



NATIONAL VULNERABILITY REPORT FOR MACEDONIA

Focus on Roma



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Prepared by:

Natasha Gaber Damjanovska Ph.D.
Samet Skenderi
Nadir Redzepi
Aleksandra Bojadzieva
Lolita Cekregi

Proof-reading:

Julian Pack

Design and printing:

ARCUSS FONKO Design, Skopje

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Project:

Support to the National policy Development
for the Roma Decade

Address: Nikola Vapcarov II/4-4, 100 Skopje
Tel: 389 2 32 44 105

UNDP Project Team:

Liljana Alceva
Aneta Damjanovska
Merita Kuli

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INTRODUCTION¹

Globalisation has intensified the construction and political articulation of ethnic identities. This trend of internationalisation of ethnic minority rights is particularly active in transition countries, which either have a candidate status for entry in the European Union or are in the process of applying for it. This commitment, of course, also models the agenda of standards and criteria which should be integrated by these countries into their legislation in order to firmly determine and protect human rights. The experiences thus far have shown that, when it comes down to Roma issues, the traditional approach to resolving minority issues does not produce the expected results. Namely, the circumstances of the Roma community entirely differs in terms of other ethnic communities and, in that sense, the traditional approach does not resolve the problem efficiently. This is precisely why these countries have an imposed need to prepare special national programmes for the Roma community which will have to meet the specific needs and problems permanently encountered by this ethnic community. The programmes which will be exclusively dedicated to the Roma community are derived from the need to draft a comprehensive and consistent policy which will identify the crucial topics and problems which reflect certain specifics of this group and which are in the framework of the globally defined core development movement. The programmes should also offer concrete specialised implementation programme for the policy, and provide guidelines for those who will execute the policy.

It is a generally known fact today that the Roma community represents the poorest and the fastest growing ethnic minority group in Europe. It is estimated that the total number of the Roma population in Europe is between 7 and 13 million, which actually represents around 2% of the 450 million people living in the enlarged European Union. It is also estimated that nearly 6 million of the Roma community live in Central and Eastern Europe and almost 5 million in the new member-states of the European Union.

The Roma population is significantly younger in terms of the majority population in the countries where they live. Currently, 25-30% of Roma are under the age of 15 against the corresponding group of the majority population with 10%. Due to its young demographic profile, the group represents the future of many countries in Central and Eastern Europe and that is why these countries need to take on the challenge providing for the group's economic and social development.

The key questions concerning the Roma are poverty and exclusion, which are cumulative and self-perpetuating in its own multiplying circle. The Roma population live in profound poverty, even in the most prosperous countries in Central and Eastern Europe, with a rate of poverty often ten times that of other groups; they are also excluded from the labour market to a large degree due to their level of education qualification, which in turn results in a lower living standard; the group has limited opportunities to overcome poverty because of the low human development and long-term discrimination, poor health and limited possibilities for participation in social and political spheres. Due to these general reasons, the Roma population is regarded as the most vulnerable ethnic community and it imposes the need to promote an *inclusive policy* which will enable a change of the current situation.

Therefore, the basic challenges which are highly compatible with the measures and policies that ought to be realised by any country in terms of the Roma population are as follows:

- Creating conditions in order to increase the level of integration on the labour market for the long-term unemployed and risk groups which live in poverty and are socially excluded;
- Provide comprehensive systems for social protection for families, women and children, which will offer a minimum level of funds that will provide for a decent life and at the same time, eliminate lack of motivation to seek employment;

¹ Unless stated differently, the data used in this report are based on the UNDP Vulnerable groups survey conducted in the fall 2004 (for methodology see Annex 1).

- Develop programmes for continuous education, particularly for risk groups and prevent them from leaving the educational system in premature stages;
- Improving the quality and approach to public services, particularly in the field of health, as well as social services and housings (accommodation);
- Overcoming the high level of social exclusion and discrimination.

The success rate of social inclusion will also directly depend on the following: policy strengthening and coordination between the accountable government department which are concerned with and prevent the level of poverty; development of effective support measures of these priorities between social partners and civil organisations; providing implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies; ensuring a clear division of competencies between national, regional and local authorities.

Within the framework of the Republic of Macedonia, the Roma population is one of the ethnic groups that, according to the census held in 2002, represents 2.66% (or 55.970 persons) of the total population in the country². Since the conditions determined in other countries are almost identical in Macedonia, there is a need to adhere to the global trend as well as to prepare special national documents related to the Decade of the Roma population and the National strategy for the Roma. These documents which have already been endorsed at the beginning of 2005 resulted in the proposed national policy which emphasises and intensifies the states responsibility, attempting to provide a more concrete operational programme for implementation and provide guidance for those who will implement the determined activities.

Even though the Republic of Macedonia has made significant steps in terms of the Roma group as an ethnic community, until now there was still a requirement for a consistent and coordinated policy aimed at meeting the specific needs, whose consequences are reflected in the actual reality. Nonetheless, during the previous period, certain projects regarding the Roma population were formulated and carried out, but these efforts are deemed as partial, mutually unrelated and unable to resolve the existing problems on a wider level. Thus, the Republic of Macedonia will join the countries that have shown commitment to promote the principle of active protection of the rights of the Roma population.

This process signifies not only a moral obligation for the state, but also its legally regulated responsibility. The state is obligated to respect the outlined rights through the relevant legislation as well as to provide institutional protection of the rights by implementing administrative and other measures necessary to ensure their realisation. By integrating the highest standards for abiding by human rights in its legislation, the Republic of Macedonia represents a legitimate political system which expresses openness and acceptability of contemporary democratic processes. In that sense, the basic starting point is the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, amended in 2001, which in its **preamble** explicitly states the Roma population along with other peoples that reside in the country, as bearers of the country's independence and sovereignty. With both the previous and current Constitution, the Republic of Macedonia has become the first country to officially and constitutionally recognise the Roma population. In accordance with the current prescriptions, the Roma population is equal in its legally guaranteed rights and obligations, as is the rest of the population in the country.

This document is related to the current condition of vulnerable groups (particularly Roma) in the Republic of Macedonia and it represents the second step in assisting the UNDP which supports the process of endorsement and realisation of the Action Plans derived from the Decade of the Roma.

² Expert estimates range between 220,000 and 260,000, though (UNDP BRC, 2006)

1. IMPORTANCE OF THE DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION

In order to speed up the progress towards improvement of the situation of the Roma population in Europe, a requirement has arisen to transform the declarations into a coordinated framework of actions aimed at improving the economic status and social inclusion of the Roma population. Therefore, an international initiative was proposed under the title **Decade of Roma Inclusion**³ (2005 - 2015), a process regarded as a direct result of the regional conference “The Roma population in enlarged Europe: challenges for the future”.⁴ This initiative increased the profile of the issue concerning the Roma population in Europe. The central objectives of the conference were the following:

1. To establish the Roma issues as matters of poverty and economic development – referring to human rights in the 1990s and inclusion in dialogue of those responsible for policy formulation with the Roma leaders in order to overcome poverty and social exclusion of the Roma population;
2. To provide opportunities for political representatives of the Roma population to get long-term political commitments by respective Governments and international organisations, particularly by the EU which should improve opportunities for the Roma population and living standards, prior to and subsequent to EU accession.
3. Exchange experiences on projects and programmes regarding the Roma community during the last decade and discuss experiences and options for an increase of small projects and policies.

A consensus was reached in terms of the urgency and the European dimension of the issue, as well as overcoming the identification process of the Roma issues which remain as a priority for the Governments which are in the EU accession process and those that became EU member states in 2004. The objective of the Decade is to accelerate the process of improving the economic and social status of the Roma population through the provision of an action framework which includes three activities:

1. Establishing clear and measurable national objectives to improve the economic and social status of the Roma population and creating an information base aimed at measuring the realisation of the established objectives;
2. Development of National Action Plans for achieving the outlined objectives;
3. Regular monitoring of the progress and adjustment of the action plan, as necessary.

The Decade determined the following as problems of high priority of the Roma population: *housing, education, health and employment*. Additional three cross-cutting topics have been added related to the previously mentioned fields, namely: poverty, discrimination and gender equality.

The first meeting of international **Steering Committee of the Decade of Roma Inclusion**⁵ was held initiated by the Government of Hungary, and the objective of the meeting was to get all necessary preparations under way. Consensus was reached at the meeting for the following steps which began in 2005:

- 1) Establishing the priority fields which will be the main focus of the activities related to the Decade;
- 2) Institutionalisation of the Steering Committee, National Working Groups and the Secretariat of the Decade;
- 3) Provisional agenda and schedule for future meetings of the Steering Committee.

In accordance with the conclusion of the Steering Committee of the Decade, the main part of the Decade costs will be incurred in the process of up-grading the programmes necessary for realisation of the objectives of the Decade and the Governments of participating countries will need to implement the programmes and ensure that they are financially sustainable. At the same time, international organisations can help in the implementation of the objectives of the Operational plans, and the financial support by the EU will have to be expanded, particularly by new member and candidate states that will have access to the structural funds.

³ Countries participating in the Decade: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia. More information about the Decade can be found at: www.romadecade.org

⁴ Held in Budapest, 29 June - 1 July 2003

⁵ December 11 and 12, 2003, Budapest.

Decade of Roma Inclusion in Macedonia

It is important to mention that the Decade of Roma Inclusion initiative corresponds to the process of endorsing the National Strategy for the Roma population in the Republic of Macedonia. The processes are regional, their approach is similar, their realisation is parallel and intertwined because part of the priorities interlink by regions. The basic criteria for development of both these documents is the observation through the Millennium Development Goals⁶, the Programme for social inclusion of the European Union, Leading Principles endorsed in *Tempera*⁷ in 1999 and the Draft document for social inclusion which are recognised by the European Union and at the same time, represent the principles which will have to be recognised and implemented by member-states of the EU.

During 2004, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy as the central subject of the activities of the Decade, the National Working Group was formed, which consists of representatives of line ministries and other relevant stakeholders (among them also representatives of the Roma population). The group prepared four National Action Plans corresponding to the four priority fields of the Decade, which also included general objectives, activities, indicators and how they are related to the three cross-cutting topics. The plans were endorsed during the Government session held on the 31st of January 2005, at which the Republic of Macedonia assumed an obligation to implement the plans.⁸ The central objective of the National Action Plans (NAPs) is to promote the strengthening and integration of the Roma within the social and economic trends in the Republic of Macedonia, by defining the fundamental direction for achieving a comprehensive multidimensional state policy, which will represent a basis for priority for additional concrete projects related to certain segments of the policy.

