

ROMS ON INTEGRATION II

ANALYSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



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European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)
Director Dr. Marc Weller

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ANALYSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ROMANI EXPERT GROUPS FOR ROMANI INTEGRATION

EDUCATION :: CIVIL RIGHTS :: HEALTH :: EMPLOYMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Following on needs assessment

This volume contains the second set of reports on research conducted by the Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration. The Expert Groups were established in fall 2004 as a follow-on to the first global assessment of the needs of Macedonia's Romani population, which the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) conducted the previous year with the generous support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). Sida has also provided support for the current initiative from its inception.

Like the needs assessment, the Expert Groups are organized around four core areas:

- Education
- Health
- Civil rights
- Employment

Both the needs assessment and the work of the Expert Groups also take into account issues of gender, attending not only to the situation of the Romani population in general, but also to the position of Romani women in particular.

Why Romani Expert Groups?

While the immediate impetus for establishing Romani Expert Groups was to address persistent gaps in the existing data on the situation of Roms in the Republic of Macedonia, the initiative is at the same time founded on the broader premise that the most sustainable initiatives are those which involve local stakeholders at all stages of design and implementation. Combining the individual Expert Group members' extensive knowledge of local Romani communities throughout Macedonia with ECMI's expertise in project management, facilitation and practice-oriented research, the work of the Expert Groups represents an important step toward equipping Macedonia's Romani population with the resources needed for playing an effective role in a democratic society based on the rule of law as well as for participating successfully in a competitive labour market.

The research projects

As was true of their research in the first project year, the Expert Groups have chosen topics which have received little attention from other actors. By conducting their research primarily in Romani ghettos in the cities throughout Macedonia with the largest Romani populations, the Expert Groups have focused on various manifestations of marginalization in need of urgent attention from domestic and international actors. The resulting reports provide valuable reference material for the design of measures to promote Roms' integration into the society of Macedonia as a whole. We are particularly hopeful that the material in this volume will be useful in realizing the Strategy for Roma in the Republic

of Macedonia, adopted by the Macedonian government in early 2005 after incorporating an extensive set of revisions proposed by the Expert Groups, as well as in making the Decade of Roma Inclusion a genuine success in the Republic of Macedonia.

Understood even minimally as “peaceful cohabitation and the retention of separate ethnic identities,”¹ integration is a two-way street. The reports in this volume take this state of affairs into account, with much of the research touching on issues of interethnic relations. The attention to issues of gender which recurs throughout the volume also makes clear that the Romani population is not a monolith, and that policies aimed at Roms must also take this fact into account. Finally, a report on Romani refugee children from Kosovo in the Macedonian educational system reminds us of the existence of a sizeable non-citizen Romani population in Macedonia in urgent need of attention from domestic as well as international institutions.

Acknowledgements

Those most deserving of recognition for the contents of this publication are the Expert Groups themselves. With this in mind, an individual profile of each Expert Group member is given at the end of the volume.

The work of the Expert Groups would also not be possible were it not for the help received from various quarters external to the Groups. We owe a particular debt of gratitude to Sida for providing not only financial support for all activities undertaken as part of this initiative, but also genuine interest in both the project and those involved in it.

The persons most involved in assisting and guiding the Expert Groups on a day-to-day basis have been: Gordana Rodić, M.A. (Programme Manager), Ibrahim Ibrahim, Bs.C. (Project Manager), and Sait Demir, Bs.C. (Project Assistant). Also of crucial importance in the project’s second year has been the continual support of the administrative staff of ECMI’s Skopje Regional Office: Verica Grdanoska, Bs.C. (Outreach Manager) and Jasmina Ristić (Office/Finance Manager).

In preparing, conducting, and compiling their research, the Expert Groups received support from several experts outside of ECMI. Here, special thanks are due Nikolina Kenig, Ph.D., Professor Vesna Dimitrievska and Professor IloTrajkovski. We also wish to express our thanks to the directors of the primary schools in which research was conducted and to the Bureau for the Development and Advancement of the Languages of Members of the Communities for their invaluable assistance in the research process, as well as to the Romani NGOs throughout the country which gave generously of their organizational resources in support of the Expert Groups’ work. Finally, it is worth remembering that the material contained in this volume represents the distilled life experience of the members of local Romani communities, Romani refugees from Kosovo, and others who participated in the field research. Without their demonstrated goodwill, there would be simply nothing to report.

1. Zoltan D. Barany, “Living on the Edge: The East European Roma in Postcommunist Politics and Societies,” *Slavic Review* 53 (1994): 321-344, at 325

Inquiries

The European Centre for Minority Issues invites interested readers to contact the Expert Groups through ECMI's Regional Office in Skopje. For additional information on this initiative and ECMI's activities with Roms in Europe (including downloadable research reports), please consult ECMI's Romani programme web site at www.ecmirom.org, or send an e-mail to info@ecmimacedonia.org.

Eben Friedman, Ph.D.
ECMI Regional Representative
Skopje, September 2006

**SCHOOL ATMOSPHERE:
GRADES AND VISIONS OF ROMANI,
MACEDONIAN AND ALBANIAN
CHILDREN FOR A BETTER SCHOOL**



Introduction

The school atmosphere is an essential component of a good education. School atmosphere implies all the factors and processes that influence the student's security, his/her comfort in the school building, the student-classmates and student-teacher relationship. At the same time, school atmosphere is a component of the educational process that is often neglected by the creators of educational policy. This was the case with "The National Programme for the Development of Education, 2005-2015", and its accompanying documents, including "Programme for the Development of Primary Education". This document claims that "primary education is essential, because it is, above all, the first important social context (outside the family) in which the child acquires an attitude towards knowledge, responsibility and work, and socializes in the spirit of social values". (National Programme for the Development of the Education, 2005-2015, page 3). However, it does not contain a special chapter on school atmosphere. Instead, each component is developed separately, focusing exclusively on the quality of instruction.

In contrast to this, many surveys and analyses of the educational process and its effects highlight the problems of the educational system and the possible directions and steps for the improvement of the school atmosphere. Discussing education from a psychological standpoint, Glacer (1997, p.63) concludes: "We must change the school in which the students look and say: in this school and with these teachers I will be able to meet my needs only if I work hard". He mentions the advantages of creating a democratic atmosphere in the school where the students have the feeling that they belong to that school, mentions socializing with peers, the students' need to be accepted and respected, their freedom to express their thoughts and the fun they have at school. Glacer treats such an atmosphere as an influential factor in the students' learning and their achievements at school.

Simovska and Kostarova-Unkovska (1998), believe that education should focus on realizing the rights and the needs of children. They say that the school is "an optimal environment" for providing a sustained process of mutual communication and exchange between children and adults. Specifically, the school should prepare the child to initiate, organise and realise.

With the importance of the school atmosphere in mind and its importance for the students' achievements, we focus our survey on the children's evaluation of this issue, as well as their visions for creating a favourable atmosphere that would motivate them to achieve the best possible results.

The aim is to find out the children's opinion and their needs to improve the learning atmosphere in the schools, i.e. to discover their visions and wishes for improving the school conditions so that they can maximise their initiative, motivation and results. The survey was carried out in order to improve the educational system so that it will produce creative and independent young generations, with special attention paid to the special needs of the children who belong to the non-majority ethnic communities educated in the Republic of Macedonia.

We expect this survey to inspire the state institutions, especially the Ministry of Education and Science, to develop a suitable concept of monitoring for improving school atmosphere.

Research methods

Interviewees

Romani, Macedonian and Albanian 5th-8th grade pupils took part in the survey. A total of 904 students from 10 cities in the country (Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kičevo, Bitola, Prilep, Štip, Kočani and Vinica) were interviewed in 12 schools¹.

The choice of the schools where the survey was carried out was deliberate. Two 5th grade and two 8th grade classes were chosen from each of the schools. The classes which were taught in Macedonian had at least 20% Romani children, whereas the classes taught in Albanian were chosen at random. 17% of the respondents are Romani children, 48% Macedonian, and 32% Albanian.

Instruments

A questionnaire prepared by the team members who carried out the research was applied to ascertain the primary school children's opinion. The questionnaires are based on the information obtained in the interviews in the 6 focus groups (children of the same ethnic groups and at the same age) carried out immediately before the survey.

The questionnaire consists of 42 questions, which refer to demographic information, the current teaching situation, assessment, grades, the comprehensibility of the books, the condition of the school building and the socialization of the children. Besides these questions, the questionnaire also had a group of questions referring to the children's wishes and expectations about the important aspects of their school life.

