent of Roma people covered by the employment programs, 2007-2015

3 Law on Employment and Insurance in Case of Unemployment, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no.112

4 Survey by the International Labor Organization "Young women's and men's school to work transition" - Geneva

FINDINGS FROM THE FIELD RESEARCH

Table 1: Number of registered unemployed Roma (active job-seekers), according to education and sex, 2016, per municipality

Municipality	total		No education/ incomplete primary education		Incomplete SE		Completed SE		Higher Education		University		Postgraduate studies	
	total	women	total	women	total	women	total	women	total	women	total	women	total	women
Berovo	141	54	104	35	15	6	19	10	0	0	3	3	0	0
Bitola	409	196	390	186	5	2	13	8	0	0	1	0	0	0
Vinica	161	42	151	38	2	0	7	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
Gostivar	417	121	344	101	17	1	52	16	1	1	3	2	0	0
Delchevo	85	34	66	28	3	0	15	5	0	0	1	1	0	0
Kochani	272	89	251	84	13	1	8	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kumanovo	404	122	349	103	17	4	36	15	0	0	2	0	0	0
Prilep	767	320	726	305	11	5	29	9	0	0	1	1	0	0
Tetovo	258	88	199	67	16	2	37	18	2	0	3	1	1	0
Chair	218	98	194	94	12	1	9	2	0	0	3	1	0	0
Shuto Orizari	1.125	404	949	370	105	12	70	22	0	0	1	0	0	0

The data in the table show that most of the registered unemployed Roma are without education or incomplete primary education, which is practically an obstacle for them to access the programs and measures in the first place.

The majority of Roma who were part of the programs were actually involved in measures that provide support for employment and/or training, while only a small percentage of unemployed Roma are actually employed or self-employed. Below is a table with the number of Roma included in the active measures/ services in the municipalities where the survey was conducted. The data refer to 2015.

Measures	Total number of Roma participants
Self-employment and formalization	13
Subsidized employment	6
Scarce skills training	7
IT and language courses	1
Support in finding a job	108
Preparing for work and employment	4
Communal work	43
Professional orientation and career counseling	6
Support for active job-seeking	10
Internship	8
Training to start a business	/
Subsidizing the usufructurers of state agricultural land	/
Training with a known employer through a subsidy (training)	5
Training with a known employer through a subsidy (subsidizing)	3
Motivational training	416
Self-employment (additional employment of one personal)	1
Training with a known employer	6

As part of the services to activate people living at social risk, the representatives of the local employment centers in cooperation with the mentors engaged by the UNDP and the Roma Information Centers, organize informative sessions in order to present the available measures within the Operational Plan and to motivate the Roma people to take advantage of those measures. Such information sessions were held in Suto Orizari, Cair (Topana), Kumanovo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Prilep, Bitola, Shtip, Kocani, Vinica, Delcevo and Berovo. “But these informative meetings are not detailed enough and, in the end, are not related to the measures that correspond to the needs of the Roma. What is the benefit of such meetings with mentors for measures that are not available to the Roma?”, said one representative of a Roma NGO.

In fact, as was mentioned earlier, most of them do not meet the criteria for applying, which is to have completed primary education. The involvement and active role of the local self-government varies in the municipalities. In some municipalities, according to the interviewed representatives, there is close cooperation with the employment centers and the Roma Information Centers, while in others this is considered a matter and competence of the employment centers exclusively.

During the interviews with representatives of the employment centers at the local level, it can be noted that there are still stereotypes about the Roma community. “They are uninterested, they do not want to find a job and they are here just to receive social welfare. It’s a question of their culture and mentality”, was stressed on many occasions during the interviews with representatives of the local administration and employment centers. One of the main arguments for this is the fact that there is little interest in the trainings offered through the Operational Plan.

Due to factors such as poverty and social exclusion, most Roma work on low-skilled jobs in the informal sector. Such jobs can hardly provide them with adequate earnings to support their families. According to the testimonies of the members of the Roma community who participated in the focus groups, the

number of people engaged in the collection of plastic bottles and scrap metal constantly increases. Another area of informal employment is trade, primarily in the municipality of Shuto Orizari. The textile industry is also an area where many Roma women are employed, especially in the eastern part of the country. However, employment in this industry is very often informal and in virtually all cases in substandard working conditions and salaries below the minimum salary in the country. It should be noted here that the amendments to the Law on Minimum Wage are a positive step in dealing with some of these problems, taking into account the fact that the textile industry was previously excluded from the Law on Minimum Pay.

The largest percentage of Roma who have formal employment are in public institutions, including public utilities. According to one representative of the Roma Information Center, “these are good jobs, but party-affiliated employment means that people should be engaged in a political party to get a job.” This is particularly discouraging for young Roma and their perception of the future in the country which was also indicated their views expressed during the focus group meetings.

What are the specific barriers that the Roma are facing in their access to the labor market?

Low level of education and vocational training

This is the first factor mentioned by the representatives of all the local institutions in all the involved municipalities when it comes to unemployment among Roma. In fact, the official data show that the majority of registered Roma are without education or incomplete primary education, which is one of the key challenges for their inclusion in the active labor market measures. On the other hand, those who have completed primary education and who are able to access the measures, once again face obstacles in the access to some of the measures for employment/self-employment/vocational training, where priority is given to those with completed secondary education.

However, as one representative of a Roma non-governmental organization pointed out, “if education is the main obstacle, then why are the young Roma with higher education also unemployed?” Discrimination against Roma is still very widespread and undermines their inclusion in all areas, according to interviewed members of the community and civil society organizations.

Stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination by the potential employers

According to the participants in the focus groups, the discrimination against the Roma is still very widespread and has an upward tendency in all areas, especially in the labor market. Cases were mentioned when job offers were withdrawn by the private employer after learning that the person applying for it was Roma. In some municipalities, for example, Delchevo, the municipality and the Employment Center organize meetings with representatives from the private sector in order to overcome the potential stereotypes and prejudices which act as an obstacle to the employment of Roma.

Lack of information and access to the possibilities

As was observed during the focus group meetings, many Roma people, especially Roma women, have difficulty accessing the necessary information on the opportunities and employment measures offered by the institutions. Exactly because of this, Roma women need additional support and counseling in order to be able to enter the labor market, but at the same time their isolation increases the difficulty of providing them with such services and even basic information.

The information meetings organized by the employment centers are not sufficiently clear as information-spreading tools. This was confirmed by the fact that many of the young Roma who participated in the focus groups were not familiar with the existing opportunities for advanced IT skills and languages and as a result, as is evident in the table shown, the number of Roma participants in these trainings was zero.

The access to information is particularly limited for the many Roma living in isolated areas who do not have or have poor interaction with the institutions outside. The basic information, including information on available support and services, is unavailable, and a common result of living in isolation is the lack of trust in institutions and organizations outside the Roma community.