Implementation of the NAPs requires joint efforts of several line ministries as well as other relevant stakeholders as local self-governments and NGOs. Every respective line ministry required specific operational plan to be able to plan a budget for the implementation of the objectives outlined in the Action Plans. The National Working Group together with the specialists from respective line ministries (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Transport and Communication) prepared the draft versions of Operational Plans for implementation of the NAP. These operational plans were endorsed by the Government on the 18th of November, 2005.

The general objective of the Strategy and the Decade is the integration of the Roma in the Macedonian society and strengthening of the Roma community. Thus it is necessary that the proclaimed strategic objectives and activities correspond with the general reform state policy. The central long-term performance indicators are the achieved positive changes in the overall living standards of the Roma as well as the increased participation in social life in the country.

⁶ The Millennium Goals include: advocating for a reduction of poverty, better education and health care, combatting hunger and gender inequality, prevention of environmental damage, and building global development partnerships.

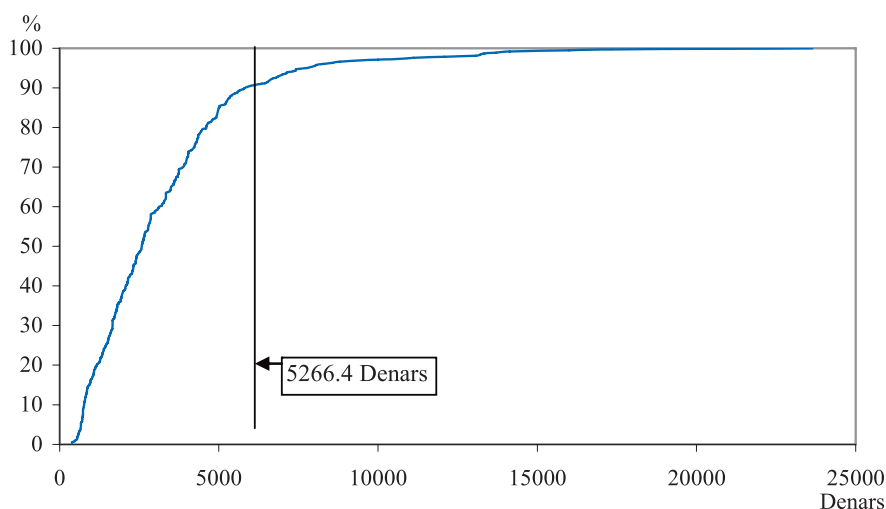
⁷ This is a particularly significant document, as the basic emphasis is laid on the elimination of discrimination and racism against the Roma, as well as ensuring gender equality in the access to and opportunities for development in all areas, particularly in the area of education, employment, housing, health and gender relations.

⁸ To facilitate their more rapid implementation, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy organized several workshops with the members of the National Working Group, during which several Operational Plans for implementation of the NAPs on the four priority areas in the Decade were finalised.

2. DEGREE OF ROMA POVERTY IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

In 2003, there was 30.2% of the population living on less than 70% of the median equivalent consumption, which means they were living on less than 5,266.4 Denars per month. The figure for the Roma, based on the UNDP survey in 2004 was significantly higher – 79%.

Figure 1 – Distribution of income per capita in households



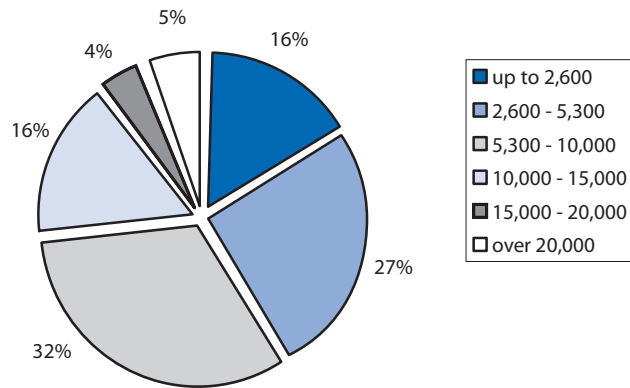
As far as the source of income is concerned, still the majority of Roma households have some income from wages (63%). Average income from this source accounts also for the largest income the households are getting from all sources. The second most frequent sources of income are various types of benefits – 40% of households reported such income, although the average amount coming from this source is only the third largest average income. The second largest average income comes from old age pensions, which brings money to 18% of Roma households.

Table 1 – Source of income in the household in the last month

	% of households	Average income in Denars
All kinds of wages, earnings, bonuses	63	4,835.7
Old age pensions	18	1,065.4
Disability pensions	10	503.7
State transfer for children	9	184.6
Unemployment, poverty and local assistance benefits	40	869.8
Stipends and scholarships	1	26.1
Sale from agricultural production	0	0.0
Money received from interest, capital, debtors	0	13.3
Pawning or sale of personal things or collected secondary materials	1	10.6
Informal personal activities like gambling, begging, fortune telling etc.	3	108.5
Remittances or gifts received from friends and relatives	4	98.1
Aids from NGOs, charitable or humanitarian contributions	5	365.8

On average, the total monthly income of the Roma household reaches 8,081 Denars, which is only about 50% above the relative poverty line (which is defined as “per capita”). As many as 43% of Roma households report total monthly income below the poverty line, which means, that the members of these households are often facing extreme poverty. Such a statement can be supported by the fact that 45% of households consider hunger a serious threat for them and as many as 56% of Roma households faced the situation when a member went to bed hungry, because they could not afford a food to feed them.

Figure 2 Total monthly household's income, Denars



3. EMPLOYMENT

In the process of transition in the countries in the region, including the Republic of Macedonia, the Roma were usually among the first to lose their jobs and stood the least chance of finding new ones.⁹ The long-term unfavourable economic trends in the Republic of Macedonia, which affected the entire population, had even more pronounced negative consequences among this group, resulting in further impoverishment. The main consequence of this trend is the high unemployment, which indicates that there is room for improvement in the employment rate when more general positive economic developments start taking place in the country.

Current Situation

What makes this situation less favourable for the Roma population is the fact that a large portion of the employment-seeking Roma still lacks the required level of education to be more competitive in the labour market. If we compare the total number of the workforce by ethnic structure, it is noticeable that the Roma as a group have the highest percentage of unemployment - always above 70%¹⁰ compared to others who have had unemployment rates between 30% and 49% over the same periods. This situation was confirmed by the 2002 Census, which showed that the unemployment rate among the Roma is more than twice the national rate (78.5% compared to the national average of 38.1%). The survey from the Employment Agency from 31.05.2004 shows a situation with a total of 395,693 unemployed persons, of which 17,177 (or 4.3%)¹¹ are Roma, and of these 7212¹² are women.

According to the latest data (2005), the general unemployment rate in the country is 37.2%, while the UNDP survey shows that among the Roma it is 79%. The unemployment rate of Roma even increases

⁹ In the study conducted by the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Studies in 2004 for the Roma Economic Forum, it was found that: 44% of the Roma live from welfare benefits, 30% from wages/salaries, 22% from "other" sources and 4% from pensions. In 39% of the cases there is not a single family member employed, and in 40% of the cases only one family member is employed. Nonetheless, at the time of the poll 77% of respondents stated that they "work". Such work involves sales through vendor stands (31%), "other, miscellaneous" 25%, provision of services 8%, manufacturing 7%, store work 4% etc. Approximately 33% of respondents have held a job in the past, working as general labourers, tradespeople, cleaners, salespeople, drivers, waiters etc. Approximately 20% of this group had worked in the state sector, and another 12% in the private sector. 23% of respondents said that they have pension insurance, and 63% said they have health insurance. Every other respondent (50%) believes to be disadvantaged in the job search due to ethnic origin, 14% due to education level, and 21% believe that they are treated equally. Still, 45% of respondents do not think that they need further training, unlike a 30% group who believe that they should learn trades, 15% think that they should learn computer skills, 9% think that they should learn the English language wtc. The data is excerpted from the Roma Economic Forum, held 25-26.03.2004 in Skopje

¹⁰ In 1998-74%, in 1999-71% and in 2000-73%. In 2001, if the unemployment rate in the country is estimated at close to 40%, among the Roma the estimate is again around 70%.

¹¹ As expected, the largest number of unemployed Roma is registered in Skopje (5987) followed by Prilep (1962), Kumanovo (1666), Bitola (985), Stip (876), Kocani (820), Gostivar (737) Kicevo (616) and Tetovo (542).

¹² The proportion of women in the total number of employment-seeking persons who have not completed primary education is 44% (out of the total number of 5455 persons the women comprise 2424) and among the group of persons who have completed eight years of education, the women constitute 40% (out of 11716 there are 4786 women).

if it is determined through self-assessment of Roma. In such a case as many as 89% of relevant age group thinks of themselves as unemployed. Unemployment is significantly higher among women, both in the Roma group as well as non-Roma (in case of Roma 84% in comparison to 60% unemployment rate for men and in case of non-Roma 56% for women and 36 for men). As for age, the unemployment among people between 15 and 24 years of age reaches even higher figures than in general – for Roma 84% and non-Roma 74%. In the prime age (25-44) the unemployment rate goes below the general figure – for Roma to 58% and non-Roma to 45%.

Table 1 – Unemployment, %

	Roma	Majority living in close proximity to Roma
Unemployment rate, total	71	45
Subjective perception of unemployment	89	51
Length of unemployment (as % of unemployed/housekeeping):		
- up to 3 months	1	1
- more than 2 years	15	30
- more than 5 years	12	19
- never was employed	74	50
- average length (months)	98	74.6

Source: UNDP 2004 survey.