The research process

The polling took place in the period March - April 2006, and was carried out by the team that worked on this research problem. In all fifth-grade classes, the questionnaire was administered frontally, with the research reading each question out loud and respondents marketing their responses on the questionnaire. In the eighth-grade classes, the pupils read and completed the questionnaires on their own. For the purpose of attaining valid responses, the anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed. Additionally, in order for the respondents to feel free in their responses, in most cases teachers were not present during the time of the polling, while in the rare cases in which teachers were present in the classroom, they did not influence the process, did not move around the classroom, or give suggestions related to the questions in the questionnaire.

1. The following primary schools were included in the study: Jane Sandanski-Skopje, Bajram Šabani-Kumanovo, Toli Zordumis-Kumanovo, Bratstvo Migjeni and Goce Delčev-Tetovo, Bratstvo i Edinstvo-Gostivar, Jane Sterjoski-Kičevo, Gjorgji Sugarev-Bitola, Dobre Jovanovski-Prilep, Malina Pop Ivanova-Kočani, Slavčo Stojmenski-Vinica, Goce Delčev-Štip.

Results

1. The situation as seen through the children's eyes

Contrary to the belief that the material that the children have to study is complex, as many as 78% of the children think that the books and the workbooks they use in school are written in accessible language. Yet, some of the pupils, 19,3%, think that the materials are not written in a comprehensible style. This shows that a portion of the children who attend primary school have problems with the terminology used in the school books (Table 1).

Table 1. Books and workbooks are written in a comprehensible style

	Number	%
I do not agree at all	16	1,8
I partly agree	172	19,3
I completely agree	702	78,9
Total	890	100

Being asked: *Whether they agree that they have many lessons at school*, three quarters completely or partly agree, whereas approximately one quarter (22.4%) completely disagrees. We obtained similar results to the question as to whether pupils have too much to study during the lessons. Almost the same percentage of rejection (15.3%) was established with regards to the claim that the children have enough free time (Table 2).

Table 2. Children's opinion about the number of lessons, the quantity of the material they have to cover in the lessons, and their free time

	Completely disagree		Partly agree		Completely agree		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
We have many lessons	201	22,4	343	38,2	353	39,4	897	100
We have much material to study after lessons	142	16,0	394	44,4	351	39,6	887	100
We have enough free time	136	15,3	308	34,8	443	49,9	887	100

A group of questions referred to the pupils' experience with the teachers' treatment of them during lessons. The answers to these questions reveal contradicting situations (Table 3). The pupils' evaluation of the teaching style is strongly positive. Thus, 97.7% of the respondents completely agree that their teachers expect them to learn by understanding,

and 94.2% completely or partly agree that the teachers teach in an interesting way and give examples. On the other hand, as many as 95% of the pupils see themselves as passive listeners in the classroom, which points to an absence of interactive teaching methods.

Contrary to this, the evaluation of the teachers' treatment of the pupils is rather negative. Almost half of the respondents agree only partly (32.7%) or completely disagree (15%) with the statement that teachers assign grades fairly.

Most alarming are the pupils' evaluations as to whether the teachers treat all the pupils in the same way and whether they insult the pupils. A total of 52.2% of the pupils completely (24.7%) disagree or partly (27.5%) disagree with the statement that teachers treat all pupils equally. 37% of the respondents say that the teachers insult the children during lessons.

Table 3. Opinion about teaching methods and the pupil-teacher relationship in primary schools

	Completely disagree		Partly agree		Completely agree		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
The teachers expect us to learn with understanding	20	2,3	176	19,7	697	78	893	100
The teachers organize the lesson in an interesting way and with examples	52	5,8	312	35	529	59,2	893	100
The teacher teaches, we listen to her/him	40	4,5	220	24,5	638	71	898	100
The teachers grade fairly	135	15	293	32,7	469	52,3	897	100
The teachers treat all pupils equally	221	24,7	246	27,5	428	47,8	895	100
The teachers insult the pupils	566	63	177	19,8	154	17,2	897	100

Evaluations regarding unjust treatment and insults vary depending on the ethnic origin of the respondents. The same number of Macedonian and Albanian pupils think that the teachers do not grade in a just way at all, or that they just partly do. The least sensitive to unjust assessment are the Romani pupils – only 10.9% said that they disagree with the statement that the teachers grade fairly, whereas 65% completely agree that they are fairly graded.

Generally, we can notice that children of all three ethnic groups disagree with the statement that the teachers insult the pupils. The Romani children are most numerous among the ones who completely or partly agree with this statement, 47%, whereas among Macedonian children this is rare (32.2%) (Table 3a).

Table 3a. Ethnic origin and insults by the teacher

	Macedonian		Albanian		Roms	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Completely disagree	289	67,8	169	59,5	79	53
Partly agree	92	21,6	53	18,6	26	17,5
Completely agree	45	10,6	62	21,9	44	29,5
Total	426	100	284	100	149	100

Similar variations in the evaluation depending on the pupils' ethnic origin were obvious for the equal or unequal treatment by the teachers. 45.4% of the Romani pupils completely or partly disagree that the teachers treat all pupils equally. 42.1% of the Albanian pupils think the teachers treat all pupils equally, and 57.9% completely or partly disagree with this statement. Most of the Macedonian pupils disagree or partly agree that the teachers treat all pupils equally (Table 3b).

Table 3b. Ethnic origin and equal treatment of all pupils

	Macedonian		Albanian		Roms	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Completely disagree	91	21,7	92	33,5	28	19,8
Partly agree	132	31,4	67	24,4	36	25,6
Completely agree	197	46,9	116	42,1	77	54,6
Total	420	100	275	100	141	100

Friendships amongst children and the school atmosphere in ethnically heterogeneous schools are largely influenced by ethnic origin and religious beliefs.

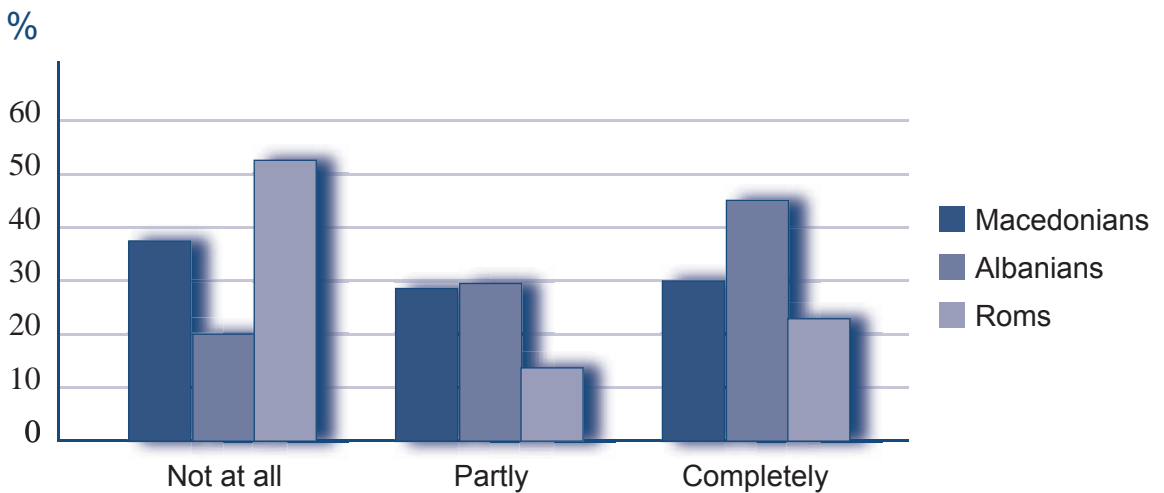
Asked about their preferences with regards to friendships, almost a third of the children said the religious or the ethnic origin is important for making friendships. More than a third of them (38.7%) said they make friends with pupils of the same religious or ethnic origin, whereas 21.3% of the pupils said that religious beliefs partly reflect the friendships they form.

36.4% say it is important for a friend to be of the same ethnic origin, and 28.4% of them partly agree that it is important to make friends with children of the same ethnic origin. However 35.2% of the children say they make friends with children of a different ethnic origin (Table 4).

Table 4. Religious and ethnic origin and friendships among primary school children

	Completely disagree		Partly agree		Completely agree		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
I make friends with children of the same religion	359	40	192	21,3	348	38,7	899	100
I make friends with children of the same ethnic origin	316	35,2	254	28,4	326	36,4	896	100

Graph 1 represents the preferences for making friends by ethnic origin of the respondents. We can conclude that Romani children do not prefer to make friends only with children of the same ethnic origin. Compared to the Romani and Macedonian children, Albanian children are most eager to make friends only with children of the same ethnic origin as their own. Like Romani children, the Macedonian children (although less so than Romani children), say they make friends with children of different ethnic origin.