Also, many Roma, when they have the opportunity to access this information, have difficulties in understanding it, especially the rights and responsibilities arising from the employment measures. In some cases, this is due to the complexity of the language used when presenting the opportunities for employment by the relevant professionals, while in some cases it is due to the lack of time and energy of these professionals to properly present the measures to the low-educated candidates, and ensure that they understand all the consequences of obtaining self-employed/employees or get training with the support of the Government through OPE.

Gender-based discrimination as a barrier to Roma women

It is often mentioned that Roma women face “double discrimination” - from the majority population and within the Roma community itself, on grounds of both ethnicity and gender, which pushes Roma women on the margins of the economic life. This means that, apart from living in harsh conditions, they are often exposed to exploitation and domestic violence. The issue of early and child marriages is on the rise again in some municipalities, according to unofficial CSO data, which means Roma girls get married young and have children while they are still children themselves.

In general, women in Macedonia face difficulties in accessing the labor market. The situation is even more difficult for women from ethnic communities, especially Roma women. The official data presented only serves to highlight this fact. In analyzing the findings of the focus group in this regard, this model was more than evident in the communities from the existing isolated settlements, such as the municipalities of Suto Orizari, Bitola and Kumanovo. Many young mothers did not express desire to find a job, accepting the socially prescribed role of a housewife, while the older women took on the role of spokespersons. The situation is significantly different in the municipalities with integrated housing habitats, such as the cases of Delcevo and Berovo. When asked how they would react if their daughters, when they get 17-18 years old, say that they do not want to get married and have children, and that they would prefer to finish school and find a job first, the answer was quite resolute in stating that in fact their daughters would have to finish school before they are allowed to marry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Equipping the units of local self-government with adequate tools and human resources for the purpose of building capacities to deal with social exclusion and unemployment of youth/Roma.

Developing a model of cooperation of the municipalities with the local NGO sector taking into account the experience and the potential of NGOs to attract and implement international projects for joint application for projects in the field of social inclusion and employment of youth/Roma.

It is necessary to develop and implement a system to “activate” unemployed young people that are not covered by education and training in order to facilitate the process of their inclusion in the labor market. This includes: profiling the unemployed, creating an individual employment plan for the hard-to-employ people, motivational training, involvement in certain types of trainings or practical work, etc.

Bearing in mind from the analysis that most of the Roma in the above-mentioned municipalities have completed primary or secondary education and are users of social welfare, it is necessary to organize communal work with a duration of not more than six months in order to include them and motivate them to seek a job.

The units of local self-government to map the number of young people and Roma at the local level by opening separate youth offices within each of the municipalities and organizing regular meetings. In cooperation with the Roma Information Centers they should also inform the people in a timely manner about certain employment measures, mentor them in the process of applying and conduct other activities for successful inclusion into some of the active employment programs.

Recognition of non-formal education, especially among the Roma, and finding a legal way for its recognition or developing a system of additional qualification in order to enhance their knowledge of certain skills.

Creating initiatives for the development of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills and encouraging the start of one's own business among young people/Roma as a means to get employed, taking into account that self-employment is the second most common form of employment among young people, second to being employed by another employer.

Preparing an IPO tool for hard-to-employ people developed by the International Labor Organization and implemented by the Agency/ Employment Centers. Study of the International Labor Organization "Young women's and men's school to work transition" – Geneva 2016.

The Local Employment Centers, in cooperation with the local self-government units and possibly international donors, to develop special local employment measures in accordance with the non-formal qualifications of women, especially the Roma women, for the purpose of increased participation of women in the labor market.

Giving the people working with informal businesses the opportunity to work in the formal economy by registering their activities and getting tax or lump-sum exemptions. Another measure could be a free or symbolic price for registering businesses, introducing the informal businesses into the formal economy in stages. This implies: gradual payment of liabilities, extension of payments over a longer period of time or "in installments", offers for grants for expanding existing businesses with a prerequisite to transition to formal businesses etc.

HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

According to the latest census in the Republic of Macedonia (2002), the total population is close to 2 million inhabitants, 53,879 or 2.66% of which are Roma. Almost 60% of the entire population of the Republic of Macedonia lives in the cities. This is also typical of the Roma population, who with minor exceptions, lives mainly in the cities. The census shows that 43% of Roma live in the capital, and half of them are residents of the Municipality of Shuto Orizari.

Although the housing is an area that has been worked on since the very beginning of the Roma Decade, it still remains one of the most burning issues where little progress has been achieved. The key legislation on housing in Macedonia includes the Law on Housing, which regulates the types of housing facilities, the management of apartment buildings, the relations between the owners of the special parts and third parties, the owners' community, the records of the apartments, the lease relations in housing, the type of management and maintenance of facilities, the rights and obligations of the state, the municipalities, the municipalities in the City of Skopje and the City of Skopje in housing, inspection and administrative supervision and other issues in the field of housing. This Law is of especial importance for the citizens, because it meticulously regulates the manner of managing the residential buildings and establishes the rights and obligations of the owners of the separate parts; the relations between the owners in an apartment building, as well as the owners and third parties; establishes the rights and obligations of the Community of owners; establishes the rights and obligations of licensed building managers and provides sanctions for non-compliance with legal provisions. The issues from the area of housing at the local level are part of the competencies of a larger number of institutions. According to the competencies and responsibilities in the unit of the local self-government, the council and the mayor are the main bodies of the municipalities. The local self-government is directly responsible for the local economic and urban development of the Municipality.

Roma housing is defined as one of the sectorial priorities of our country. Within the framework of the Roma Decade, national housing action plans were prepared, which were translated into Local Action Plans for Housing adopted by the Council of the Municipality. Most often these plans are aimed at improving the situation of Roma through the legalization of illegally constructed facilities in Roma residential areas and improving the living conditions in the residential areas.

The National Action Plan for Housing 2016-2020 sets out the following strategic priorities:

- Providing social housing for the Roma family from the socially vulnerable categories
- Improved living conditions for the Roma families by preparing and conducting programs for integrated urban regeneration and eradication of the harmful living conditions
- Providing systemic registration of the property and land owned by the Roma into the Cadaster.