The UNDP survey examined also the length of unemployment, which provides a somewhat better way to analyse unemployment. Table 1 clearly shows different pattern in the two groups (Roma and majority population living in close proximity to Roma). In the group of Roma there are 74% of unemployed (or housekeepers – housewife/house male) who have no experience with employment, while in non-Roma it is at 50%. The data for both groups indicate the two share very similar situation in terms of unemployment. The average length vis-à-vis the share of unemployed by the length suggests that although there are “only” 15% of unemployed Roma who have not been employed for more than 2 years, these people have not been employed for a long time. The average of 98 months equals to more than 8 years. And this is only the average. If we analyse the individual cases, there are unemployed who are without employment for much more than 8 years. The latter analysis shows clearly there needs to be attention paid to the people who have never been employed, since they have no working habits and few skills. Also the attention should be paid to those who are about to enter the labour market – students/pupils close to being finished with their education.

According to the data from the Employment Agency, 33% out of the unemployed Roma have not completed primary education.¹³ Of the remaining 67% most¹⁴ have finished only primary school, while 7% hold qualifications or have finished secondary school, and only 0.1% has completed higher education. Despite the fact that there are Roma who have finished secondary school and who might fill some positions in the state administration, they remain on the waiting lists as unemployed in the Employment Centres, and this reduces the incentives for the others to advance their education. Also, the Roma believe that employment in state administration is subject to strong partisan politics (preliminary agreements according to the Framework Agreement or by party affiliation), instead of being based on the qualifications of the job applicants.

The employment rate for Roma reaches significantly lower levels not only in comparison to the national average, but also to their non-Roma neighbours. The survey shows it is 38% for Roma as compared to over 55% for non-Roma.¹⁵

¹³ 58% are men and 42% are women

¹⁴ 93% or 15,949 persons

¹⁵ Employment rate calculated from the survey data takes into account those who claimed are working, or had earned some income as share in population above 15 years of age.

Table 2 – Employment, %

	Roma	Majority living in close proximity to Roma
Employment rate, total	37.6	55.3
Most “populous” sectors by employment		
- trade	16	16
- industry or mining	13	15
- construction	13	13
Main occupation last month		
- skilled worker	18	31
- unskilled worker	40	8
- office worker	2	10

The structure of employment by sector does not show big differences between the two, confirming the general perception on the sectors where these people work. The employment structure by occupation reveals the Roma occupy mostly such jobs, which require unskilled labour force, while non-Roma those which require more skills.

One of the key factors influencing the employability of an individual is their education. Another, similarly important factor especially in the case of Roma is the “discriminatory” practices.

The educational level of workforce provides a clear distinction between the Roma population and their non-Roma neighbours. Almost a half of working age Roma population does not have a completed primary education (47.5%). This pre-determines also the type of jobs they are working in (if working) – jobs that require unskilled workers (as confirmed also by the data on employment structure by occupation). This is significantly different to the educational level of majority population, where only about 11% has no complete primary education. Current trend in employment suggests secondary education to be a standard level of education, with which a person should be able to find a job (the most openings require this level of education). From this point of view, the educational level of Roma population is not very favourable, since only almost 11% of working age Roma population has a completed secondary education, while in case of majority population it is almost 50%. The share of university-educated population is used as an indicator of advanced economy (0.4% vs. 6.7%). In this respect the Roma population lags far behind the majority population living in their proximity. Educational level clearly provides the reasons why Roma population is having problems with employability. Their low education pre-determines them to such types of jobs, which are gradually being pushed out of the labour market with increasing mechanisation.

Discriminatory practices, although being reported, do not reach a dramatic scope in Macedonia. There are very small differences between the two groups of population in terms of discrimination when competing for the opening. However, there is also only a small difference when considering the self-evaluation of probability to lose the job in the instance of the company’s problems: both Roma and non-Roma think in almost the same scope they would be the first ones to lose the job when employing company has to lay off workers. This is an example of a common feature of both groups.

Along with the wage employment, entrepreneurship is another type of economic activity that leads to income generation. The UNDP survey revealed only 11% of Roma households experienced that somebody from it ever tried to start their own business. The share of registered businesses shows only ¼ of businesses started by Roma were registered. This might have several reasons: 1. they were operating in the “non-legal” status, but then, they would not probably claim this in the survey; 2. they did not develop their intention to open business to the stage of registration due to various reasons – this is more probable explanation and shows the room for policy measures (support in administration, in starting capital, etc.). The sectoral structure supports the perception of trade business being most attractive. It would be interesting to test this structure against the development situation, to see in which sector the businesses grew and in which they had problems. The share of businesses that grew and developed suggests another policy measure – support during the start-up phase, but the arguments for this measure are only speculative, since the survey did not investigate more in this regard.

Table 3 – Private businesses, %

	Roma	Majority living in close proximity to Roma
Sector of economy, in which the business operated:		
-- construction	7	13
-- trade	81	54
-- public utilities	9	10
Share of businesses which grew and developed	5	21

Conditions for start-ups but also for running businesses also influence anyone's decision to start one's own business. The access to and use of credits signals a big room for actions from the state. Only a fifth of Roma households are using some credit instruments, which somewhat surprising when almost 80% of them have some outstanding payments. The Roma families, which are using some credit instruments, use primarily friends or relatives as creditors (59%) unlike their non-Roma neighbours who are lending primarily from commercial banks. Such a pattern indicates why Roma do not start legal businesses – they either do not trust to borrow money from the bank or the banks do not see Roma creditworthy enough. Most probably the latter is closer to the truth. It is interesting that only 3% of Roma households revealed their borrowings from informal lenders. This can be attributed to the fact people do not like to openly confirm the existence of these informal lenders (loan-sharks).

As for the use of credits, vast majority of them was used for personal or family matters (81%), 14% for house improvements and only 4% to start some business. Roma borrow most frequently very small amounts of money – 40% borrowed less than 75 EUR and they borrow money for fairly short time – 53% for less than 6 months. All these information provides a clear picture that microfinance would be suitable financial instrument for motivating Roma to run legal income generating activity.

Another barrier to increased employment among Roma is shortage of information. HZRM "Sonce" conducted a micro study¹⁶ in an attempt to estimate the benefits to the Roma population from past and current programs and policies for employment, and a problem that was particularly pointed out is the issue of awareness and the manner in which information reaches potentially interested persons. The findings indicate that over 45% of Roma have never heard of any programs sponsored by the institutions or donors, 41% have heard of the so-called "Branko's Law", 11.24% have heard of the CARDS programme and 3.4% have heard of "Prisma". They may have learned of similar initiatives from the media or other civic organizations, but a large portion of the respondents (86%) have said that they had had no use for such information. One of the reasons is that these programs usually serve only persons with completed secondary or higher education, or those who are upgrading their vocational qualifications.

Third type of economic activity, which can provide resources to "feed the family", is engagement in the informal economy. Examining informal-sector employment (understood as activities for which income was not reported for tax and social security purposes) shows that Roma involvement in such activities is higher than the involvement of majority households in such activities. In Macedonia, as many as 45% of working Roma are employed in the informal sector.

NAP for Employment

The Action Plan for Employment defines seven goals distributed among four priority areas – information; education; opportunities and the legal regulations; and economy. In the area of information, the NAP aims at improving the level of information of the Roma population in the employment area. In the second priority area, education, the action plan defines two goals: raising the level of education of the Roma population and increasing their chances in the labour market; and raising the level of knowledge and skills of the Roma population. In the third priority area — opportunities and the legal regulations — the plan calls for: implementation of legal provision on equal representation of Roma (Framework Agreement); creating national programs and regulations to increase Roma employment and involvement; and promoting Roma with limited chances on the local labour market within the local action plan for employment and territorial employment agreements. In the last priority area, the economy, the action

¹⁶ Research by HZMR "Sonce", micro study "Roma Unemployment Mitigation Policies" January-September 2005

plan defines measures that should help transform Roma employment in the grey economy into a legal form of employment.

Generally speaking, the measures and activities foreseen are part of the regular duties of the institutions, but the plan itself emphasises the needs of the Roma population and adequate financing for their implementation in an appropriate timeframe.

Box xx Employment Agencies as Key Actors

Labour issues in the Republic of Macedonia fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The operational entity working specifically in the area of labour is the National Employment Agency (NEA) of the Republic of Macedonia, which is represented in the local level by over 30 Local Employment Agencies (LEA) placed in different municipalities. The National Employment Agency, in addition to its subsidiary Local Employment Agencies, is organized into 3 sections: Section for Intermediation and Job Preparation¹⁷, Section for Analytics and Finance,¹⁸ Section for Legal and Administrative Affairs.¹⁹

Until a few years ago, the work of the NEA consisted of maintaining records of the unemployed. At this time, efforts are being made to clean up the records in order to make it possible to render a real picture of the unemployment situation and to serve as a resource for information on the supply of labour according to market needs. The process is advancing well so far, although quite slowly, and it will take a long time for full implementation. In addition to the records keeping, the role of NEA is significantly enriched by a series of new responsibilities. This includes: intermediation in employment, monitoring and analysis of the labour market, client advisory, labour force adjustment, support in the job-seeking process etc. In this context, the transformation is being implemented, albeit slowly, and becoming part of NEA practice.

Local Employment Agencies perform the same tasks as NEA at the local level. The work of LEA also includes work with the employment cards of the unemployed, records of hiring and layoffs, collection of field data etc. So, Local Employment Agencies play a role that is tightly connected with direct work with the clients and represent a link to the Government and other actors in the area of employment at higher levels. For this reason, they have a key role in the implementation of policies and programs for employment, specific increase in employment and support to direct beneficiaries – employers and the labour force, in all processes, policies and programmes for employment.

The Agency participates in all policies and programs related to employment, funded by the Government or international donors. In many cases these programmes are implemented through the agency, which plays the role of an implementing agent, coordinator, administrator and/or mediator. In some of these programs it performs monitoring and evaluation of the programs. The National Agency frequently participates in the process of designing policies and programs, but the input information from the field that should be transmitted through the local units of the agency are of low quality, in view of the traditional approach taken by the staff, namely the expectation that the higher echelons would be aware of the situation without explication and that appropriate steps would be taken without being initiated at the local level. Usually the continuation of policies and programmes is made difficult, slowed down or terminated for various reasons: lack of funds; weak management structures for such advanced programs in terms of coordination; monitoring and evaluation; adjustment; planning; low level of communication among the actors due to lack of functional systems for monitoring and notification; bureaucratic and inflexible systems of records and analysis; burdening the structures with various responsibilities that are non-essential to the employment function; and other reasons. In view of all this, employment policies and programmes

¹⁷ The Sector for Intermediation and Job Preparation maintains a registry of unemployed persons and employers, conducts research of the labour market and provides information on the same, adapts the labour force to market demands by various training activities for the labour force (unemployed, workers about to be laid off or employees needing skills upgrade), promotes the job-seeking process and prepares prospective employees for the job-seeking process, provides advisory and intermediary services in employment, etc.