Graph 1. I make friends with children of the same ethnic origin

2. Children's visions and needs

The seating arrangement is one of the many aspects that influence the school atmosphere, especially the efficiency of the teaching and the possibility for the children to interact. Asked about the seating arrangement that most suits their needs and wishes, the children gave the following answers: 81.2% said they prefer the traditional classroom arrangement, i.e. sitting in rows by two. A small part of them, 12.5%, prefer to sit in groups during the lessons (Table 5).

Table 5. Classroom arrangement the children prefer

	Number	%
In rows by two	729	81,3
In rows by three	34	3.8
In groups	111	12.5
In a large circle	4	0.4
In a different way	18	2.0
Total	896	100

The review and assessment of knowledge are elements of the schooling process with which primary school pupils are the most concerned. Fear of being called upon to answer questions as well as the satisfaction / dissatisfaction with grades are important elements in building children’s confidence and their motivation to learn. At the same time, they help pupils understand school either as a place for educational realization, or a place where they will experience disappointment and resistance to learning. Tables 6 and 7 represent the pupils’ answers about their wishes with regards to assessment and evaluation. 49.8% of the respondents prefer oral exams, whereas 29.3% said they prefer assessment to be done by written tests.

Table 6. Assessment preferences

	Number	%
Written	263	29,3
Oral	446	49,8
No assesment	165	18,4
Others	23	2,5
Total	897	100

Most of the pupils prefer numerical grading from 1 to 5, with 71.9% of respondents choosing this way of assessment. It is surprising that only 10% of the pupils think that their knowledge should not be assessed, whereas 13.4% choose sign or letter assessment (which is just a nominal replacement for the traditional numerical assessment). It is interesting to point out that only a few of the pupils opted for descriptive assessment of their knowledge.

Table 7. Pupils’ preferences for the assessment of their knowledge

	Number	%
With numbers 1 - 5	646	71.9
With letters(A, B, C...) or with signs	120	13.4
Descriptive	42	4.7
No assesment	90	10
Total	898	100

Punishments and disciplinary measures undertaken by the teachers and other school employees reflect on pupils' self-confidence and their wish to go to school. Therefore, part of the questionnaire surveys the visions and the need to punish irresponsible pupils and the most acceptable kind of disciplinary measures that would be positive and effective for the children.

More than half of the pupils said that weak and irresponsible pupils should be given advice (53.4%). The next chosen measure was to consult these pupils' parents, with 19.2% of the respondents opting for this answer. Part of the respondents think that these pupils should be motivated or should meet with the school principal. Only a very small number of children thought that there should not be any measures at all (Table 8).

Table 8. Pupils' visions about the most acceptable punishments for weak and irresponsible pupils

	Number	%
Beat them	21	2,3
Advise them	478	53,4
Repremand them	25	2,8
Motivate them	54	6,0
Give them bad marks	19	2,1
Expel them from school	14	1,6
Consult the parents	172	19,2
Get a notice from the school principal	47	5,3
There should not be any punishments for anybody	65	7,3
Total	895	100

The security of the school as a place where the children can freely leave their learning materials and the child's personal safety reflect on the wish to go to school. It is also a part of the school atmosphere, since the child could feel safe or unsafe and feel fear. About one third of the respondents think there is no need for a security guard, whereas the remaining number thinks camera surveillance (41%) or police presence (20.6%) is necessary.

Because the school has an important role in the children's socialization as well as in their formal education, it should inform and direct children about deviant social phenomena. For this reason, we offered the children a choice of lecture topics which could be accommodated in connection with the school activities. A third of the children (32.9%) would like to hear additional information about drug problems. 28% of the pupils showed interest in other topics such as religion, and 18.7% in smoking.

Speaking at least one foreign language and computer skills are a necessary part of the knowledge base. These subjects are present in the school curriculum, but to an

insufficient degree. In particular, access to computers is impeded by the schools' poor state of equipment. We asked the children about their need to learn a foreign language and their wish to use computers at school. Most of the pupils, 93.7%, would like to learn to use computers. It is interesting to notice that pupils would like to learn how to use computers, regardless of their success at school. Learning two foreign languages in primary school was preferred by 67.8% of the pupils, whereas 21.6% would like to learn one language.

Learning can be very demotivating if the material in the books is presented in a dull way, with no examples and in a style that is not clear for children. More than a third (35.37%) of the children would like the books to be written in a clearer style, 21.1% think they should contain fewer information that need to be memorized, and 19.1% think the books should contain more illustrations. Only 22.6% of the pupils think the books could be written in the same way (Table 9).

Table 9. What kind of books pupils would like to have

	Number	%
With more illustrations	171	19,1
Less information to memorize	189	21,1
Clearer words	319	35,7
The same as now	202	22,6
Other	13	1,5
Total	894	100

All pupils, regardless of ethnic origin, express the need for books that would be clearer to the pupils. 35% of the Romani children, 47.2% Albanian pupils and 27.5% Macedonian pupils indicated this need.

Unlike the Macedonian pupils, who have decided equally for each of the offered alternatives, the majority of the Romani and Albanian pupils selected the possibility to have books written in a simpler style (Table 9a).

Table 9a. Ethnic origin and textbook style

	Macedonians		Albanians		Roms	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
With more illustrations	84	20,2	61	21,9	22	15,1
With less information to memorize	108	25,7	43	15,5	31	21
Clearer words	118	28,1	135	48,5	53	36
The same as now	109	26	39	14,1	41	27,9
Total	419	100	278	100	147	100

Interactive teaching shows good results in the classroom. Asked what kind of teaching they prefer, 67.8% of the pupils said they would not like just to sit and listen while taught a new unit. 34.5% of them like to listen to lectures, but also to be given the opportunity to express their opinion on the unit, and 33.3% would like to discuss together the new material. It is interesting to see that a quarter of the pupils still prefer to remain passive and choose to listen and remain quiet while a new unit is being taught.

Taking into account the ethnic origin of the children, the results of the questions discussed in the preceding paragraph can be summarized as follows: compared to the others, Romani children prefer to listen and sit quietly while a teacher teaches. Romani children do not prefer to discuss the new unit. Also, they are not keen on listening to lectures and expressing their opinion on the topic (Table 10).

Table 10. Pupils' visions about their part in teaching a new unit

	Number	%
To sit quietly	283	31
To listen, yet have an opportunity to express my opinion	312	35
Discuss the new unit together	301	34
Total	896	100

In order to discover the children's vision for a desirable school, they were given a list of changes, together with an opportunity to add their own ideas.

Table 11. Children's visions about the two things they would do if they were the school principal

	The first thing I would do if I were the principal		The second thing I would do if I were the principal	
	Number	%	Number	%
I would paint the walls in bright colours	78	8,9	108	12,3
I would replace the floor	36	4,1	60	6,8
I would get new furniture	145	16,5	175	19,9
I would rearrange the school yard and put in a playground, funfair and a lawn	288	32,8	222	25,2
I would sack the teachers who do not teach well	41	4,7	68	7,7

I would sack the teachers who insult and beat children	144	16,4	81	9,2
I would order simple school books	14	1,6	31	3,5
I would start a school radio	39	4,4	48	5,5
I would organize a canteen or shop inside the school	93	10,6	86	9,8
Total	878	100	879	100

We determined their priorities by asking them:” *What would you do if you were the school principal?*” A third of the pupils would first rearrange the schoolyard into a playground, funfair and park. 20% of them would first change the furniture, whereas 12.3% would paint the walls in bright colours. The yard rearrangement occupies the first place on the second list of priorities, too, with 25.2% of the pupils indicating that they would do this in the second place. 12.3% would paint the walls bright, and 9.9% would replace the furniture. It is interesting to see that the children primarily focused on changing the physical environment of the school, rather than on offering own ideas.

Discussion

The results lead to a conclusion that there is a need for improvement of the school atmosphere. Almost all of the schools that took part in the survey apply traditional teaching methods and classroom arrangements. The pupils’ replies indicate lack of ideas for a different teaching concept which would result in more effective learning, and which would include interactive work, sitting and working in groups, and discussions which would eventually lead to more creative lessons.