Field analysis findings

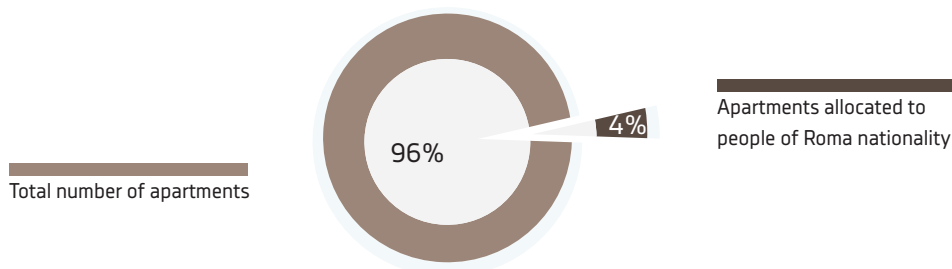
It is undisputable that many Roma live in separate, de facto segregated residential areas built in areas outside the territory covered by the detailed urban plans of the respective municipalities. In the Republic of Macedonia, there is a lack of mapping of Roma settlements that are not covered by the detailed urban plans, and consequently the Law on Spatial and Urban Planning, which regulates (among other things) the adjustment of detailed urban plans in the municipalities where the Roma settlements are must be mentioned in this context. The Roma often live in settlements consisting of illegal habitats, which are subject to demolition if they do not fulfill the conditions for legalization under the Law on Illegal Construction. The largest territorial unit inhabited with predominantly Roma population is the municipality of Shuto Orizari, and there are also large segregated communities in Bitola, Prilep, Gostivar and Kumanovo.

Inadequate and substandard housing is typical of most Roma-populated municipalities. Many of their residential challenges are related to the difficulties in obtaining rights from the responsible institutions. Field experiences shows that Roma mostly live in ghettoized settlements with poor infrastructure and substandard conditions that additionally contribute to social exclusion. The inhabitants of the Roma settlements in many cases have a problem with the property documentation, that is, they have no documents for ownership of the houses/land they live in. In order to enable the Roma population to benefit from the Law on Legalization of Illegal Buildings from 2011, the Roma Information Centers and Roma NGOs at the local level, have started activities to support the provision and submission of legalization documents to the local self-governments. In addition, the fees for the geodetic reports required for legalization requests have been abolished for social assistance beneficiaries (regardless of their ethnicity).

According to the representatives of the RICs, this measure resulted in a large number of submitted requests for legalization among the Roma population. However, this does not apply to the majority of Roma living in substandard conditions, since those areas are usually not part of the existing urban plans and it is impossible to even start the process of legalization. Such is the case with the illegal settlements in Gostivar, Bitola, Prilep. This would mean that the most vulnerable are once again left out of the existing processes with their problems unresolved. One such example is the illegal settlement under the Skopje Kale (Fortress), where about 40 homeless Roma families with over 50 children are located.

Regarding the utilization of the measures for support of social housing for the Roma population, the data obtained from the Ministry of Transport and Communications for the period 2014-2016 show that out of a total of 111 allocated social housing apartment, 5 apartments were allocated to persons of Roma nationality.

Allocation of social housing 2014-2016



In fact, in the period between 2014 and 2016, social housing apartments were allocated in 3 municipalities (the open call was published in 2015, and the apartments were allocated in 2016):

- **Municipality of Prilep** – Out of the allocated 73 social apartments, under category 5 - People from the Roma community, at social risk, a total of 9 requests were submitted, 5 of which were valid, and 4 had incomplete documentation. **5 apartments were allocated to people who had fulfilled the conditions from this category.**

- **Municipality of Demir Hisar** – out of the allocated total of 20 social apartments, under category 5, people from the Roma community, at social risk, no requests were submitted.

- **Municipality of Resen** - out of the allocated total of 18 social apartments, under category 5, people from the Roma community, at social risk, no requests were submitted.

It should be noted that for the other categories, with the exception of Category 5, no proof of ethnicity was required and in accordance to this, the Ministry of Transport and Communications responded that it cannot provide data on the number of persons from a particular ethnic community who applied for and got a social apartment.

Another initiative in this area is the cooperation between the Minister without portfolio on Roma issues and the local self-governments for realization of infrastructure projects in places populated predominantly with Roma population (street asphaltting, sewage networks, etc.). However, some of the interviewed representatives of the NGOs and the Roma Information Centers reported abuse of these projects, i.e. their use in settlements where there is minimal presence of Roma population.

Housing is often associated with the social exclusion of the Roma community. In this regard, some of the undertaken activities and measures are the activities of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy: The Cash Conditional Transfer Program (CCT) and the Program for Subsidizing Energy Consumption, according to which subsidies are awarded for electricity, firewood, coal, extra oil / household oil and central heating.

Which are the most burning issues related to housing/infrastructure per municipality?

- **Municipality of Gostivar** – Residential area of Dupka, with substandard living conditions, for which no detailed urban plan has been adopted. According to the representatives of the municipality, it is necessary to reallocate the land, and then to develop a detailed urban plan, in order to start the process of legalization and build the communal infrastructure. On the territory of the municipality, there is another location where a larger group of Roma population lives, which is the so-called Makedonsko maalo (Macedonian Neighborhood). According to the plans of the municipality, residential units are planned to be built at that location. Also, social housing is planned to be allocated during 2018.

- **Municipality of Prilep** – Residential area of Trizla, with substandard living conditions, located on the outskirts of the municipality of Prilep, with a predominantly Roma population. There are several “neighborhoods” in Trizla: Novo Selo; Dabnichka with Tri Bagremi, Meksiko (with Debarca) and Deboj. The General Urban Plan (GUP) does not include the Tri Bagremi and Debarca residential areas and the families who live there have still not regulated the status of their homes, meaning that the property has not been registered. It is illegally built and has not been legalized. In these parts there is no legal grounds for construction of water supply and sewerage network, because they have not been entered into the GUP. The illegal objects, in addition to not being registered are also not connected to the electricity, water and sanitation grids.

With regards to the other neighborhoods, according to the data from the municipality and the organizations, most of them have already submitted requests for legalization.

According to local NGOs, one of the biggest problems related to housing and infrastructure is the unsafe riverbed, which passes along the Dabnichki zavoj Street, because over the past few years there were several child deaths, and emergence of various infectious diseases due to the poor hygienic conditions.

- **Municipality of Chair – Topaana** - The Topaana residential area is characterized by unplanned and inadequate infrastructure. In 2007, the Municipality of Cair developed a detailed urban plan for Topaana, but only a small part of the planned activities have been implemented to date. Most of the families have submitted requests for legalization, yet many of them still do not have water-supply and sewerage in their homes. The street infrastructure and hygiene are also listed as problems that require urgent intervention by the municipality.

At the initiative of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, a decision was made for interventional accommodation of homeless persons, that is, Roma families from the territory of the City of Skopje who had lived in the location called Pod Kale (under the city fortress), and in the course of November 2017, 112 persons were displaced and were accommodated in institutions that are under the authority of the Ministry.

Roma organizations have been engaged for the purpose of social inclusion of these persons, that work with them for 12 hours a day in two shifts, prepare individual social plans for their integration on the labor market, social protection, health care, providing documents for personal identification and inclusion of the children in the education system.