¹⁸ The Sector for Analytics and Finance, in addition to financial operations, conducts assessments of the changes in employment and unemployment on the labour market, creates plans and programs for employment, maintains a national employment information system etc.

¹⁹ The Sector for Legal and Administrative Affairs provides financial and legal assistance to the clients, adjusts the work of the agency to legal regulations and conducts legal-administrative operations related to the work of the Agency.

give poor results, but still there are improvements, although it will take a lot more work to achieve satisfactory levels of effectiveness and efficiency.

A key need of the employment agencies is for advanced and highly structured management. Although the Agency has a lot of statistical data available, without going into issues of relevance, it needs more professional analysis and a qualitative approach to the analysis. Communication with clients also needs to be improved and practices should be harmonised with the legal regulations. A particular weak point is the failure to utilise the capacities of the Roma community and take advantage of existing organized forms that could support the processes of improvement of employment.

4. HOUSING

The Republic of Macedonia is constitutionally defined as a social state, which protects its citizens without favouring certain categories of the population.²⁰ Changes to the legislation related to concrete measures for specific groups of people started in 1998 with the enforcement of the Law on housing,²¹ which was subject to several amendments as a result of the dynamic changes in this field.²² Other laws that are related to the vulnerable groups include the Law on Ownership and Other Real Rights,²³ the Law on Obligations,²⁴ Law on Spatial and Urban Planning,²⁵ the Law on Local Self-government,²⁶ etc. The list outlining the relevant laws may be expanded, and crucial to the latter are the enforcement of a law on social housing and the resolution of the problem with illegal buildings. The legal reforms should also include: ownership rights and registration, planning and construction, provision of complete legal security in leasing domiciles with the adequate social protection (subvention) as well as creating a new social form of non-profit leasing of domiciles.

In the field of social housings, the category “vulnerable group” should be clearly separated from the remaining “common” citizens, thereby determining the standards of construction of the housings. Globally speaking, the category “vulnerable group” can encompass the homeless, children under 18 deprived of parental care, single mothers (parents), persons with special needs, long-term unemployed persons, extremely poor persons and, in some cases, members of certain ethnic communities which are more frequently exposed to more extreme conditions than the previously outlined elements together, such as the Roma population. Part of this material encompasses the changes of the Law on social protection,²⁷ in which the criteria and the manner in which the right to housing is realised for children under 18 and not older than 26 without parents or without parental care and are enforced by the Minister.²⁸

Current condition

The data shows that the Roma population dominantly lives in urban areas (95%) which are centrally based, in poorer areas (ghettos) or in suburban areas. The largest part of the population of Roma households (48%) lives in the Skopje area, followed by 14% in the Pelagonija and Bregalnica region, 10% in the Kumanovo region and 9% in the Polog one. In terms of ethnicity, 82% of the districts are populated by Roma, 10% are mixed and only 8% of the districts where Roma live are dominated by other ethnic groups.

Vast majority (96%) of the Roma population have lived in the current place of living longer than 15 years, which means that the Roma population does not practice the nomad way of living, as is sometimes

²⁰ Article 1 and 35 from the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia

²¹ Official Gazette of RM, 21, 1998

²² Law on amending and supplementing the Law on housing, Official Gazette of RM 48/2000, Official Gazette of RM 39/2003, Official Gazette of RM 96/04

²³ Official Gazette of RM No.18/2001

²⁴ Official Gazette of RM No.18/2001, 5/2003

²⁵ Official Gazette of RM 51, 30 June 2005

²⁶ Official Gazette of RM No. 5, 2002

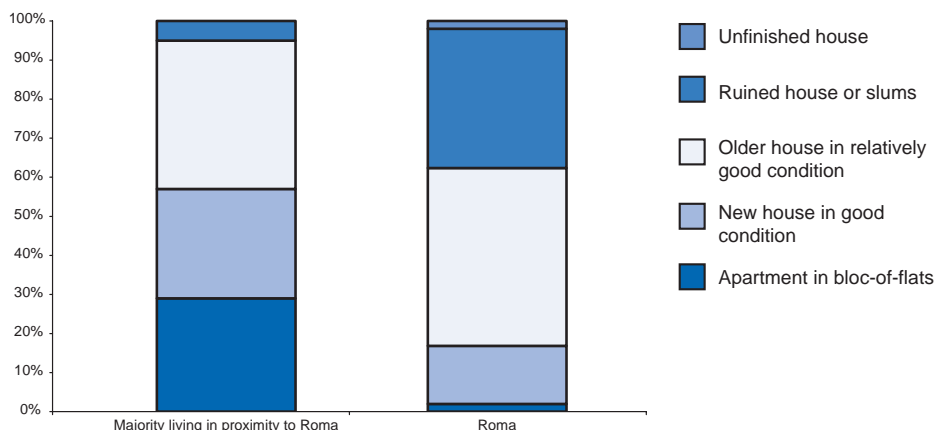
²⁷ Official Gazette of RM, No.62, 2005

²⁸ See Article 35 paragraph 3 from the Law on Social Protection. Currently, the Ministry of labour and social protection is preparing a Guidebook for the criteria and the manner in which the right to housing is realised for children without parents or parental care.

assumed. According to several estimates, approximately 70% of the Roma population does not possess the necessary documents of ownership for their domiciles; the latter is somewhat paradoxical, since according to the UNDP survey, 88% of Roma households claim ownership to the dwelling they live in. This number is rather high considering the perception about the poor social situation of this population.

The physical quality of housing, however, has probably a higher value for the insight sought into the social situation of the population. As many as 36% of Roma households do not have access to proper housing, living in ruined houses or slums, which do not meet the requirements of housing properly classified to be in good condition. This share gives us the first idea about the area that should be the focus of some policy measures: increase the physical quality of housing. It is probably financial situation of Roma, which accounts for the physical quality of Roma housing, but also for the lower standard of the housing and its equipment., Only 2% of the Roma in Macedonia live in apartment houses.

Figure 1 Type of dwelling



The survey reveals the average size of the Roma household's dwelling is almost a half of the size of the non-Roma household; while the average Roma household has 4.8 members, the average non-Roma household from the survey has 3.7 members.²⁹ The Roma families accommodate primarily small dwellings – as many as 70% live in a dwelling smaller than 50 m². The average size of Roma dwelling is as little as 45.9 m². For the comparison, the distribution of non-Roma households by the size of dwelling is more balanced with the largest share of households in the dwelling between 51 and 75 m² of floor area and the average size of non-Roma dwelling is almost double of the average Roma dwelling – 81.2 m². This has direct implication on the quality of living: Roma households have 11.7 m² per one household member, greatly bellow the national average of 19.7 m². As many as 17% of Roma households live in one room, 39% live in two rooms, and 25% inhabit three rooms, 14% in four rooms and 5% in five or more rooms.

The Roma households are also less equipped with basic appliances; as many as 59% of Roma households have no access to proper sanitation (12% of non-Roma households). It means there is no toilet and bathroom/shower inside the dwelling. This feature has very strong correlation with the hygienic situation in the Roma settlements and consequently also with the health situation of the population. At the same time almost all surveyed households have access to a water source (which, however, does not mean that all are connected to the urban pipeline).

Roma households are also inadequately equipped with basic tools, namely: 60% have washing machines, 65% have radio, 66% have telephone lines, 85% have refrigerators, 87% have ovens, 95% have TV sets, 9% have cars, 12% have CD players, 3% have computers, 1% have internet connection, 12% have satellite links, 23% use mobile telephones, 42% have beds for each family member and 11% own 30 or more books.

The Roma households also lag behind the non-Roma households in terms of the information and communication technologies. There are only 18.5 fixed lines or cellular subscribers per 100 people in Roma households, significantly less in comparison with over 40 in the non-Roma households. Similarly, as many as 200 people have access to one PC and 500 to one Internet connection in the Roma households (it is only 17 people per one PC and 34 people per one Internet connection in the non-Roma households).

Finance is a very important aspect of housing. In the survey, as many as 38% of the participating households declared that they did not spend any portion of their funds on utility duties for the previous month and the remaining 7% have spent up to 10 euros, other 10% have spent 11-20 euros, 10% have spent 20-30 euros and 34% have spent over 31 euros.

²⁹ According to the 2002 census, the average Macedonian family has 3.6 people.

Table 1 – expenditures on housing

	Roma	Majority living in close proximity to Roma
Average share of household's expenditures on housing (rent/utilities) in total household's expenditures (%)	12.6	20.3
Average expenditures on housing (Denars)	1,379.5	3,150.1
Average share of expenditures on housing in total household's monthly income (%)	22.2	22.9

On average the Roma households spend on expenditures related to housing (rent or utilities) 12.6% of their monthly expenditures. In absolute figures this type of expenditures reaches only 1,379.5 Denars. Both relative and absolute figures are far below the ones for the non-Roma households. Again it can have two interpretations: first they do not allocate for housing more money because of they do not have enough funds and they allocate the available money to “more important” items in their family budget; second, they do not allocate more money for housing because they do not see it as important even though they could afford to spend more on housing. When seeing the share of expenditures on housing in the monthly income, it is about the same in both Roma and non-Roma households, the latter interpretation seems to be truer than the former.

However, also the former interpretation has rationale. The review of outstanding payments in the Roma households could support this interpretation, since as many as 78% of Roma households have outstanding payments (40% of non-Roma households living in their proximity).