The pupils are used to the existing organization of the schools, yet 70% of the respondents expressed a wish to give their comments during the lectures, pointing to the fact that the children feel the need to engage in the teaching process and are ready to exchange opinions, but the current teaching methods reduce their initial ambition to engage and to take an active part in the educational process.

Additionally, the computer equipment of the schools is very poor, while almost all of the pupils show interest and need to work on computers at school. As for the books that the pupils use, most of them agree they are clear but if there were an opportunity to improve them, they suggest using a language that would be simple to understand.

The results show that the pupils are not taught to think in a creative and a critical manner. The old-fashioned primary school and the lack of particular actions to improve the current situation in the schools can be seen in the above results, which clearly indicate the fact that the teachers use classical teaching methods. This is not to the pupils’ preference, since only a third of the children said they liked it.

However, it is interesting to point out that as many as 49% of the Romani children said they prefer just to listen quietly while the teacher teaches. This fact illustrates the long-standing introversion of the Romani population and the way Romani children are educated in their families – to be quiet and not to express their opinion. This, in turn, leads to a passive attitude and lack of motivation to work during the lessons.

As for the socialization of the children with their peers, it is obvious that Roms do not prefer to play only with children of the same ethnic origin, unlike Albanian children who do. This is probably due to the fact that Romani children attend Macedonian mixed classes, as well as to their (pacifistic) upbringing, whereas the Albanians attend homogenous Albanian classes, and have fewer opportunities to play with children of different ethnic origin.

The findings concerning the children's feeling of security in the schools are presented in Table 16. All of the ethnic groups agreed that they feel unsafe, such that they would like to have video surveillance introduced. Nowadays, there are frequent incidents of vandalism and violence incidents among the pupils because of religion, ethnic origin or school success.

Further, the results of the survey indicate the need to reduce the school material, as reflected in part by pupils' statements about lacking free time. The number of hours spent at school should also be reduced.

It is interesting to see that most of the pupils say that the teachers still apply traditional teaching methods, even though many donors and institutions have invested in training the teachers on new methodologies and techniques. This datum leads to the conclusion that most of the teachers do not apply the knowledge acquired at various seminars and trainings. On the other hand, the traditional teaching method does not help develop pupils' initiative, creativity and self-confidence. As for the physical environment, which is a part of the general school atmosphere, we can conclude that it is unattractive to the children, starting with the schoolyard where the children need to have lawns, sports facilities and playgrounds. Similarly, the pupils indicated that school walls do not look bright and pleasant, and that school furniture needs to be replaced. These are the key places where the children spend most of their time when they are at school. Neither the classrooms where learning takes place nor the schoolyard used for recess contribute to good feelings and a learning atmosphere.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improving the physical aspects and the classroom environment in schools (rearranging the schoolyard and the interior);
- Equipping the schools with computers and offering free access;
- Teaching (mandatory) of two foreign languages;
- Using advisory disciplinary measures;
- Introducing interactive teaching in all subjects taught at the primary school level;

- Constructing a system for evaluation and awarding the application of newly acquired knowledge from seminars and trainings;
- Licensing the teaching profession;
- Expanding the teachers' knowledge base;
- Educating future creative and independent generations;
- Preparing conditions necessary for introducing Romani language in primary education;
- Introducing Romani language in primary schools, as this is a constitutional right neglected by the relevant institutions;
- Making use of local government's responsibility for primary education to improving the educational level of Romani children by making use of the local government's responsibility;
- Organizing various activities and programmes in the local schools depending on the particular needs;
- Modernizing the teaching process by which the pupil's security and socialisation will be ensured as important elements that influence the acceptance or rejection of education as a whole;
- Creating additional activities that will build the values of co-existence and valuing diversity;
- Attention to the style in which books are written, verifying whether it is suitable for the children, since the books are among the most important elements in the teaching process. This problem is especially important for the Romani pupils who do not attend school in their mother tongue, as they are not comfortable enough to express themselves, resulting later in a passive attitude in the classroom, poor scholastic performance and drop-out;
- We expect this survey to prompt the state institutions, especially The Ministry of Education, to create a special concept for the improvement and monitoring of the school atmosphere.

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**ROMANI REFUGEE CHILDREN FROM
KOSOVO AND THEIR INTEGRATION
IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF
THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**



Introduction

Armed conflict and NATO intervention in 1999 caused a major refugee migration from Kosovo to the Republic of Macedonia. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, there were 274.615 refugees in the country, out of which 150.000 were given the status of persons under temporary humanitarian care. Until April 2000, 5000 people of the entire number of refugees were Roms (according to Mils News, 11 April 2000), whereas according to unofficial sources the number of Romani refugees reached 7.000-8.000 (Demirovski, 2000). The same author claims that the Romani refugees could not apply for a job, and as a result they were completely dependent on the humanitarian aid.¹

From September - December 1999, the refugees dwelled in Stenkovec refugee camp. At the beginning of 2000 they were relocated: part of them moved into the military barracks in Katlanovo, another part moved to the collective centre built by the Macedonian Government in Šuto Orizari, and yet another part moved to some Romani private houses. Information from the Ministry of Internal Affairs from 2003 shows that the number of refugees was reduced to half, such that Macedonia had 2.500 refugees to take care of at that time.²

The Romani refugees from Kosovo lived and still live in appalling conditions. The people interviewed by Human Rights Watch in Medžitlija, in private accommodation in Šuto Orizari and the ones accommodated in Katlanovo, describe their living conditions both in the past and at present as very difficult and inadequate. The best illustration of the fact is that the Šuto Orizari camp was located near a dump. The people in the camp lived in temporary cabins. Several families had to use a single toilet placed in a metal container. The camp had no plumbing, let alone the other infrastructure necessary for everyday living. The camp had no asphalted streets, so rains regularly flooded the camp with water and mud. Still, the Roms from this camp claimed that the conditions in this camp were better than the ones in the private accommodation.³

An additional difficulty in the whole situation was the treatment of the educational problem of the refugee children. The Kosovo Romani children attended lessons in containers in “Brakja Ramiz and Hamid” primary school, and in the basement of “26 July” primary school. Due to the inadequate and bad conditions in the schools many of the refugee children suffered serious health problems, which was a reason for their parents to stop sending them to school.⁴

Although the international documents recommend acceptance of refugee children in the educational system of the host country (i.e., the country where refuge is sought) and enabling effective accomplishment of the right to education (preferably in their

1. By Macedonian law, persons under temporary humanitarian protection could not apply for asylum, and their status was reviewed by the government every six months.

2. *Outside of the Hopeless Situation? The Problems of Kosovo Romani Refugees in Macedonia* Human Rights Watch, article for the media (10 December, 2003); Interview with Blagoja Stojkovski, principle of the asylum and immigration department in the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje, 18 November 2003

3. Human Rights Watch interview with Ramadan Ali and Fatmir Kurezi, (Šuto Orizari, 29 July, 2003)

4. Information received in the interview with the president of the Refugee Committee in Macedonia, Mr. Džavit Beriša (April, 2006)

mother tongue), both in the interest of educational continuity, we can say that in both areas the situation in Macedonia is far from the recommended ideal. As a part of the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Child Rights Convention (CRC), Macedonia is obliged to enable free primary education for all children on its territory. A further explanation to this obligation is given by the Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural rights that “education should be available to everyone, especially the vulnerable groups, both by law and in reality”, “it should be safe and physically rich” and “affordable to everyone”.⁵ The international and domestic legislation which covers the refugees’ problems is inconsistently implemented, especially in the case of the Romani refugees, who we can say are the most vulnerable social group: with no permanent home, poor knowledge of the local languages, no adequate education, economically powerless, and often victims of prejudices.

At the moment there are **1780 Romani refugees from Kosovo in Macedonia**.⁶ The conditions they live in now do not differ from the ones they lived in 3 years ago. Most households live in a single room and have poor living conditions.

Having to face these problems and bare existence, the parents are not in a position to pay enough attention to their children. Thus, the refugee child loses its support and becomes a victim, on one hand of the refugee living conditions, and on the other hand of its family (Kostarova-Unkovska et al. 1992, according to Petrovska-Beška et al. 1997)

The aim of the survey is to discover whether, seven years later, the Romani children refugees have managed to integrate in the educational system in Macedonia. The real situation is the necessary first step in creating policy for the future steps to be taken in order to prevent total marginalization and social isolation of this group of children.

Interviewees

Two groups of interviewees took part in the survey: 50 Romani refugee parents and 50 refugee children who attend school. The survey was carried out in a settlement in Skopje with the highest concentration of Romani refugees from Kosovo. The parents who have children in primary school and one of their children were questioned (research principle of visiting every third house). Since they often move and there is no possibility to identify them among the other inhabitants, part of the participants were chosen by chain questioning (the interviewee being questioned indicates another potential interviewee).