- **Municipality of Bitola** – In the residential area of Bair there are still buildings and homes that have substandard living conditions. According to the local residents, the collection of communal waste is a major problem which results in the creation of mini-landfills that endanger the safety and health of residents. The construction of the sewage system that will cover all homes in the Roma residential area is also a priority, which is included in the local action plan for housing of the Municipality of Bitola.

- **Municipality of Shuto Orizari** – Although it is listed as an urban municipality, many parts of the municipality lack the basic standards for decent housing, such as street infrastructure, lighting, plumbing, electricity supply, and according to the non-governmental organizations there are many illegal buildings in the territory of the municipality inhabited by people without documents who exist outside of the system. Although on the territory of the municipality there is a wide range of homes, from those with the lowest standard to the most modern buildings, most of the people can be said to live in unfavorable conditions of social exclusion. There is an ongoing procedure for legalization, but many families are facing problems and lack of access to information and the necessary documents to complete it. The municipality is overcrowded and there is no accurate data on the number of inhabitants (an additional problem for an accurate estimation of the population are the persons without identification documents).

Conclusions

- The situation with housing remains one of the most pressing issues of the Roma population.
- The conditions in the segregated residential areas, such as the ones in Bitola, Gostivar, Kumanovo, Prilep and Shuto Orizari tend to be worse than those of the Roma households in the integrated residential areas.
- The residents of the Roma residential areas often do not possess personal documents to prove the ownership of their homes and/or the parcels that they have been built on, and the progress in the implementation of the Law on Addressing Illegally Built Facilities varies greatly between the municipalities.
- Very few of the Roma are users of the social housing project conducted by the Ministry of Transport and Communications.

Recommendations

- Drafting a Law on Social Housing. There already is such an initiative in the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy for 2018.
- To “de-ghettoize” the Roma residential areas. i.e. invest in building residential buildings and access to social apartments for the Roma outside their original residential areas, or in their vicinity where there already are existing housing conditions and access to quality life.
- Conducting regular numeration of houses and giving the streets names which would enable easier identification of their homes and access to all their social and healthcare services.
- Placing public waste disposal bins throughout the streets of the residential area of Trizla, primarily on the main streets, which will enable better general hygiene for the inhabitants. At the same time organizing environmental actions in the community involving the residents and educating them about methods of waste selection.
- To enable access to the sewage system of the inhabitants living along the rainwater drainage canals on streets “Debarca”/“Meksiko”, to conduct on-site inspection of the potentially harmful effects of the canal on the surrounding houses and the appearance of moisture in them, and consequently, to repair the causes causing harm to homes.
- To conduct on-site inspection of the water supply connections on the street “Dubnichki Zavoj”, to check the individual and direct access to clean drinking water in the homes of the residents, and thus inform the residents about the possibilities to improve their access and define their status as users of the water supply network.

HEALTHCARE

The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia states that all citizens have the right to health insurance and/or health care - a fundamental human right. Every citizen is guaranteed the right to healthcare and has the right and duty to preserve and improve his/her health. This imposes an obligation on the state to create conditions for exercising the right to healthcare for all citizens, including the vulnerable groups to which the Roma belong. The rights of citizens in the area of healthcare are regulated by various laws, such as: the Law on Healthcare (Official Gazette of RM 43/2012); Law on Health Insurance (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia 25/2000, 91/2013); and other relevant bylaws and regulations. Internationally, these rights are defined in the Declaration of the Rights of Patients in Europe, adopted by the World Health Organization in 1994. According to the Constitution, citizens have the right to social security and social insurance determined by appropriate regulations and collective agreements. This also applies to health insurance as part of the social security package.

According to the current legislation, all citizens, regardless of their status, should be members of the health insurance system. A key problem arises when a citizen cannot provide identity documents, as is the case with some of the Roma people.

Field analysis findings

Even in the absence of precise statistics from the Health Insurance Fund (health statistics in Macedonia are not classified according to ethnicity), it is clear that the health status of the Roma population is significantly worse compared to other ethnic communities in Macedonia. In 2016, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations (2016: item 47 and 49) expressed “concern over the limited access to health services, especially to the Roma population, and the acute shortage of gynecological services in rural areas and environments with a predominantly Roma population”. The Roma population has highest infant mortality rate according to the analysis of the Institute for the Protection of Mothers and Children. The data show that infant mortality among the Roma population is the highest compared to all periods starting from birth up to 11 months of life. The life expectancy of the Roma is on average 10 years shorter than the rest of the population.

Roma children under the age of 5 show signs of growth and developmental delays considerably more than the national average (16.6% versus 8.7%) (Eminova, Janeva and Petroska-Beshka 2011). In addition, as mentioned above, Roma children are less likely to be immunized by non-Roma children: 34% of Roma children have not received all vaccines (Source: UNICEF, MICS, 2011), compared with 12% among children from the remaining ethnic communities, despite the fact that the immunization program should provide free vaccination for all children.

The comparison between the national Roma strategy drafted in 2004 and the one from 2014 suggests that Roma face the same health problems even after a decade of implementation of the strategy.

The access to health care among Roma is often limited by poverty. As one representative of a Roma NGO who participated in the focus group stated, “the access to health services is not easy for poor families, and most Roma families are really poor families living in inadequate conditions”.

The information collected during the fieldwork conducted in the process of preparation of this report suggests that most Roma do have health insurance; according to the representatives of the Roma civic organizations participating in the survey, the health insurance coverage among the Roma has improved significantly in recent years and continues to improve. However, health insurance remains a problem for a large number of people who have problems with their personal documentation. The latest official information from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy speaks about a figure of about 700 people, but according to NGOs, this number is much higher. According to estimates of some non-governmental organizations, the number of Roma without health insurance ranges from 20 to 30% in all municipalities.

This makes them legally invisible and makes it impossible for them to be covered by the health system. While the increase in the coverage with health insurance is a positive development, health insurance is an indispensable, but not sufficient condition for access to health services, and many Roma people face difficulties in accessing free prescription drugs, similarly to the other poor citizens from all ethnic communities. However, an important difference in this regard is that Roma are poor in a much larger percentage in comparison to other ethnicities and cannot afford services or drugs that are not free of charge.

The most commonly mentioned positive activity in all of the municipalities was the project for Roma health mediators, which started in 2013 as an initiative of the CSOs in partnership with the Ministry of Health and currently functions in 10 municipalities. The participants in the interviews conducted during the preparation of this report noted that the mediators are particularly successful in supporting the immunization of Roma children, facilitating access to health insurance and providing information on free services available through the preventative and curative programs of the Ministry of Health. In this direction, it is necessary to expand the scope of this project, the number of Roma health mediators and the number of municipalities where they would work.