Table 2 – Outstanding payments

	Roma	Majority living in close proximity to Roma
Share of households, which have outstanding payments for water %	71.5	32.9
Average outstanding monthly payments for water (as share of total monthly expenditures of household) %	266.9	98.3
Average outstanding monthly payments for water (as share of total monthly income of household) %	439.9	160.8
Average value of outstanding payments for water (Denars)	17,859.0	8,109.4
Average length of outstanding payments for water (months)	32.73	12.76
Share of households, which have outstanding payments for electricity %	62.3	30.5
Average outstanding monthly payments for electricity (as share of total monthly expenditures of household) %	472.0	104.4
Average outstanding monthly payments for electricity (as share of total monthly income of household) %	766.7	140.9
Average value of outstanding payments for electricity (Denars)	30,784.1	11,014.4
Average length of outstanding payments for electricity (months)	31.26	7.09
Share of households, which have outstanding payments for other payments related to housing %	31.1	22.3
Average outstanding monthly payments for other payments related to housing (as share of total monthly expenditures of household) %	107.8	46.7
Average outstanding monthly payments for other payments related to housing (as share of total monthly income of household) %	142.5	66.2
Average value of outstanding payments for other payments related to housing (Denars)	6,740.8	4,143.5
Average length of outstanding payments for other payments related to housing (months)	6.67	3.89

The outstanding payments for water supply and for electricity account for the most critical types of outstanding payments both for Roma and non-Roma households. The Roma households are, however, in more critical situation than the non-Roma households. There are more than 71% of Roma households that have some unpaid bills for water supply (almost 33 non-Roma households). The share of households with outstanding payments for water is higher than the one for electricity or other housing related payments (both Roma and non-Roma households).

However, absolute figures show the outstanding payments for electricity being the biggest financial burden for Roma households. On average, the Roma households owe almost 30,800 Denars (non-Roma slightly more than 11,000 Denars). In case of Roma households this amount accounts for 766% of their monthly income and 472% of their total monthly expenditures. In combination with the fact the outstanding payments for water reach also high amounts – 440% of their total monthly income and 267% of their total monthly expenditures, there is probably no way to brake this circle of outstanding payments. As for the length, on average the Roma households do not pay their bills for water supply for more than 32 months (non-Roma households more than 12 months) and bills for electricity for more than 31 months (non-Roma households for more than seven months). This fact even enlarges the problem of outstanding payments. In consequence, the households facing this problem face also the threat of being disconnected from supply of water and electricity, which in return decreases the quality of their life.

It is interesting, however, that despite such “financial misbehaviour”, only 25% of Roma households perceive the evictions as a threat to them (14% of non-Roma households). If any state policy desires to improve social situation of Roma population, the issue of outstanding payments should be, probably, addressed as a priority.

NAP on Housing

The NAP on housing focuses on four main areas: Laws, regulations and advocacy; Urban planning; Quality of living; and Education.

- 1.) **Laws, regulations and advocacy** – the NAP defines the measures aiming at: adopting laws and regulations to set up a mechanism for participation of relevant communities in the decision making process; introduction of affirmative action regulations; and resolving the issue of illegal houses.
- 2.) **Urban planning** – the NAP aims to achieve the following two goals: to have urban plans for the settlements predominantly inhabited by Roma and to legalise illegal buildings in the Roma populated areas (if the conditions allow for that).
- 3.) **Quality of living** – the action plan has several main goals: to make it easier for Roma population to solve their housing problems; to improve infrastructure in Roma settlements; and to decrease the number of substandard houses.
- 4.) **Education** – the plan aims at using, adjusting or opening information centres to get information on housing and at organising the information media campaigns informing about new/amended laws related to the area of housing.

5. EDUCATION

It is no accident that education, along with employment, possesses the strongest potential for future development of every society, and that they both present the surest way out of poverty. In case these two areas achieve notable growth in the forthcoming period, anticipations are that they will give strong incentive to the other priority areas as well. Unfortunately, however, the current situation with the general educational level of the Roma is considerably dissatisfying. Illiteracy and the general low level of education among this category of the population continues to strain the poverty spiral and, thus, entail high rates of unemployment.

Current situation

In Macedonia, the literacy rate in general reaches almost 100 percent.³⁰ As for the Roma population, the picture is different. The survey shows only 84% of Roma are literate as oppose to 98% of non-Roma population living in their proximity. The situation is even worse for Roma females, when only 75% are literate (94% for Roma male).

The disaggregation by age groups shows only small differences at the national level, but bigger differences when separating the Roma population and non-Roma population (vis-à-vis national level average).

Figure 1 – Literacy rate, total, by age (%)

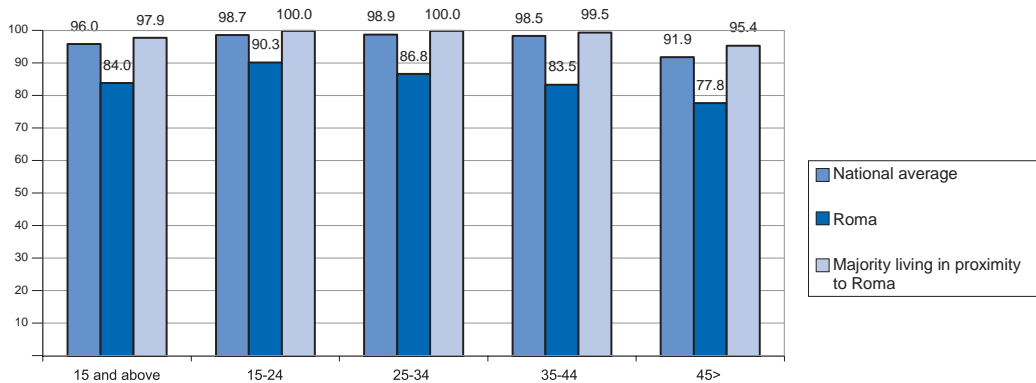
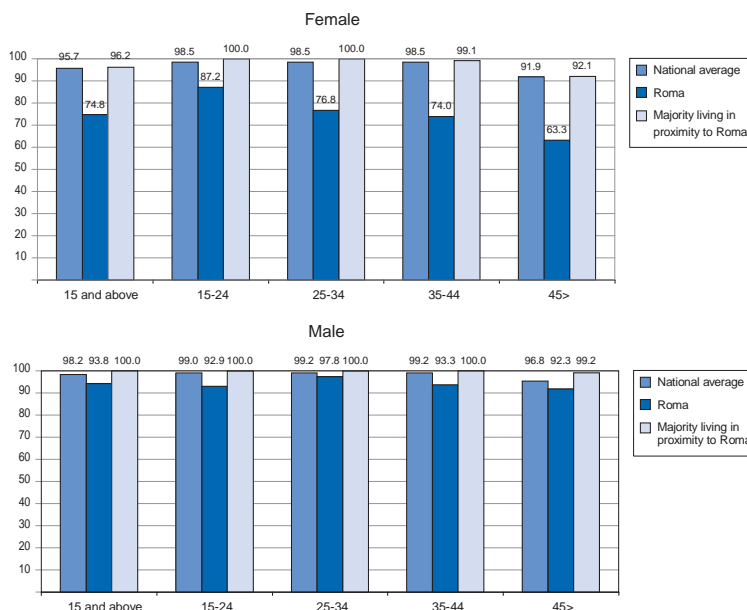


Figure 1 shows capability to read and write decreases with the age. This pattern is true not only for Roma population. Non-Roma population also shares it, although the trend is not so clearly visible. Further disaggregation, by gender, confirms the unfavourable situation of Roma females in terms of education.

Figure 3 – Literacy rate, by sex, by age (%)



³⁰ According to the census conducted in 2002, out of the total population older than 10 years, 63,562 or 3.6% are officially illiterate (of which the rate of illiterate women is 5.5% and that of illiterate men 1.7%)

While the Roma male literacy rate almost reaches the levels of the non-Roma population and the national average in all the age categories, the Roma female literacy rate significantly lags behind. The highest female literacy rate of Roma is observed in the youngest age group (15-24) – 87 percent, while Roma male literacy rate reached the top value in the age group of 25-34 (97.8 percent). On the other end of the scale are Roma female over 45. The literacy rate in this group reaches only 63.3 percent. At the same age group the Roma male keep still pretty high literacy rate of 92.3 percent. These data suggest that in terms of literacy, Roma females who are above 45 years of age should be targeted.

Enrolment rate in particular educational level is the best indicator for measuring the inclusion of Roma in all levels of education.

Figure 4 – Enrolment rate, total (%)

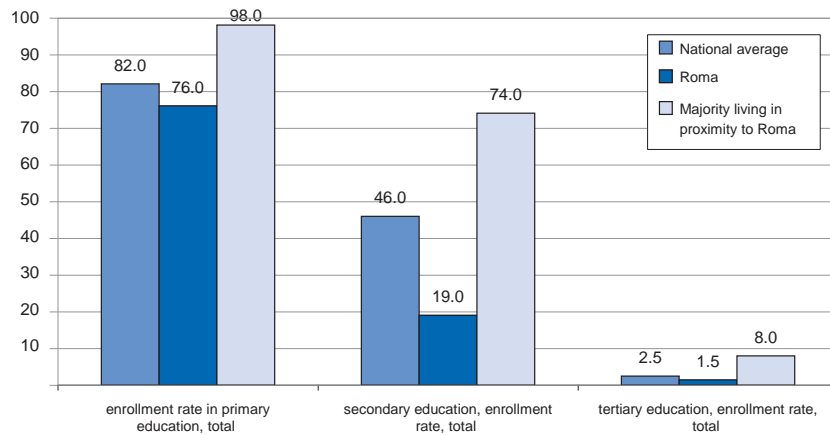
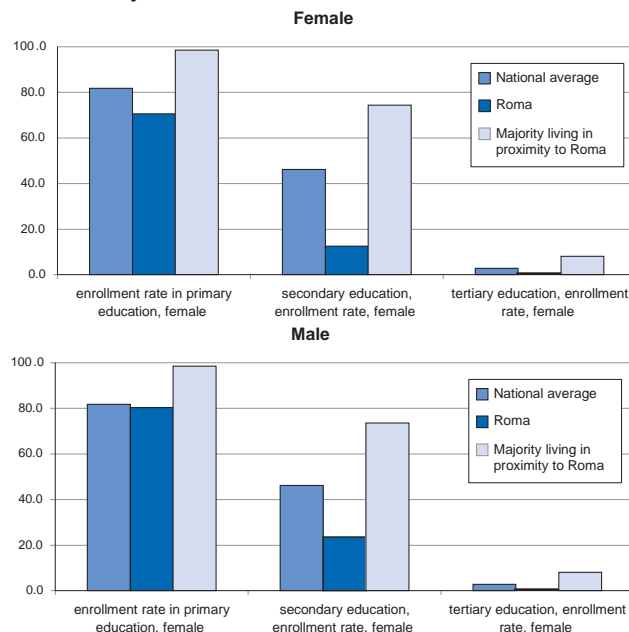


Figure 4 shows the Roma population clearly lags behind not only the national average but also the non-Roma population living in their proximity. The most vivid difference is recorded in secondary education, when the enrolment rate reaches only 19%.