Interviewees – Romani refugee children

56% of the participants are male, whereas 44% are female, and most of them (94%) live with both parents. More than half of the participants (60%) attend “Brakja Ramiz i Hamid” primary school, 14% attend “26 Juli” primary school, whereas 26% attend “As Makarenko” school for adults. Most of the interviewees (72%) attend the first, second and third grade, and only a small number of them are included in the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh grade.

5. The Committee further states that “Article 2 of the Child Rights Convention and Article 3 (e) of the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education confirms the non-discrimination principles for everyone of school age in the entire country, including the non-citizens. Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights General Comment – The Right to Education, 8 December, 1999, paragraph 11-14, 34

6. Information obtained in the interview with the president of the Refugee Committee in Macedonia, Mr. Džavit Beriša (April, 2006)

Interviewees – Romani parents refugees

64% of the refugee parents are female, and 36% are male. All the participants come from Kosovo and are at the average age of 37, with the youngest being 19 and the oldest being 63. The sample was rather heterogeneous with regards to their educational level. The largest group (36%) has no education, 30% are partly educated and only few have completed primary, secondary and higher education.

Instruments

Before the survey, a focus group comprised of parents and refugee children was held in order to acquire a general impression about the situation and integration problems of Romani refugees from Kosovo. The conclusions of the focus group and the experience of the Expert Group on Education of the European Centre for Minority Issues helped create two questionnaires for the survey needs: one each for the parents and the children. The questionnaire for the parents consists of demographic information, questions about school attendance (including the reasons for irregular attendance), information about the learning conditions of their children, their opinion about the quality of their children's education and suggestions about the improvement of the education of the refugee children.

Similarly, the questionnaire for the refugee children was created after having held the focus group. The questionnaire consists of questions about the children's education, the languages they speak at home and at school, their experience with the other children and their expectations about school. Before the survey started, a pilot survey was conducted with several interviewees in order to try out the questionnaire.

The survey process

The Expert Group, previously trained to work with adults and children, carried out the survey. A member of the research team would interview the parent, while at the same time (in another room, to ensure privacy) another member would interview the child. Each of the interviewees was read the questions and was given additional explanation if needed. Special care was taken to explain the participants that the survey is voluntary and anonymous (they take part only if they wish so, and can give up without any consequences at any time). The survey was carried out in Macedonian or Romani language depending on the language the individual spoke. When needed, Albanian was used.

RESULTS

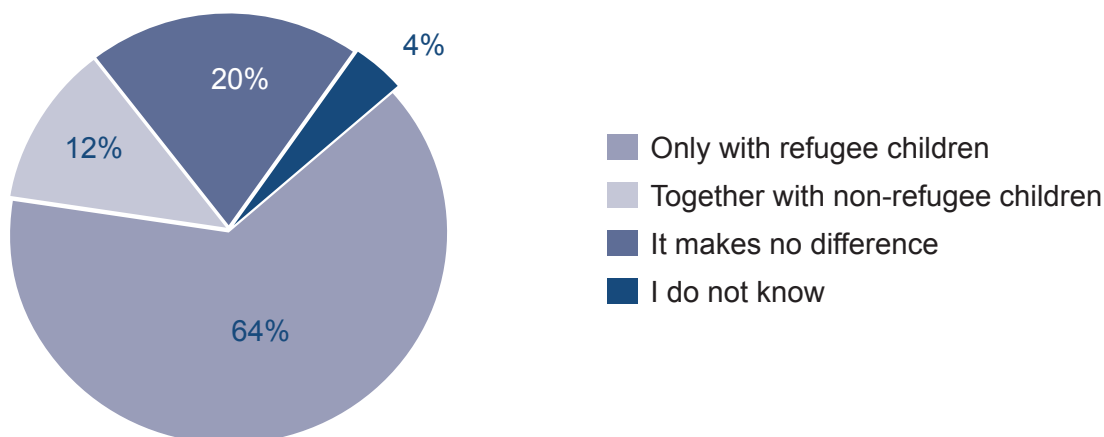
Romani children – refugees

Most of the children (94%) attend school in Macedonian, and 6% in Albanian. Being asked if it was difficult for them to learn in this language, 40% said that it was moderately difficult, 26% that it was not difficult at all, 18% that it was very difficult and 16% that it was difficult at the beginning. More than half of the children (52%) speak Romani at home, whereas the remaining 48% speak Albanian.

More than half of the children (76%) said that they attend classes that have both refugee children and children who are not refugees, and 24% said that they attend classes for refugee children only.⁷ 67% of the children who attend classes with non-refugee children

are from “As Makarenko” primary school, whereas the remaining 33% attend “Brakja Ramiz i Hamid” primary school.

More than half of the children who attend classes with non-refugees said that they would like to sit with a refugee classmate, and the others said they would like to sit with a non-refugee classmate or that it was not important to them.



Graph 1. Preferences of the children about the classroom composition

Being asked about the classmate’s preferences, most of the children said they would like to attend a class for refugee children only, and 20% said it made no difference. Only a small number of them have a negative attitude, i.e. would prefer to be with non-refugee children only.

Being asked to explain why they would like to learn with refugee children only, 37.5% said that it is because the other children bully them, whereas the others said either that their classmates insult them because they speak Albanian or they feel better that way because the refugee children know each other.

Since we think participation in school activities is a segment of integration, we asked the children if they held any position in the class or whether they take part in extracurricular activities. Most of the children (76%) said that they have never even been suggested for a class leader or any other similar position. Also, 42% said they do not take part in extracurricular activities, whereas 20% said there are no such activities in their school. 66% of the total number of interviewees said they have never had the chance to represent their school outside own surroundings, whereas 18% have experienced this possibility. The small number of interviewees who have represented their school is also a reflection of the number of pupils among them with outstanding results.

7. The information we got from the children about this question does not correspond with the information we got from the parents

Most of the children (82%) think that the teachers take notice when they raise their hands, 84% of the children say teachers help them learn the material, 82% say teachers are willing to give additional explanation if something is not clear. A great number of the children (76%) think teachers are objective in assigning grades, 10% think the teachers are sometimes objective, and only 6% think teachers are not objective in grading, whereas the remaining could not judge teachers from this aspect. Also, only a small number of children say teachers personally have insulted them, whereas 18% say teachers insult the whole class (like *"you Gypsies."* *"You are refugees, get out of here..."* or similar) or threaten to complain to the school principal.

Being asked how their classmates treat the refugee children, 41% of the participants said they threaten them, and a large number of them (25%) said they insult them. Most of the respondents think this happens because they are refugees and do not speak Romani. About 70% of the participants said they get along well with the non-refugee children, whereas the remaining 10% said they do not get along well with them. Beating is stated as the most frequent reason for this.

Half of the respondents said they prefer to play with refugee children outside school, 16% said they prefer non-refugee children, and 32% say it makes no difference to them who they play with. Only one child said he / she does not like playing with anyone.

About half of the children (46%) say their classmates never visit them at home, explaining it with the distance between their homes, and the fear that the other children might tease those classmates because they associate with refugee children. A significant number (18%) said the non-refugee children completely ignore them.

As many as 28% of the refugee children do not visit the non-refugee children in their home due to embarrassment or fear to be rejected. In contrast to the real situation, 84% of the interviewees say they like visiting non-refugee children in their homes, and 80% said they like doing homework together. However more than half of the interviewees claim their classmates often assault refugee children. Most of the children explain this as a result of the fact that they are refugees.

Most of the interviewees (85%) who were victims to classmates' assaults report that teachers react in these situations and undertake certain measures (mostly reprimand them, beat or threaten the bullies, and often teachers talk to the children and advise them not to fight in the future). In spite of all this, 84% of the children said they like it at school, and 68% said they feel accepted in their surroundings .

30% of the participants said they were insulted or ridiculed outside school. The children state that neighbours, shopkeepers, children from the neighborhood, and children with whom respondents do not get along well are the ones who do this most frequently. Most of the participants think that they are insulted or ridiculed because they speak a different language (96%) and because they are refugees (20%).

In spite of the claim that they feel accepted, being asked whether they would like to stay and live in Macedonia, almost half of the children said they would not like to live in Macedonia, because of the frequent moving (26.6%), the wish to go to a third country (23.3%) or to return to Kosovo (16.6%).