The program for medical scholarships for Roma enrolled in secondary schools and universities in Macedonia was also mentioned as a positive practice. The importance of this program was clearly highlighted in Gostivar by a member of the local Roma community: "Our access to health services, the way we are treated in the healthcare facility, is much better now because we have a Roma doctor. It means that now we have someone we can rely on".

While the interviewed health workers were generally skeptical about the discrimination against Roma in the area of health care, the interviewed participants and participants in the focus groups reported that there indeed are discriminatory practices. The findings of the focus groups are largely supported by reports provided by other institutions, such as the Ombudsman's reports. Some of the interviewed citizens reported cases in which Roma patients were not issued hospital discharge lists or their health cards were taken kept to the unpaid debts they had to the institutions where they were treated, which disabled their right to health care. Furthermore, participants in the focus groups declare that they often face unkind and harsh behavior that prevents them from further seeing a doctor. "We just want to be treated kindly and kindly asked what need", one participant said.

The access to prenatal care and sexual and reproductive health services is an issue for many Roma women. A positive step forward is that the problem in Shuto Orizari has been solved, as there was no gynecologist on the territory of the entire municipality. Furthermore, in the municipalities of Bitola and Prilep there is a lack of sufficient number of gynecologists to ensure the fulfillment of the reproductive and health rights of all Roma women. At the same time, the problem of the early marriages among the Roma requires immediate reproductive health care. However, the interviews and focus groups that were held during the preparation of this report point out that there is little coordination between the institutions in resolving the phenomenon of juvenile marriages between the Roma, where this practice is sometimes tolerated as typical of the Roma tradition. The field research has also identified unequal treatment by health professionals and a lack of information on healthcare rights as some of the most significant barriers that Roma women face.

Conclusions

The Program of the Ministry of Health and the Roma health mediators has significantly contributed towards the increase in the vaccination rate, has alleviated the access to health insurance, and has provided information about the free services offered by the Ministry of Health. However:

- Although most of the Roma do have health insurance and access to healthcare, it is often limited due to poverty.
- The notifications about cases of discrimination against the Roma in the area of healthcare are still frequent.
- The access to professional prenatal care poses a problem to a large number of Roma women, due to the insufficient number of gynecologists, as has been observed in Bitola, Prilep and Shuto Orizari.
- There is insufficient coordination between the institutions in charge of overcoming the issue of early marriages among the Roma population.
- Not all municipalities have their mediators.

Recommendations

- The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Macedonia should establish a Committee Monitoring the Health of the Roma which will monitor the implementation of the healthcare strategy on a national and local level and issue periodical reports;
- The Ministry of Health may create a program to provide funds for access to medications without payment of participation for Roma beneficiaries of social assistance, which will overcome the problem of their unfavorable financial situation and their inability to provide the necessary medications;
- Program for Roma Health Mediators, which will define the status of the Roma health mediators within the Ministry of Health and enable their permanent employment. Roma health mediators should be employed in all municipalities with a higher percentage of Roma population, such as the municipality of Bitola;
- Program for Medical Scholarships for the Roma, which will provide continuity of the existing project for Medical Scholarships for the Roma that has achieved significant results and long-term effects on the health of Roma in the Republic of Macedonia;
- The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Macedonia and/or the Local Self-Governments to open health counseling centers in the Roma environments for mobile health services from the preventative and primary health care;
- Increased pro-activity on the part of healthcare workers, especially the family doctors and patronage nurses in their communication with the Roma population for the purpose of health education.

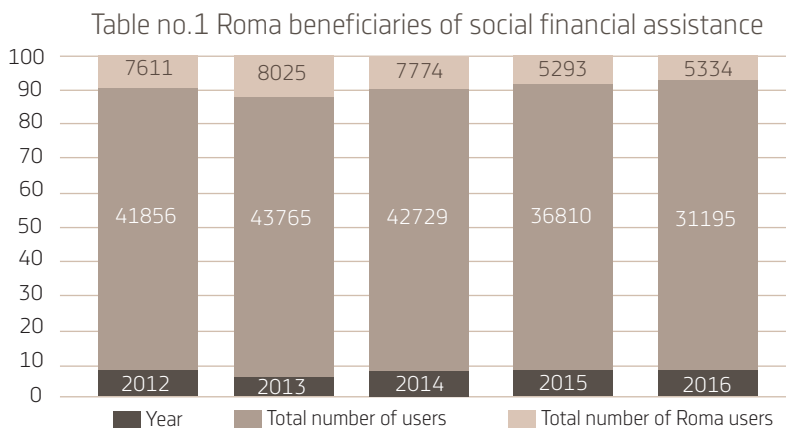
SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Republic of Macedonia, according to its Constitution, is defined as welfare state. Article 35 of the Constitution states: “The Republic shall take care of the social protection and social security of the citizens in accordance with the principle of social justice”.

The laws which enable the exercising of the rights to social protection and security are: the Law on Social Protection; the Law on Family; the Law on Child Protection; Law on Local Self-Government; the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance; the Law on Employment and Insurance in the Case of Unemployment; The Law on General Administrative Procedure; the Law on Administrative Disputes.

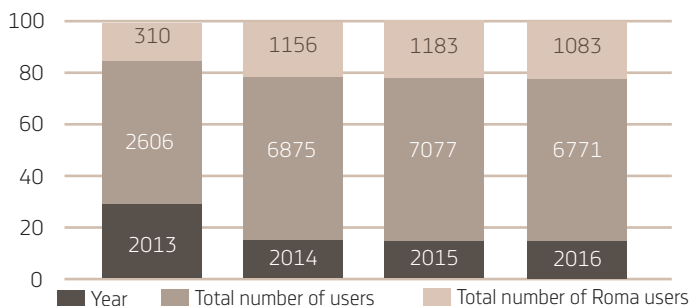
Over view of access and users of the rights to social protection

Any person who is able to work and manage a household (a family of family members and other relatives, who do not have a legal obligation to mutually support each other and who jointly contribute, manage and spend their earnings) has the **right to social financial assistance (social welfare)**. The applicant, i.e. the holder of the right to social financial assistance, is an unemployed person who is actively seeking a job in accordance with the Law on Employment and Insurance in Case of Unemployment, who has no steady income and is unable to provide a livelihood according to other regulations. A Materially unsecured person is a person or a household that generates income which is lower in its totality than the amount of social financial assistance and who does not own any property or has any property rights to sustain him/herself. Most of the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia are beneficiaries of the **right to social financial assistance**. From the data it can be seen that in the period from 2012 to 2016, the largest number of Roma beneficiaries were recorded in 2013 – 8025. In the coming years the number of beneficiaries decreased, so the number of users of social financial assistance in 2014 was 7774, in 2015 it was 6299, in 2016 the number dropped to 5334 users (Table 1). On average, the percentage of Roma beneficiaries of SFA is 18% of the total number of users.