As for the gender disaggregation, one can see that females are contributing the most to the unfavourable situation of the Roma in terms of educational enrolment. While the Roma male enrolment rate in tertiary education exceeded even the national average (but still lower than the rate for the non-Roma living in their proximity), the Roma female enrolment rate in this level lagged far behind. Similarly also for the secondary education, when the male enrolment rate reached almost 25 percent for Roma, while the female enrolment rate only about 13 percent. Still, both of these rates were far behind the national average or the rate for their non-Roma neighbours. In case of primary education, however, the male rate for Roma reached almost the same level as the national average, while the female rate for Roma was 10 percentage points below the rate of male Roma and still a bit more below the national average.

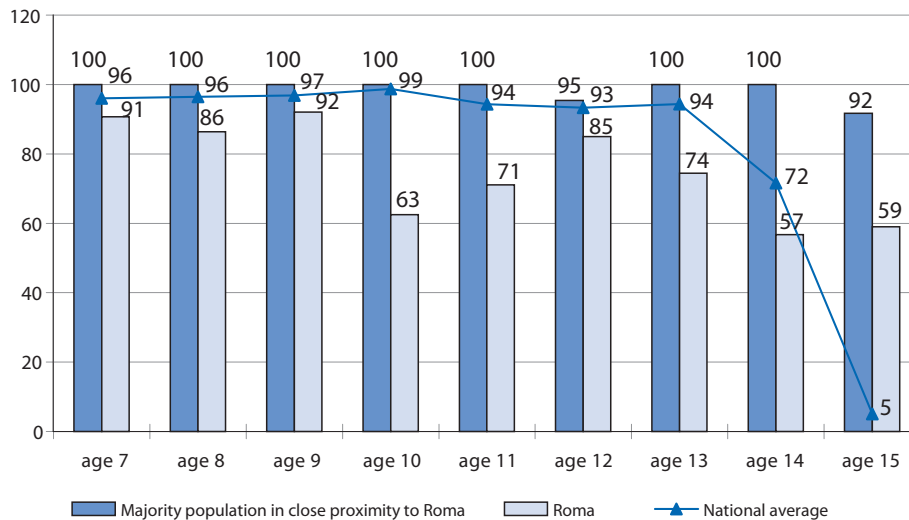
Figure 5 Enrolment rate, by sex (%)



Considering only this short analysis, there are clear implications for the policy measures – they should target primarily the Roma female population and mainly the secondary level of education.

Although completion of primary education is mandatory in Macedonia for all, the real situation does not reflect this fact. Although the Roma children start their schooling at the age of 7 in a fairly high rate (91%), in the age of 10 only 63% of children that are supposed to be at school are enrolled (Figure 6).

Figure 6 Enrolment in primary education by age (%)



The reasons behind such unsatisfactory levels of the educational achievement among Roma are numerous and frequently mentioned: the large percentage of the children are not enrolled in the pre-school education; the rather poor socio-economic situation of a large portion of the Roma families disabling them to afford the educational expenses; the failure to register the newly born and to regulate the citizenship of a considerable number of children makes their inclusion in the educational process difficult;³¹ the network of pre-school and schooling institutions for all Roma children is underdeveloped; the insufficient knowledge of the Macedonian language when enrolling in first grade prevents them to follow the teaching; a large portion of the enrolled children drop out, especially after fifth grade;³² the low level of education (illiteracy) of the parents, who lack the awareness of the importance of education; use of child labour in the informal economy sector; frequent marriages among minors or other family duties imposed on children (care for the elder and ill family members); no encouragement of female children to go to school by some Roma families as a result of the patriarchal values; worse teaching conditions in schools dominated by Roma children as compared to the other schools and segregation³³ and discrimination; insensitivity on a part of the teachers and other school staff for the issues and needs of Roma children; the trend of a smaller portion of the parents to intentionally enrol their children in schools for disabled, so that the children complete their education and find employment more easily.

It is interesting to note that, according to the UNDP research, the interviewed Roma stated that they mostly use the Roma language at home (64%), followed by the Macedonian (21%), Turkish (12%) and the Albanian (3%) languages. Cumulatively, 81% of the Roma speak Macedonian at home, 78% of them speak Roma, 24% speak Turkish, 7% Albanian and 3% Serbian.

When looking at the reasons for dropping school or not continuing to study at higher levels, the survey reveals as many as 51% of Roma at the age of 6-22 was not attending the school at the time of

³¹ The 2002 UNHCR and UNICEF Survey conducted in Suto Orizari showed that 2.2% of the population in this municipality has not regulated their citizenship status.

³² As failing to pass any of the first four years of education is an exception in most of the cases and the children automatically go on to the next level, the real problem in the failure to acquire the material taught is only realised too late (not before the fifth grade), when teaching of many subjects begins. For this reason, there is an obvious need to pay serious attention in the first four years, to include the Roma children in the educational process more efficiently.

³³ Roma children are not accepted appropriately by the environment in which they are educated; the other children refuse to sit next to or socialize with them and they end up sitting alone or in the back desks; some teachers fail to work sufficiently with these children; Roma children are ashamed of their clothes and there is discrimination in the attitude towards them and their assessment.

the survey. Majority of these people (55%) does not attend the school or not continue studying because costs of education are too high (fees, transportation, fees, etc.)

The costs of education as a major problem for Roma is confirmed also by the fact that about 65% of the Roma could not financially afford to educate their children (as opposed to 26% for non-Roma living in their proximity). Roma households spent on average only 116 EUR per year on education, while the non-Roma almost 5 times more (546 EUR). As many as 85 percent of Roma households allocate for education less than 10% of their monthly expenditures, while it is only about 62 percent of non-Roma households. Also the average share reaches in the non-Roma households the double of the average expenditures in Roma households (15% vs. 7%). This suggests for the Roma households that there are more important expenditures and education is not a priority when trying to survive.

NAP for Education

The National Action Plan for education focuses on four main goals, which entail numerous objectives referred to all levels of education and target groups.

1. Higher inclusion of the Roma population at all levels of the educational system (including adults learning)
2. Reduced drop-out rate of the Roma children at all educational levels
3. Strengthening the capacities of the teachers and school structures to recognise and manage situations of conflict caused by the insufficient levels of sensitivity regarding the cultural differences
4. Increased number of adequately educated Roma teachers

These goals – particularly the first two – are actually the greatest challenge in the domain of education. There is no doubt that, if visible results are to be achieved, long-term and intensive efforts by all involved actors are called for, both on part of the state (the educational system) and on part of the Roma community itself, its representatives and interested donors. On the other hand, it is a fact that the education of Roma is the area in which the greatest efforts have been made over the past years and that there already is certain accumulated experience and methods that may be used in the future attempts to improve the situation.

Box XY Current experiences

Certain measures defined in the NAP have already been achieved, such as: the recommendation by the MoES³⁴ regarding the introduction of teaching material on the Roma culture, tradition and history at the Faculty of Pedagogy and the other faculties producing teachers has already been submitted to these institutions; a study group on the Roma language has already been established and is up and running and a department for Roma studies has been introduced within the faculties of pedagogy.

There are also various programmes for encouraging education among Roma currently underway with the support by the large civil society organisations, such as the FIOOM program for education of Roma, carried out in cooperation with USAID, OSCE and the Pestaloci Foundation. This program includes all levels of education and is expected to reduce the dropout rate and improve the success rate of about 4,000 pupils in the elementary schools, 260 students in the high schools and 70 university students. FIOOM has already identified settlements and places in which the program will take place, as well as partners through whom it will implement the program. The pre-school component will focus on the improvement of the knowledge of the Macedonian language among the Roma children and on increasing their educational experience; work in the primary schools will include improvement of the abilities of teachers (against prejudice) and development of the schools' organisational capacities, as well as development of out-of-school activities; efforts in the secondary education will be aimed at providing scholarships, a supervisor's assistance, help by fellow students, etc; as regards higher education, plans also include scholarships, supervisor assistance and development of information services. Other FIOOM programs that are a part of special

³⁴ Ministry of Education and Science.

programs and are also targeting Roma include: a part of the “step-by-step” program for learning English for Roma, Roma cultural and educational centre “Darhija” (includes standardisation and affirmation of the Roma language, access to library with books in the Roma language, publication of magazines and numerous other activities). In addition to FIOOM, the Macedonian International Cooperation Centre has developed the POR program (i.e. applied education for the Roma), which has been operating for two years already and will probably continue to do so. The program especially encourages educational and stimulation activities, which included quiz contests, games without frontiers, art colonies, travels, workshops with parents and students, etc. Thus designed, the program has thus far been assessed as mainly effective and successful. Other programs within which the civil organizations contribute to the educational process also include: “Program Library” (for books required at school), Educational Centre “Vrama Si”, Educational Centre “Future of the Roma”, etc.

6. HEALTH

Specific health situation of the Roma is due, first of all, to the bad socio-economic situation, substandard housing conditions of the Roma, no health insurance, insufficient primary health care (in the areas mainly populated by Roma there are very few out-patient facilities with insufficient number of medical personnel) weaker preventive care (irregular response from parents for immunisation of children, irregular systematic examinations of children and women), low level of health education among the Roma population, expensive health services and medications, specific mentality and tradition (the cure is most frequently looked for in the para-medicine and thus precious time lost) early marriages, inequality of spouses, less valued female child, discrimination in health care by medical personnel, insufficient information about health care rights, heavy physical work and polluted environment, and so on.