Romani refugee parents

The results obtained in the survey with the parents show that the Romani refugee families tend to be large. 20% of the surveyed households contain 5 members, 30% 6 members, 14% seven, and there are cases where the households contain eight or nine members. More than half of the participants have three or four children, 16% have five children, 8% six and 8% seven children.

More than half of the respondents live with the entire family or a part of it, in 30m² or less, 30% live in 30-50m², and only 8% live in over 50m². Most of the participants think they live in bad or very bad conditions, whereas a smaller number (30%) think they live in good conditions, and only 2% think that they live in very good conditions.

All of the interviewed parents have children who attend school. The greatest number of them (82%) has one or two children who attend school, 14% have three, whereas 4% have five children who attend school or who are at that age.

As many as 50% of the parents said they have school-age children who do not attend school. Most of them (68%) have one, 8% have two and 24% have three school-age children who do not attend school. The analysis shows that most of the participants who have school-age children who do not attend school are themselves either without any education, have finished just a part of primary education, or have completed primary education.

Chart 1. The reasons for the school-age children not to attend school

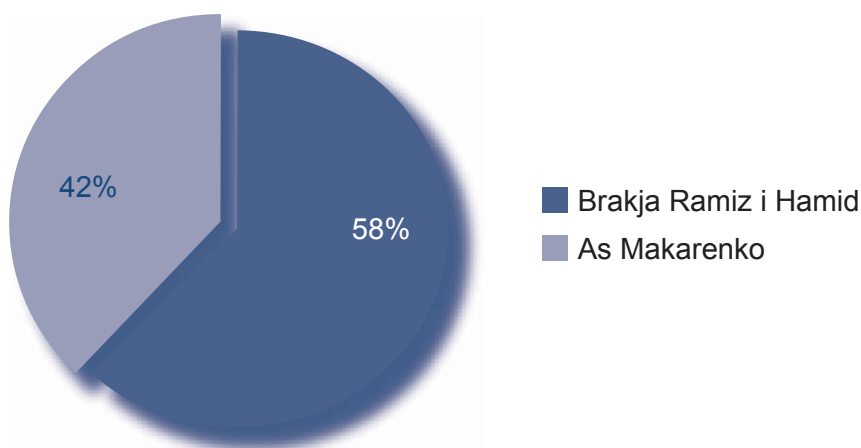
Reasons	Yes		No		I don't know		Total	
	indi viduals	%	indi viduals	%	indi viduals	%	indi viduals	%
Lack of money	9	36	16	64	/	/	25	100
Lack of motivation on the part of the child	5	20	20	80	/	/	25	100
No documents for school enrollment	4	16	21	84	/	/	25	100
The children do not speak the language of instruction	4	16	20	80	1	4	25	100
Abuse by teachers	1	4	22	88	2	8	25	100
Abuse by principal	4	16	19	76	2	8	25	100
I think he/she does not need school	1	4.2	24		/	/	25	100
Not accepted by classmates	14	56	10	40	1	4	25	100
Bullying	16	64	8	32	1	4	25	100
Fear	4	16	21	84	/	/	25	100

Most of the parents say that the main reason for their children not to attend school is because they are not accepted by their classmates (56%) and bullying (64%). Less than a half of the participants say that finances are the main reason (36%) as well as the lack of motivation on the part of the child (20%). Only a few of them said that abuse by the principal, fear, language ignorance and lack of documents are the reasons for their child not to attend the school. Other reasons are teacher abuse or the attitude that the child does not need education at all.

The children need proper learning conditions at home if they are to achieve success at school. Most of the parents (62%) said their children do not have proper learning conditions at home. Most of the participants said they needed additional help for their children to attend school. 89.5% of them claim they need help in materials (school supplies, clothes for the children, etc.).

It is well known that refugee children need psychological and social help in order to adapt more easily to the new conditions and to overcome the trauma and the stress caused by having to leave their homes. Being asked whether their children need this kind of help (consulting a psychologist, pedagogues etc.), more than half of the participants (54%) say their children need support. It is remarkable that only 8% say their children have received this kind of professional help.

The integration of the refugee children cannot be accomplished if they study in isolation from other children. More than half of the interviewees (56%) say their children attend classes with refugee children only.



Graph 2. Schools that have a separate building for the refugee children classrooms

Many of the parents (48%) reported their children attend classes in separate buildings. Most of these cases (58%) refer to the children who attend “Brakja Ramiz and Hamid” primary school, whereas the remaining 42% said their children attend “As Makarenko” (Graph 2).

Table 2 presents the parents’ opinion about the education their children receive.

Table 2. Parents' opinion about the education their children receive

	Fully agree		Partly agree		Do not agree at all		I do not know		Total	
	indi viduals	%	indi viduals	%	indi viduals	%	indi viduals	%	indi viduals	%
Teachers distinguish between your children and the other children	8	16	13	26	21	42	8	16	50	100
Teachers work well with your children	30	60	15	30	2	4	3	6	50	100
Teachers grade your children objectively	30	60	13	26	1	2	6	12	50	100
Your children need additional explanation	42	84	4	8	2	4	2	4	50	100

Some of the participants (16%) agree that the teachers distinguish between the refugee children and the other children, whereas less than half of them (42%) think the teachers make no such distinction. More than half of the participants (60%) think that teachers work well with their children, whereas 30% gave the teachers an average rating. A similar number of 60% thinks that teachers assess the children objectively, whereas 84% think their children need additional explanation to the material.

Only 16% said their children are frequently visited by the classmates, whereas most of the participants (84%) said their children are seldom or never visited. Here, we would like to point out that the information obtained from the parents differs from that obtained from the children. Namely, only 46% of the children said their schoolmates do not visit them at home. A similar number of 86% said their children seldom or never do homework with their classmates.

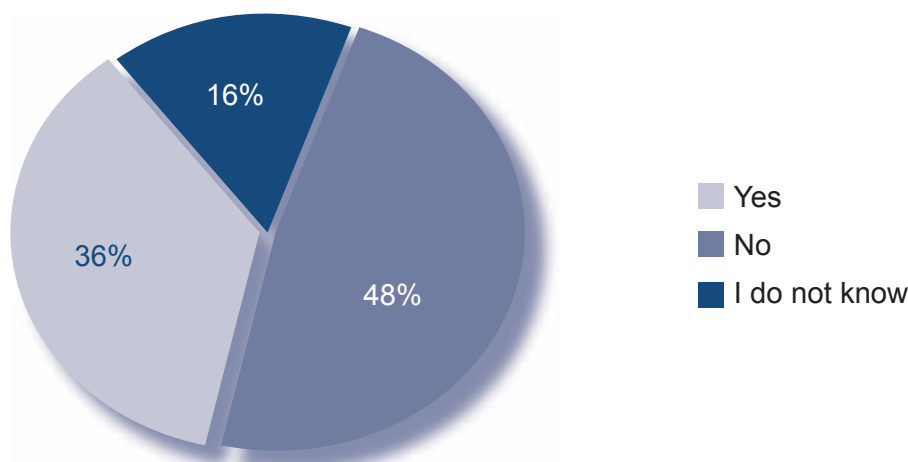
The results in Chart 3 show that only 16% of the children complain to their parents to insults from the school staff. About half of the participants recall their children complaining about insults by the classmates (44%) or the local people (42%).

Table 3. Who insults the children?

The children are insulted by:	Yes		No		I do not know		Total	
	indi viduals	%	indi viduals	%	indi viduals	%	indi viduals	%
School personnel	8	16	38	76	4	8	50	100
Classmates	22	44	25	50	3	6	50	100
Local people	21	42	28	56	1	2	50	100

38% of the parents said their children associate mostly with refugee children, 12% they associate with non-refugee children, and the largest number (46%) said their children associate with both groups of children.

Being asked what they think is necessary for a better and more successful education of their children, most of the parents (56%) said they need better living conditions, some of them (12%) said they need to attend regular schools and mixed classes, and 6% said it is important to prevent bullying and discrimination of the refugee children, whereas the remaining number think they need additional teaching, acceptance by the environment and parents' engagement about their children. An important element for successful social integration is inclusion in social events together with the knowledge of the local mentality, habits and the language of the environment one lives in. Most of the parents (90%) find it important for their children to integrate with non-refugee children. Also, most of the participants think it is crucial for their children to be aware of the customs and habits of the ethnic groups they live with (84%), and to learn the local languages. Since adaptation and integration of the children cannot be accomplished unless their parents feel a part of the community, we asked the adult participants if they would like to stay in Macedonia. About half of them (48%) do not want to stay in the Republic of Macedonia, 36% want to stay, and a small number of 16% are not sure whether they want to stay in Macedonia. Lack of living conditions and unemployment are the main reasons why more than a half of the participants (59%) who would not like to stay in the Republic of Macedonia or are not sure if they want to stay.