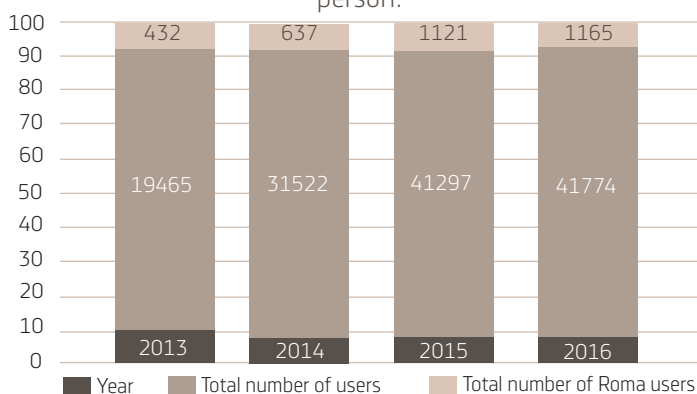
A person who is incapable of work and is economically unsupported, and who is unable to provide means for his/her existence on the basis of other regulations has the **right to permanent financial assistance**. The number of Roma beneficiaries of the **right to permanent financial assistance** in recent years is shown in Table no. 2

Table 2. Roma beneficiaries of permanent financial assistance



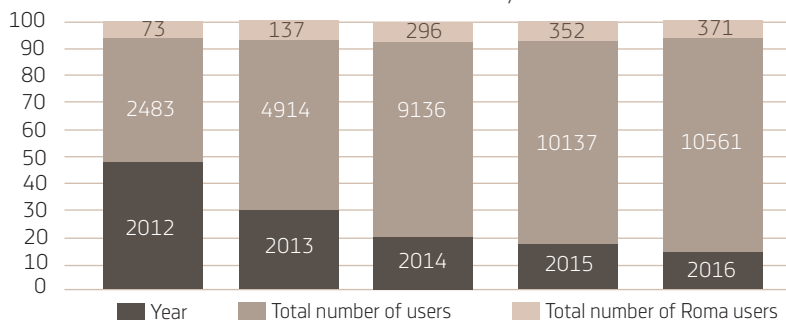
A person over the age of 26 with moderate, severe and profound intellectual disabilities, a person with severe and serious physical impairment, a completely blind person, as well as a person with permanent changes in the health, who needs help and care from another person because he/she cannot take care of him/herself has the right to a financial allowance for assistance and care from another person if this right is not exercised on the basis of other regulations. The data on the number of Roma who exercise the right to **financial compensation for assistance and care by another person (financial compensation for a caregiver)** are shown in Table no.3.

Table no. 3. Roma beneficiaries of financial compensation for assistance and care by another person.



The right to a mobility allowance is provided for a person with 100% physical disability who independently uses a wheelchair with 26 years of age and a person with quadriplegia or with moderate, severe and profound intellectual disability who uses a wheelchair with a companion, in order to create conditions for equal opportunities for inclusion of these people in the everyday life of the community. In 2014, 296 people of Roma nationality used the right to mobility and blindness, the number of users in 2015 was 352, while in 2016 this number amounted to 371 beneficiaries. (Table no. 4).

Table 4. Allowance for mobility and blindness



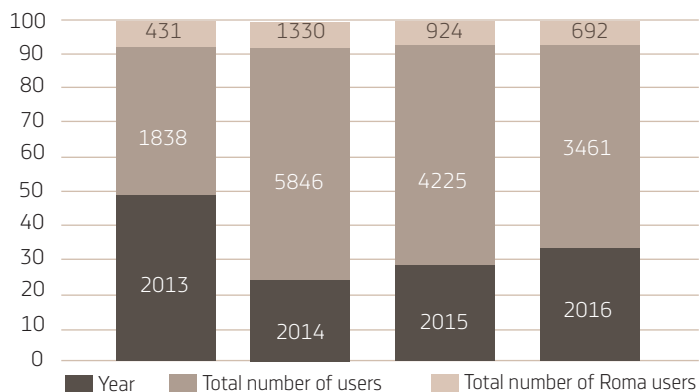
The right to financial assistance for social housing is provided to people at social risk – those without housing. The right to financial assistance for social housing is used by a low number of Roma people. This is reflected the statistical data which says that in 2014 there were 5 beneficiaries of this right; in 2015 7 people exercised this right, and in 2016 the number of beneficiaries of this right was 6 (Table 6). This data does not fully correspond to the actual situation i.e. the fact that the biggest problem for the Roma population is precisely the housing. Only at one location in Skopje, 30 Roma families reside in substandard conditions, which are currently sheltered in a facility under the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. In December, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, in cooperation with the Macedonian Red Cross, opened four regional shelters for homeless people in order to meet shelter the people with a housing problem during adverse weather conditions. The regional points were opened in Bitola, Strumica and Struga and the capacity of the shelter center for homeless persons in Skopje was expanded.

Table no.5 Financial assistance for social housing

Right	Total number of users	Year	Number of Roma users	Percentage of Roma
Financial assistance for social housing	13	2013	2	15,4%
Financial assistance for social housing	22	2014	5	22,7%
Financial assistance for social housing	33	2015	7	21,2%
Financial assistance for social housing	28	2016	6	21,4%

One-time financial assistance or assistance in kind is granted to a person or family who are exposed to social risk, as well as to a person and family affected by a natural disaster or an epidemic, or longer period of treatment in a health institution. In-kind aid means the provision of clothing, food and other means that the Center for Social Work finds are necessary for a minimum subsistence of the citizen or the family. Table no. 6 shows the number of Roma beneficiaries of one-time financial assistance and in-kind assistance in recent years. According to the data, on average about 20% of the beneficiaries of this right are of Roma nationality.

Table no. 6 One-time financial assistance and in-kind assistance



The beneficiaries of social financial assistance, by fulfilling certain criteria, have the right to subsidies for consumed electricity. 9682 people exercised this right in 2016, 1053 of whom were Roma (Table no. 7).

Table no. 7 Subsidies for electricity consumption

Right	Total number of users	Year	Number of Roma users	Percentage of Roma
Subsidies for electricity consumption	6.335	2012	764	12%
Subsidies for electricity consumption	10.346	2013	1.240	12%
Subsidies for electricity consumption	10.984	2014	1.244	11,3%
Subsidies for electricity consumption	10.688	2015	1.099	10,3%
Subsidies for electricity consumption	9.682	2016	1.053	10,9%

For a child with specific needs that has physical or mental disabilities or combined developmental disabilities and is up to 26 years of age, a special allowance is provided as a financial compensation. The assessment and opinion on the need for a special allowance is provided by an expert body which assesses the type and degree of disability in the mental or physical development of the applicants. The right to a special allowance is for one of the parents of the child, a foster parent or a person with a permanent place of residence in the Republic of Macedonia who has been entrusted to live with and care for the child with a decision of the competent center for social work, if the child is a citizen of the Republic Macedonia with a permanent place of residence in the Republic of Macedonia until the age of 26 years, unless the child is institutionalized and taken care of by the state.