Current situation

The health situation of the Roma population is to a large extent in correlation with living habits that derive from tradition. One of these factors is an early marriage and, its corollary, early motherhood. The UNICEF and World Bank research in 2000 shows that 41% of the interviewed younger Roma families have 3-5 children, 3% have over 5 children, while 56% have 1-2 children. The results point out that family planning and other health programs are needed also in the smaller communities where the Roma live. Among the interviewed families every fourth mother is younger than 24 years.³⁵

The UNDP survey found out that almost a third of the Roma population assessed their health situation as ‘somewhat worse’ or ‘worse’ than a year ago; it was only 15 percent in non-Roma population. Out of all interviewed Roma in this survey only 34% had no health problems in the last 12 months, that is 66% suffered from some ailment. This reiterates the bad overall health condition and the task would be to change this percentage and reduce the number of Roma with poor health in the course of one year. Regarding the type of diseases that appear, the most frequent are cold and influenza (Table XY). Obviously, one of the activities would have to be vaccination against influenza for the Roma population. These are diseases that all adult Roma suffer from in the course of one year and with high percentages, starting from persons at the age of 0-14 years (55% of those at the age of 0-14 years catch cold and influenza), then persons at the age of 15-19 years (51%), at the age of 30-49 (43%) and at older age (41%).

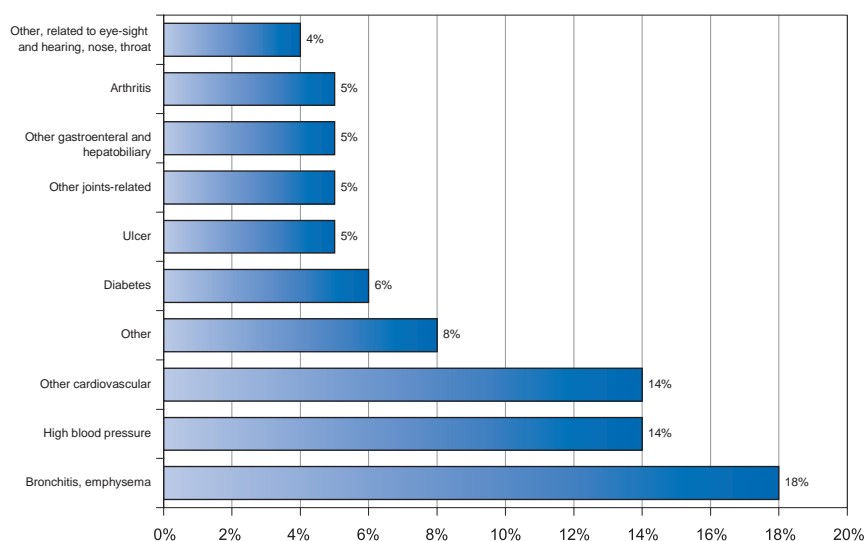
³⁵ Others are the large number of children in the Roma family (preference for male children, tradition); lack of health education; lack of reproductive health education and gender relations; the habit of taking sick children first to non-professionals (spellbinders, fortune tellers and similar) and only when the situation deteriorates to a doctor; insufficient education of Roma women in the field of pregnancy, care for newly born and gynecological problems; existence of taboo topics deeply rooted in the tradition (for example to enter a marriage intacta).

Table XY Most serious illness encountered within past 12 months

Illness	Non-Roma	Roma
Cold	32%	29%
Influenza	18%	20%
Back/knee pain, joints	7%	4%
Injuries and burns	2%	1%
Infections – urological, throat and pulmonary, enthal and CNS (bacterial, viral)	1%	2%
Psychological problems	2%	2%
Gynaecological problems	1%	1%
Alcohol and drug abuse	3%	4%
Wasn't sick	31%	34%

According to the percentage of occurrence, next are illnesses of the bones and muscles, while the same percentage goes for diseases of addiction (alcohol, drugs, and so on). About 30% of the Roma have chronic diseases, and this represents quite a high percentage. This shows that their health condition is bad and that measures have to be taken to improve it. Since chronic diseases in principle are not treated, this percentage cannot significantly be decreased in the short term. Nevertheless, it should be set as a goal for this percentage not to increase. In the long term, the goal should be that the percentage of Roma with chronic diseases is brought down by improving the living conditions and the general health condition.

Figure 1 Most frequent chronic diseases, Roma



Since not all children are included in the regular education process, there is a lack of systematic monitoring of their health (vaccination, systematic medical examinations) and their involvement in the regular preventive program. Nevertheless, vaccination of pre-school and school children is free for all children, regardless of their insurance status. The UNDP survey found that 97% of children (0-14 years old) are vaccinated against measles, diphtheria, tetanus and cough.

Demographic data show that the Roma population in the Republic of Macedonia has on average the youngest population compared to the average age in the country. Due to the different natality and mortality rates compared to the national average, Roma children have a larger share and senior citizens a smaller share of their own ethnic group. It is obvious that reproductivity among the Roma is two times higher than the average in the country, yet mortality among the children is also two times higher than in the other ethnic groups.

According to the 1996 UNICEF research, less than 1/3 of the Roma mothers who expressed a wish not to get pregnant in the next 2 to 3 years used modern contraceptive protection methods. The same research shows that diarrhoea among Roma babies is an especially frequent occurrence. Some data show

that 23% of the Roma women give birth at home and the assessment is that around 4% of the newly born are not registered at all. As for the age of mothers giving the first birth, in Suto Orizari for example, 3% of mothers are in the age of 12-14, 41% 15-18 years of age and 56% of mothers giving the first birth is over 18 years old. The difficult living conditions make the average life duration of most Roma shorter compared to the non-Roma.³⁶

Access to health care is along with correct life style another key factor of good health. The UNDP survey shows 17% Roma have not requested help when ill, which is not a significantly high percentage. Not requesting help could be due to lack of trust in the system, lack of financial resources, lack of adequate documentation, physical distance to health care facility, consultations in the community and so on.

Ability to buy medications to treat the disease is key economic precondition when dealing with health care problems, since the advice of the doctor does not mean anything if the patient cannot act accordingly. Around 80% of the households have faced in the last 12 months the problem of not being able to buy the medications prescribed by the doctor and adequately treat the illness. Obviously, this affects to a large extent the health condition of the Roma. One fourth (25%) of the Roma do not spend anything on medications, others, 34%, spend up to 10 Euro, 22% from 11-20 Euros, 19% over 21 Euro. The whole household had spent, in the course of last year, aggregate on health: up to 25 Euro-20%, from 26-50 Euro 16%, from 51-100 Euro 17%, from 101-200 Euro 16%, over 201 Euro 16%.

Regarding the health insurance, the UNICEF research showed that 56% of the Roma have regulated their health insurance status on any of the possible grounds, 17% have partially regulated status (meaning not all of the family members have health insurance) and 27% have no health insurance at all. This means that this group of persons would have to pay the full costs of the health care services.³⁷ Concretely, in Suto Orizari 78% of the population has health insurance, 18% are not insured, and 4% are partially insured. The UNDP survey found out 22% of Roma people have faced the problem of being denied health care services due to lack of proper documents (including health insurance).

Physical distance to health care facilities is also a factor that influences the health situation. According to the UNDP survey, most of the interviewed had a health care institution relatively close to their dwelling: 65% at less than 1 kilometre, 28% at 1-3 kilometres, 3% at 3-5 kilometres, and so on. The nearest out-patient facility is up to 1 kilometre away for 25% of the cases, from 1-3 for 21%, from 3-5 km for 13% of the cases and so on.

NAP for Health

The following five priority areas have been set in the National Action Plan for health of the Republic of Macedonia for the Roma Inclusion Decade:

1. Health Protection – aiming at improving the living conditions (in terms of regular hygienic controls)
2. Healthcare training – aiming at improving the quality of healthcare training in the educational process; provision of additional healthcare training for people outside the educational system (medical practitioners); promoting preventive healthcare measures to improve the health of Roma; and affirmative approach towards Roma students in medical schools and faculties.
3. Information – in this area the NAP has the following goals: greater coverage of the Roma population with health insurance; full coverage of the Roma population with primary health care; and creating conditions and human resources for on-going information for Roma concerning health insurance and exercising rights.
4. Healthcare regulations and administration – the NAP aims to: improve legal regulations; improve administrative procedures; and introduce affirmative approach to employing Roma in the healthcare sector.
5. Access to healthcare – aiming at easier access for Roma to healthcare institutions and initiating a proactive approach of public healthcare institutions towards selected Roma categories.

³⁶ This can be seen from the small number of Roma older than 40 years compared to the general population

³⁷ Up to now, the social cases, unemployed or bankruptcy workers have had health care free of charge or with minimum co-payment. These rights are provided in most of the cases under the condition that the person has not regulated the Republic of Macedonia's citizenship status or when the parent, by rule the father, has not completed the elementary education and cannot be registered in the Employment Bureau. When needed, the Social Care Center covers the expenses of the uninsured poor persons.

7. CHALLENGES

Requirement to Maintain Relevant Statistics

To achieve the objectives defined in the plans, it is necessary to have access to relevant data related to several aspects of the life of the Roma. In order to realistically identify the group as vulnerable faced with the risk of poverty and social exclusion there is a need to determine statistical indicators which will support the statement. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a comprehensive and quantitative official data base at a state level, which will be crucial for the initial development of a broad national policy and which will later identify its development trends. By having solid quantitative data the relevant parties (the government, donors and partners included in the implementation) can be involved in defining the priorities and measures for the progress of the determined action plans.

In that sense, the authorities are to ensure the development of a public services manual, which would include the necessary indicators for focused “ethnic” monitoring for every area, and field research related to the relevant areas would have to be conducted. Based on the latter, the authorities would prepare regular periodic reports, describing the degree to which the programmes and policies of the Decade and the Strategy have been executed and the achievements and implementation of the objectives defined.

The role of the local self-government

The general impression of countries in the region is that the local self-government is the weakest link in the system for implementation of planned priorities. In order to avoid this trend and escape the declarative aspect of the local self-government, it is necessary to induce the local administration (as a primary level of communication with the citizens) to maintain and respect the principle of equality and non-discrimination for all citizens, including the Roma. Thus, it will be necessary to provide and publicly declare the support from all relevant political actors on local and national level, regardless of whether they are in the governing party or opposition. For the efficient servicing of citizens’ needs, the local authorities can carry out the following points:

- Introduce a local mechanism for the achievement of the Decade’s objectives;
- Allocate special budget items for certain interventions on local level, related to the Roma;
- Actively seek funds from the central government or other donors for certain programmes through previously prepared projects;
- Work to develop or raise the awareness of local population regarding Roma issues;
- If the Council fails to select members from the Roma population, some form of consultation should be carried out with the relevant persons regarding their interests (for example mayors’ advisors, etc);
- These activities should be carried out in a transparent and accountable manner.