Graph 3. Participants' opinion about staying in Macedonia

Only 15% of the parents said they would like to leave to a third country. The other reasons for not wanting to stay in Macedonia are: frequent insults and rejection of their children, uncertainty and the wish to return to their country.

DISCUSSION

The data show that almost half of the participants have school-age children that do not attend school. Most of them have started, but failed to complete their education. Apart from the bad living conditions and the shortage of the necessary learning materials, which we can assume to be an obstacle for the children's regular school attendance and to study effectively, there are other reasons, which are even more difficult to deal with. Namely, the refugee children are not well accepted by their non-refugee peers. A large number of them say they have been bullied and insulted by their classmates, and often even physically attacked. This results in a loss of enthusiasm for learning while some of them even refuse to continue the education. Some of the children find it very difficult because the others see them as "different", Albanian - speaking and arriving from elsewhere.

The parents, who could act as a stability factor in their children's integration, are largely helpless due to the constant pressure of basic survival problems and unable to cope with the difficulties stemming from poor living conditions, a low level of education, ignorance of the Macedonian language and the limited skills they possess. Therefore, they often seem passive, in spite of being aware that their children do not receive the same treatment as the other children around them.⁸

The survey shows that in addition to all the previously mentioned factors that contribute to the isolation of the refugee children, this situation is greatly supported by the policy for their education. A great part of them not only study in poor environments, but are also isolated in classes where there are no non-refugee children. Such an uninclusive environment not only prevents integration, but it also sends a message to the others that the refugee children are "the other", a special category that has to be set apart from the rest of the children.

Despite the fact that more than half of the refugee children feel accepted in their surroundings, the actual data say that they remain closed to the local population. It is most probable that the children psychologically defend themselves by adapting to isolation, so eventually they take it as normal. Moreover, the insults and the threats contribute to self-exclusion: most of the children say they would like to study in classes with refugee children only.

Fortunately, both the parents and the children are pleased with the work of the school staff. Still, although the children do not feel discriminated, it seems that there is no serious effort to include them in school clubs or to stimulate their participation in the class as

8. For example, parents report that 56% of their children attend classes only for refugee children, while according to the children the number is much smaller (24%). Such a discrepancy in the data creates the impression that the parents are uninformed about/uninterested in what happens to their children at school.

class leaders, treasurers etc. Also there is no effort, or it remains without effect, to create a co-operative atmosphere between the non-refugee and refugee students. Although the refugee children want to associate and study together with the non-refugee children after classes, this seldomly happens in reality.

We view this survey as just a beginning of addressing the problems and the questions that concern Romani refugees, a vulnerable group whose social integration is of crucial importance as a basis for overcoming experienced traumas and for beginning the life to which they are entitled to as persons forced to flee their homes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The fieldwork results show that the integration of refugees in the Republic of Macedonia is a slow process. So even after 7 years the Kosovo refugees have not been integrated and there was no consideration for their cultural, social and educational needs.

In light of the facts cited above, the Expert Group on Education recommends that:

1. The refugee children to be integrated in mixed classes in the schools, to prevent their isolation and segregation.
2. All refugee children of school age (i.e., 7-15 years old) to be included in the educational process. To this end, Macedonian educational experts should ensure that refugee children have equal access to a healthy and proper school, with special help for the children who have left school because of discrimination and bullying by their peers.
3. The Ministry of Education allot funds for textbooks and school supplies in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.
4. Macedonian educational authorities to develop and implement suitable policy in order to protect refugee children from discrimination and bullying. This should include training of teachers about the nature of the non-discrimination norms, the needs of the refugee children, and the procedures for investigating, reporting and preventing discrimination;
5. Macedonian authorities to make an effort to ensure proper living conditions for the Kosovo refugees, since their frequent moving prevents the integration of their children in the educational system;
6. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World Bank or bilateral donors to issue loans to Macedonia to build collective centers that will meet the needs of normal living on the part of the refugees from Kosovo.

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**ROMS' AWARENESS ABOUT FAMILY
PLANNING AND SEXUALLY
TRANSMITTED DISEASES**



Introduction

The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia guarantees the right to health protection and the right to health improvement for its citizens. The right is supposed to apply to all its citizens, including Roms. However, Roms have some distinctive features compared to the general national picture of the state of affairs in the area of health. These features appear as obstacles for realizing the guaranteed rights, as well as in the form of a worse state of health compared to the citizens of the other ethnic groups who live in the Republic of Macedonia. The reasons for the generally poor health condition are: the poverty of the Romani people, poor living conditions, lack of sanitary infrastructure, and low level of education, as well as some values and habits of the culture and tradition that are relevant for health. Namely, the health situation of the Romani people reflects several traditional values which result in early marriages, lack of health education and education about reproductive health, insufficient education of the Romani women about pregnancy, baby care, and some taboos that are deeply rooted in tradition.

Several surveys illustrate these facts. A survey conducted for UNICEF shows birth rate among Roms to be twice as high as the average in Macedonia, with child mortality also twice as high as in the other ethnic groups (UNICEF, 1996). The UNICEF survey carried out in the Šuto Orizari settlement in Skopje shows that 3% of the Romani women who live there gave birth to their first child between the ages of 12 and 14, 41% between 15-18 (UNICEF, 1996). Another survey by UNICEF and the World Bank shows that 41% of young Romani families have 3-5 children, 3% have more than 5 children and 56% have 1-2 children (UNICEF and the World Bank, 2000).

The surveys conclude that lack of family planning is one of the more important reasons for the situation. This, in turn, is connected to the habits and the awareness about contraception, awareness of sexually transmitted diseases, etc.

Bearing these facts in mind, the Expert Group on Health at the European Centre for Minority Issues decided to carry out a survey in order to get a more precise picture about Roms' awareness of these issues. The survey results can indicate the solution to many crucial problems, thus contributing to improving the state of health of the Romani people in the Republic of Macedonia.

METHOD

Interviewees

640 respondents, 320 women and 320 men, took part in the survey. The respondents were aged 18-45 (of reproductive age). A small group of 40 minors aged 15-17 were also interviewed in order to get information about their habits and opinions about the sexually transmitted diseases (STD) as well as about family planning.

The survey was carried out in the cities in the Republic of Macedonia where at least 3% of the population consists of Roms. 344 people were interviewed in Skopje, 60 in Kumanovo, 56 in Tetovo, 60 in Prilep, 56 in Štip and 24 in Vinica.

The respondents were interviewed directly in their homes, in every third house in a randomly chosen street in areas where the Romani population lives concentrated. The interviews were voluntary, and the respondents were guaranteed anonymity.

Instruments

The research team prepared a questionnaire to get information about family planning within the Romani population, the usage of contraception and awareness about sexually transmitted diseases. The questionnaire was prepared in two versions: one for men and another for women. The men's version consists of 26 questions, whereas the women's version consists of 31 questions.

The questionnaire was prepared in Macedonian and its practicality (whether the questions and the directions are clearly formulated) was tested in a pilot survey.

The questions were grouped by topics:

- Questions about demographic features and respondents' initial opinion about the number of children before they get married;
- Questions that cover specific topics related to male and female sexual health, such as whether they use contraception, abortions, gynecological check-ups;
- Questions about the awareness of contraception and sexually transmitted diseases.

The survey method

The field survey was carried out in the course of April and May 2006. The members of the Expert Group on Health carried out the survey. The interview took between 20-40 minutes. The interviewer would read the respondent each question, ticking the answer given by the respondent.

SURVEY RESULTS

The survey results show that Roms live in extremely poor living conditions. For example, 26% of the numerous families live within 10-30 square meters. The remaining 47% live within up to 50 square meters, whereas only 27% live in homes larger than 50 square meters.

Beyond living in poor housing conditions, Roms' monthly income is insufficient to meet their basic needs. 30% of the families receive up to 2000 denars monthly income, 39.5% live on up to 5000 denars monthly income, and only a small number of 21.5% receive more than 5000 denars. It is alarming that 9.5% of the participating families have no monthly incomes at all.

A) Survey results: women

1. Number of children

To find out whether the high number of children in the Romani families results from their early marriages, each of the interviewed women was asked: "*How old were you when you got married?*" These are the results from their answers: 52.5% of the interviewed Romani women got married between 12-17, whereas 47.5% got married after the age of 18.