This right was used by 681 Roma in 2014, and marked a slight decrease in the next two years. In 2015 it was used by 666 Roma people, while in 2016 the number of Roma users reached 628 (Table 8)

Table no. 8 Right to a special allowance

Right	Total number of users	Year	Number of Roma users	Percentage of Roma
Special allowance	3.740	2013	327	8,7%
Special allowance	7.203	2014	681	9,4%
Special allowance	7.249	2015	666	9,2%
Special allowance	7.128	2016	628	8,8%

The right to a salary compensation for part-time work for the care of a child with physical or mental disabilities and the most severe forms of chronic diseases is stipulated by the Law on Labor Relations and exercised through the Center for Social Work. In the period between 2013 and 2016, this right was used by a single person of Roma nationality.

Children are also eligible for a child allowance which is a financial compensation the purpose of which is to cover some of the expenses related to raising and bringing up a child. The right to a child allowance is exercised by one of the parents of the child, a citizen of the Republic of Macedonia with a permanent place of residence in the Republic, for a child who is a citizen of the Republic of Macedonia and attends a public school in R. Macedonia.

Table no. 9 gives an overview of the Roma beneficiaries of this right, for the period between 2012 and 2016.

Table no. 9 Child allowance

Right	Total number of users	Year	Number of Roma users	Percentage of Roma
Child allowance	6.622	2012	401	6%
Child allowance	9.531	2013	686	7,2%
Child allowance	8.677	2014	640	7,4%
Child allowance	7.498	2015	539	7,2%
Child allowance	5.985	2016	444	7,4%

One-time financial assistance for a newborn child is provided to the family for the first newborn child. The first newborn child is the first living child of any mother. The birth of multiple children at once (twins, triplets) also has the status of a first newborn child and is eligible for this assistance. The first adopted child has the same status as a first newborn child, in cases when one child is adopted, but also when multiple children are adopted at once (twins, triplets and more) at the first adoption, if the child is not older than one year of age and the month does not have any birth children.

Table no. 10 Users of one-time financial assistance of Roma nationality

Right	Total number of users	Year	Number of Roma users	Percentage of Roma
One-time financial assistance for a new-born child	1.034	2013	37	3,6%
One-time financial assistance for a new-born child	8.532	2014	286	3,3%
One-time financial assistance for a new-born child	8.309	2015	237	2,8%
One-time financial assistance for a new-born child	5.562	2016	152	2,7%

Parent's allowance for a child is a type of aid granted to any mother giving birth to a third living child. Any mother who is a citizen of the Republic of Macedonia with permanent residence in the country for the last three years before submitting the request is eligible for this type of assistance.

Table no. 11 Parents allowance for a third child, beneficiaries of Roma nationality

Right	Total number of users	Year	Number of Roma users	Percentage of Roma
Parent's allowance for a third child	3.848	2013	612	16%
Parent's allowance for a third child	18.029	2014	1.893	10,5%
Parent's allowance for a third child	21.174	2015	2.115	10%
Parent's allowance for a third child	22.725	2016	2.152	9,4%

The right to a parental allowance for a fourth child is exercised by a mother who is the immediate caregiver to the child that she has applied for, whose children from the previous order of birth are not placed in a social care institution, a foster family and are not given for adoption and who has not had her parental right of the children from the previous order of birth terminated.

Table no.12 Parental allowance for a fourth child, users of Roma nationality

Right	Total number of users	Year	Number of Roma users	Percentage of Roma
Parent's allowance for a fourth child	276	2013	63	22,8%
Parent's allowance for a fourth child	853	2014	160	18,7%
Parent's allowance for a fourth child	843	2015	155	18,4%
Parent's allowance for a fourth child	820	2016	143	17,4%

The beneficiaries of the program **conditional financial compensation** are pupils from households who are beneficiaries of the right to social financial assistance and from households whose right to social financial assistance has been suspended. The beneficiary uses a conditional financial compensation for secondary education if: - he/she does not exercise the right to child allowance, in accordance with the Law on Child Protection, - is enrolled as a regular student in a secondary school, - has regularly completed the previous school year in which he used conditional monetary compensation, and - is at secondary school age, in accordance with the Law on Secondary Education. The beneficiary uses conditional financial compensation for secondary education if: - he/she is a full-time student; and - he/she attends at least 85% of the total number of school classes.

Table no. 13 Roma beneficiaries of conditional financial compensation

Right	Total number of users	Year	Number of Roma users	Percentage of Roma
Conditional financial compensation	2.911	2012	191	6,5%
Conditional financial compensation	10.880	2013	816	7,5%
Conditional financial compensation	8.093	2014	605	7,5%
Conditional financial compensation	9.062	2015	597	6,6%
Conditional financial compensation	4.681	2016	284	6%

Taking into account the fact that the biggest drop-out of school of Roma children occurs in primary education, it is proposed that this measure for conditional monetary compensation to include primary education as well.

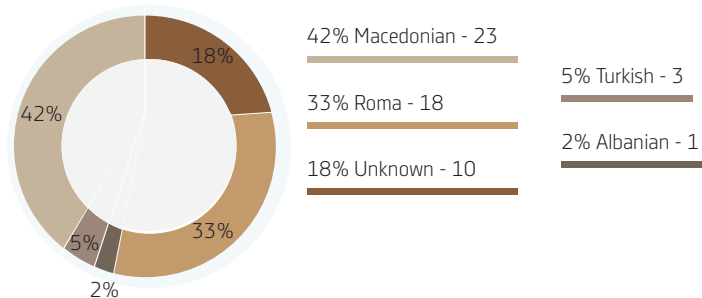
Persons who have had the status of a child without parents and parental care until the age of 18, are eligible to the right to **financial assistance for university studies**, provided they are enrolled as full-time or part-time students at the public institutions of higher education (first and second degrees of studies and doctoral studies).

The amount of the financial assistance for university studies is 18,000 MKD or 24,000 MKD, depending on whether the person uses a social apartment for rent. The number of users of this right is small, so in 2014 there are only 3 users registered. In 2015 -2016 there was a small increase by 3 users. Of the total number of users of 197 in 2016, only 8 Roma used the right to financial assistance for university studies.

From the rights in the area of social protection, the number of Roma beneficiaries of the right to a **civilian disability** is the lowest. In the period 2011-2013, the number of Roma beneficiaries was 3, while in the next 3 years this right was used by 2 beneficiaries.