The local authorities will be able to identify representatives of the Roma ethnic community and might be able to create successful local development strategies and policies with their help and partnership. At the same time, the civil sector appears as a medium for correction, in circumstances when the local authorities are withholding something.

Revisions of National Action Plans

The works on operational plans for the NAP as well as the data analysis provided in this report revealed a need for revisions of the existing National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion in Macedonia. The revisions should reflect the most recent developments in the country in terms of work with the Roma population. When updating the action plan, the rules of results/performance based management and planning should be respected and applied in order to align this action plan more easily to the work plans of individual line ministries.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Outline of the Survey Methodology

Survey questionnaire

The survey questionnaire that was used to generate the data on which this report is based follows the philosophy of integrated household surveys, with separate components containing both household and individual modules. Within the individual module, each household member's profile was registered (demographic characteristics, economic status, education, health). The household module addresses issues related to the household in general (dwelling type, access to basic infrastructures, household items possession etc.). Questions related to incomes and expenditures were addressed in both modules, making it possible to crosscheck the results. For any additional information related to the questionnaire, please see the dedicated website <http://vulnerability.undp.sk>

Universe under study

The primary universe under study consists of: (i) all the households in Roma settlements or areas of compact Roma population; and (ii) domicile non-Roma communities living in close proximity to Roma.

The Roma sample

The sampling of vulnerable groups in general and of Roma in particular is a major challenge in every survey targeting diversities and vulnerability. The first assumption of the survey was that major disparities in socioeconomic status of the populations are most obvious (and can be explored best) at the level of municipality (or other relevant micro-territorial unit). Since at this level vulnerability factors exist that affect both Roma and other communities, vulnerability profiles of the two groups (Roma and domicile non-Roma) in the same municipality were developed, in order to make possible the identification of those vulnerability factors that affect the Roma.

The most difficult question in this regard is “Who is Roma?” and how to appropriately identify the survey respondents. The primary objective of the survey was to map the vulnerability of groups with common socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic patterns – irrespective of how the potential surveyed might identify themselves. Since Roma identity is often associated with underclass status and discrimination, the decision to avoid self-identification as “Roma” is not infrequent. In most countries, therefore, Roma are underreported in censuses, and officially registered sizes of Roma populations often differ dramatically from experts' estimates.

While accepting the belief that censuses understate the absolute numbers of Roma, the survey accepted that the census data provide reasonably adequate pictures of the structure and territorial distribution of those individuals who identify themselves as Roma. Since the absolute number of Roma populations is not known, random sampling was not possible, so a “pyramid” sampling model was used instead. Within this model, various estimates of Roma population (including census data) constitute different tiers of the pyramid. The bottom of the pyramid constitutes the total (“real”) number of Roma in a country. The top represents the hypothetical situation of total exclusion in which not a single person would self-identify as Roma. Census data constitute one of the pyramid's tiers, with the pyramid's strata reflecting the structure of the population. Under this model, if the “propensity to underreport” (i.e., the share of the Roma not willing to identify themselves as Roma) is distributed similarly in different

regions within a country, the structure of the population reflected in the census tier would be identical to the structure of the total population. This should be sufficiently unbiased to construct a representative stratified sample.

In practical terms, it was assumed that the propensity to underreport was identical for each region within an individual country. Based on this assumption, the Roma sample was taken as representative of the Roma population living in “Roma settlements or areas of compact Roma population”. Those settlements and areas were defined as settlements where the share of Roma population equals or is higher than the national share of Roma population in the given country, as reflected in the census data. The share – not the absolute number – of Roma was used for identification of the sampling clusters. The knowledge that X percent of Roma (as reported in the census) live in settlement Y was taken to mean that X percent of the sample will be derived from settlement Y. In this way, the demographic structure of the sample reflects the demographic structure of the Roma population (as reflected in the census data in proportions).

At the first stage of the sample design the universe was defined as mentioned above, using “average and above share of Roma in each settlement”. In the second phase, taking into consideration also Roma organizations’ estimates of Roma populations, the distribution of the settlements and population sizes, sampling clusters were determined. Respondents were then identified using “random route” selection processes (third stage).

Internal (self-identification) and external (outsider’s identification) modes therefore prevail at different stages of the sampling process. Self-identification (reported during census) was used in the first stage; external identification (assessment of local people, NGOs, experts) was employed in the second stage. In the third stage (respondents’ selection), the results of the first two stages were confirmed or rejected by “implicit endorsement of identification”.

In some cases (particularly in big cities and capitals), large Roma communities constitute relatively small shares of total populations. In such cases, the sampling methodology conformed to administrative subdivisions (usually the “capital municipality” is divided into smaller municipalities and/or lower levels of self-government). These lower levels were then chosen as the sampling units. Such cases were also corrected typologically introducing additional sampling points.

Domicile non-Roma sample living in close proximity to Roma

The non-Roma booster samples were constructed using similar procedure as for the Roma. These are representative samples of non-Roma communities living in settlements with Roma communities of “average and above” size. These samples are therefore not representative of national averages. The idea was to have records of their socio-economic status, which can serve as a baseline for comparing levels of vulnerability and their determinants for the Roma, refugees and internally displaced persons.

For obvious reasons, the samples for non-Roma living in close proximity to Roma were constructed for the same settlements reflected in the Roma samples. In the second stage of sampling (determining the size of population and the sampling clusters), external identification was used to identify the non-Roma neighbourhoods (assessment of local people, local self-governments). In the third stage random route selection was also applied.

In cases of municipalities with a high share of Roma population and the number of domicile non-Roma population not sufficient for creating a majority booster (for example, in cases of isolated Roma settlements or segregated neighbourhoods), the majority booster was based on a typologically similar settlement in the same district (administrative unit) with Roma population equal or higher the national average. The criterion for choosing this settlement was the ‘closest village accessible by road connection’.

The desire to obtain comparable data for non-Roma living in close proximity to Roma reflected a major emphasis of the current analysis: Roma are the most vulnerable, but not all vulnerable are Roma. The domicile non-Roma boosters gave the survey the “benchmark” needed for assessments of the depth of Roma poverty and vulnerability vis-à-vis non-Roma living in similar socio-economic environments. Despite the sample design challenges it poses, this approach allows us to distinguish among various vulnerability factors, particularly those that are related to minority status (and hence can be attributed to various forms of discrimination), as opposed to manifestations of regional development disparities or depressed local economic circumstances. It also provides clues on how to tackle the issues of exclusion and marginalization. Although often determined by institutional factors and policies, exclusion occurs at the level of interaction. This is primarily the level of the community, where people enter daily contacts. Measuring the distance between Roma and non-Roma in areas they cohabit could be an important clue of how to tackle challenges of social distance.

It is important to bear in mind that this approach does not attempt to guarantee national representativeness for domicile non-Roma communities. Because they share similar socioeconomic circumstances, members of domicile non-Roma communities living in close proximity to Roma may well be more vulnerable than national averages. Whenever national indicators are available these are used as a benchmark to assess the vulnerability of the three groups covered in the survey.

Methodological costs and benefits

The samples based on municipalities with average and above shares of Roma population are not fully representative for the entire Roma populations of the countries covered in this survey. They do, however, cover roughly 85 percent of Roma in each country, and as such provide a good basis for developing quantitative socioeconomic indicators of Roma welfare (quality of life, life expectancy, access to services, incomes etc.). The resulting samples are representative not just for residents of segregated Roma communities, but also for the majority of Roma.

The data generated by these samples are broadly consistent with census data, since this survey's data are based on relative numbers (structure and regional distribution) instead of the absolute numbers of Roma registered in the censuses. This approach also gives some standardized criterion for majority booster selection. The major drawback of this sampling methodology concerns its application to municipalities where the share of Roma in the total population is below national averages. Because these municipalities effectively fall out of the scope of the sample, the conditions of Roma concentrated in "mini-poverty pockets" or who are dispersed (presumably integrated with the domicile non-Roma) are not captured. Both groups are represented in the sample, however. In the first case, most of the 85 percent of Roma who are captured by this survey methodology also live in similar poverty pockets, which benefit from representative sampling. In the second (integrated) case, this would be because a significant portion of the 85 percent of Roma are functionally integrated (employed, maintaining contacts with majority communities and institutions) and thus typologically similar to dispersed (presumably integrated) Roma from the 15 percent. Those of the 15 percent who are "dispersed and integrated" and self-identify themselves as Roma are typologically close to those who are integrated into the 85 percent. Those who have been assimilated and do not self-identify as Roma fall out of the scope of the research, either because they do not meet the criterion of "being Roma" (whatever that means) or because they do not meet the vulnerability criterion.

Overall, the methodology employed in this survey is based on the assumption that existing demographic information on size and structure of Roma populations can be reliably analysed and disaggregated, in total and by territory. This is not easy to achieve, and the results will inevitably reflect estimates and expert's assumptions. These steps are nonetheless a precondition for representative sampling procedures, and as such all efforts should be made in this direction.

Fieldwork and partnerships

Given the nature of the survey – addressing the needs of groups that are not easy to identify – fieldwork was another major challenge. High level of trust was needed on the side of respondents – particularly in the case of Roma. As a specific and unique minority group Roma in some countries show certain level of distrust towards other ethnical groups and ethnical majority as well. The general rule was to approach the communities carefully, with respect and avoiding any suspicion about the purpose of the data collection.

The survey was executed by Medium Gallup, a GALLUP affiliated agency in Serbia, and coordinated by the GALLUP regional office, Sofia, which managed the execution of the whole regional survey. Using the GALLUP framework made it possible to apply similar standards and procedures in all countries covered by the regional vulnerability project, making cross-country comparisons possible and reliable. After the fieldwork was completed thorough control was run with 10-15% of the sample depending on the country. All errors were cleared. Data control was conducted centrally by GALLUP regional office which managed the execution of the survey.

From the outset all agencies involved were working in coordinated manner under the methodological and conceptual guidance from UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre. The methodology of the survey, sampling and fieldwork were broadly discussed with colleagues from the World Bank and members of the UNDP Data Experts Group. Three consultants (Gabor Kezdy, Valerie Evans and Dragana Radević) were particularly instrumental in the final design of the methodology and sampling models.

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