Roma children accommodated in the Home for Children without Parents 11 October, Skopje

Table no. 14 Data on the children in PI Home for Children without Parents 11 October, Skopje, according to their nationality for 2016



People accommodated in foster families

A person who has no living conditions in his/her family or needs accommodation in a foster family for other reasons, has the right to accommodation in a foster family. The right to accommodation in a foster family is provided to: a child without parents and a child without parental care until they are capable of independent life and work, and until the completion of secondary education at the latest, that is, six months after the completion of secondary education, if there are no possibilities for the care and upbringing to be provided otherwise.

In 2016, the total number of persons accommodated in a foster family was 382, 135 of which were of Roma ethnicity. In 2016, a total of 444 service providers - foster families were registered. Out of these, 176 are Roma families who provide this service. The largest number of foster families were registered in Skopje, 116.

Adoption

In accordance with the Law on Family, in the period between 2014 and 2016, a total of 114 children were adopted:

- 40 children in 2014;
- 38 children in 2015;
- 36 children in 2016.

29 of the total number of adopted children – 114, within this period, were of Roma nationality.

Domestic violence

According to the records of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy from the 30 Centers for Social Work, the situation with the reported cases of domestic violence of Roma nationality is as follows:

Table no.15: Domestic violence

	2014	2015	2016 (January - September)
New cases	999	1.129	849
Roma nationality	78	86	49
Employed	5	10	3
Unemployed	68	66	45
Elderly people	5	10	1
Accommodated in a Shelter Center for victims of domestic violence	4	5	
Social financial assistance	1	2	5
One-time financial assistance	1	3	1
Permanent financial assistance			2

As is evident from the data, there is a difference regarding the ethnic structure of the accommodated persons, i.e., the number of accommodated persons from the Roma community is disproportionately low. The reasons for this are certainly multiple, starting from the cultural context, the identification and reporting of domestic violence, but we must also take into consideration the lack of information and services to support and protect on this entire territory and in the language used by these ethnic communities.

Conclusions

The biggest challenge in the exercising of the rights of social protection and all the rights of the people from the Roma community in general, is the problem with personal identification documents. According to the information from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, about 700 Roma are affected by this problem, and they cannot register in the birth register due to various reasons which places them in the categories at highest social risk because until they get registered and set their status, they are unable exercise any of the rights provided by the state. Taking into account that the state does not have the official number of people without documents (so-called phantoms), the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, in coordination with the Directorate for Register of Births and Deaths, has launched an initiative for a public call inviting all persons who are not registered in the birth records to submit requests to the administration for additional registration, so that the administration can have official numbers and at the same time gain insight into the types of cases in question. In addition, information was submitted to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for an initiative to amend and supplement the Law on Extrajudicial Procedure (to introduce an opportunity for the court to make a decision for registering in the birth registry in order to provide personal identification).

The Roma Information Centers play a significant role in improving the access to rights and services for the Roma community. Currently, 12 Roma Information Centers are functioning in 12 municipalities and 16 people are engaged there (working in the RICs in Shuto Orizari, Topaana, Tetovo, Gostivar, Bitola, Prilep, Shtip, Kocani, Delcevo, Vinica, Berovo and Kumanovo). The centers work to provide timely information, counseling, referral and logistical support to citizens so that they can be able to exercise their rights and obligations (in the areas of social protection, employment, health, housing and education, taking out personal documents, etc.). Taking into account the importance of their role it is necessary to turn their contract-based jobs into regular employment. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the capacities of the employees in the RICs in the areas of monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

Case studies based on the interviews conducted with the people from the Roma ethnic community

A. Lj, 34 years old, has 4 children and lives in his family's own small cabin in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari. A.Lj stated: The children go to school regularly and are regularly vaccinated, we all have health insurance. Me and my wife take on any job we can find, we clean houses, sell old clothes, just so that we can put some food on the table. Our children are young and cannot help us. We do not receive social assistance because we used to get money for a third child. But now they terminated this assistance because my child turned 6 years old in December, and I didn't know that I had to enroll him at school, no invitation was sent to me at home. I complained to the Center for Social Work but they told me that it was the law and that they couldn't do anything. I have now enrolled my child in primary school and took the documents to the Center for Social Work again, but there they told me that the case will be on stand-by for now. I do not get any financial assistance now.

F.K., born in 1979, lives in her own house in Shuto Orizari. I am married and I have 4 children, we all have health insurance and all of the children have been regularly vaccinated. We are all unemployed and we are not even recipients of social assistance. We sell old clothes, collect bottles and the children help in our work. My social assistance was terminated because of a single transfer of money. My husband had some problems and he took money from the money-lenders and he had to pay it back, so he went to his sister's in Italy and worked there for a while so he sent me 1,000 euros to pay the money back, and because of that money that I got through Western Union they terminated my social assistance. I went down to the Center for Social Work once and they told me that that's the law and that it was not up to them. I don't know where to turn to now because half of the people in Shutka already have this problem. We do not turn to the NGOs, because they haven't helped anyone for so far, we do not trust them anymore.

S.D. - 35 years old, I live in Berovo with my 9-member family, we have 7 underage children. All of my children go to school except the little one who is still young. 5 children are in primary school and the eldest son is in secondary school. We have problems with the eldest, they sent us to court because he does not attend school regularly. He is 16 years old and often leaves school and goes to work for private companies: loading and unloading, wood-chopping, whatever work is there. We have a real problem with him, he does not go to school regularly. We've been getting social assistance in the amount of 6200 MKD among, it's been 4 months now. My husband and son are working for others to put some food on the table, there's nothing else to do. The other children go to school regularly, the youngest is 6 years old, but she has health issues, she has bronchitis. The one who's in the 4th grade is sick, she has enlarged ligaments, she has nose-bleeds non-stop. The doctor hasn't made any analyzes because she is still young, plus we do not have the money to take her to Shtip to get her ears, nose and throat checked. My husband is a diabetic. We have all health insurance, we take the medicines nearly for free, we only pay a little. When we have money, we go to the doctor's when we don't we try to treat ourselves at home. We have big problem with the water-supply, an enforcement agent is after us due to unpaid bills. The debt is 27,000 MKD. (The municipality had an open call for debt cancellation, but they did not apply as they were not informed). We don't have big problems with the institutions. I have a very good experience with the CSW, they always try to help. I filed a request to the Municipality, two or three times, to build a retaining wall and eventually they built it there. My house needs to be renovated, I have 4 rooms, bathroom and corridor, but there is a lot of mold. I am more than satisfied with the work of the NGOs, all four of our children went to kindergarten for 4 years through their programs. Now we have a problem, the money is low, and we can not provide enough for the children's needs for school. What we need the most is to renovate the house, so that we don't live in mold. We need to take care of our income, get jobs, so that we can raise our children as we should.

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