In order to ascertain the number of Romani women who planned the number of children before they got married, we asked them: "*How many children did you want to have before you got married?*" The highest number of the women, 68.1%, said they wanted to have 2 children, 10.7% three children, only 13.4% wanted to have only one child, and 5.6% did not consider this question at all.

In order to find out whether the husbands plan the number of children before marriage, we asked the women: “How many children did your husband want to have before you got married?”. 57.8% said their husbands wanted to have two children, 11.3% three children, 9.6% more than three children, 6.3% one child, and 15% of the husbands did not discuss children at all.

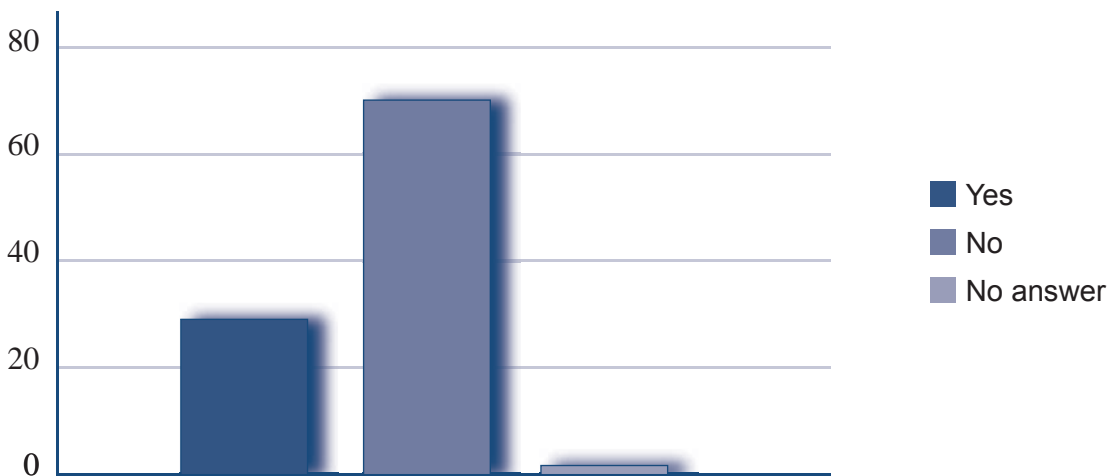
The largest group of respondents, 22.2%, now have two children, 20.9% have three children, and the remaining 35.3% have more than three children, illustrating the discrepancy with their expectations before they got married (especially in the case of the women who now have more than three children). Another 17.5% of the respondents have one child, whereas 4.1% have no children.

Being asked, “Do you plan any more children?” 18.7% said yes, 66.3% said they would not like any more children, 13.7% were not sure, and 1.3% refused to answer.

There is a connection between the number of the children in the family and the educational level of the parents. Hence, 51.5% of the respondents have no education, and they have 3-4 children, the 40% who have accomplished primary education have two children, and the 8.5% who have accomplished secondary education have an average of two children.

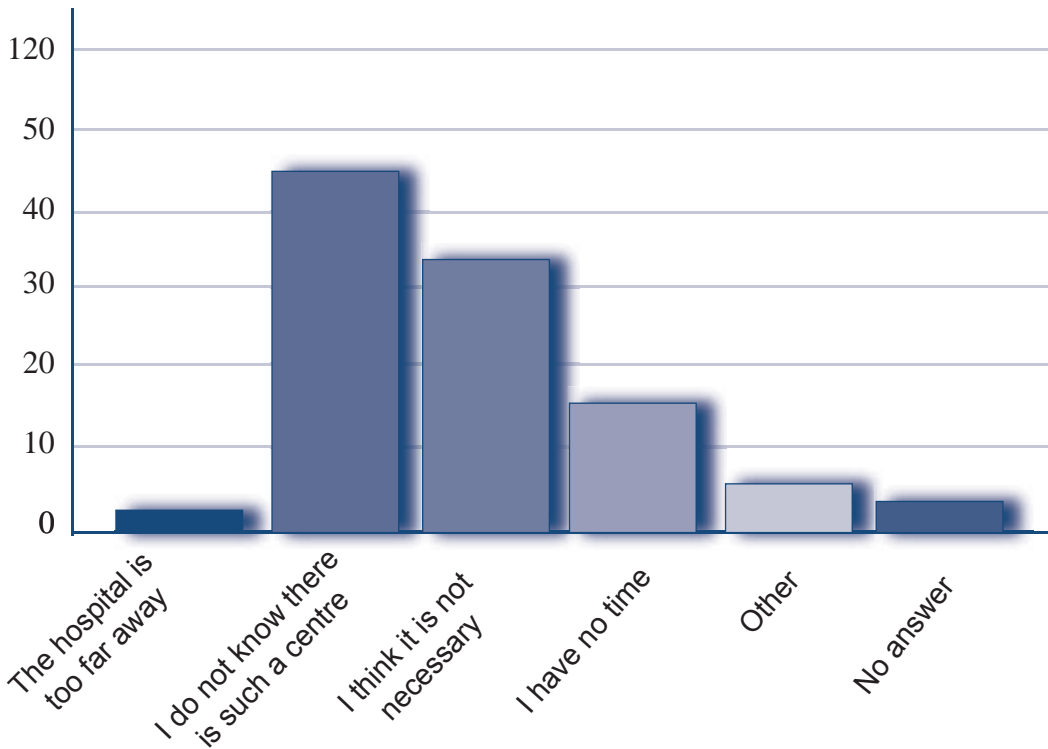
2. Gynecological check-ups and gynecological advising centres

Being asked, “Have you ever visited a gynecological advising centre?” about a third of the respondents said they have, whereas two thirds have never done that (Graph1). The remaining 1.9% refused to answer the question.



Graph 1. Visiting a gynecological advising centre

The reasons for not visiting a gynecological advising centre are presented in the following Graph. It can be clearly seen that the main reason why most of the respondents have not visited this centre is the fact that they were not informed that such an institution exists (Graph 2).



Graph 2. Reasons for not visiting gynecological advising centre

Being asked if they visit a gynecologist, 66.3% said they do, 32.5% said they do not, and 1.2% refused to answer the question. 27.5% of them visit the gynecologist once a year, 7.8% twice a year, 6.3% have regular check-ups more than twice a year, 35% go only when necessary (for pregnancy or illness) and 23.4% refused to say how many times a year they visit a gynecologist.

Being asked for the reasons of not visiting the gynecologist at all, 25.7% of the women who reported not visiting a gynecologist at all cited lack of money, 10% lack of time, 22.8% do not have the habit, 18% think they do not need it, 4.4% are not allowed by their husband, 2.6% because the gynecologist is a man, 7.7% because they feel embarrassed and 8.8% are afraid.

Being asked "*Whom they ask for consent to visit the gynecologist?*", more than half, 53.4%, said they decide themselves. 55% answered they ask their husbands. Only 5% of the respondents ask their mothers-in-law, whereas 3.4% ask their in-laws and the husband. The women who have to ask the family members to visit a gynecologist are less likely to go to regular gynecological check-ups.

Being asked "*Which sex do you prefer your gynecologist to be?*" more than a half of the respondents, 51.2%, said they prefer a female gynecologist, 8% prefer a male gynecologist, 39.4% said they do not mind, whereas 1.4% refused to answer.

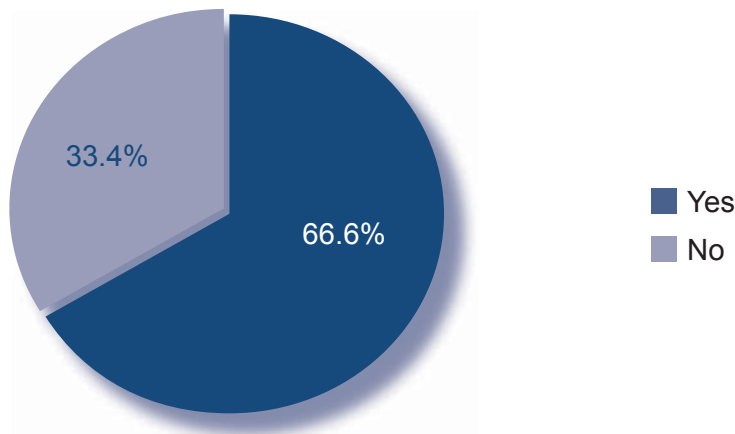
3. Contraceptive use and unplanned pregnancies

In this part of the questionnaire the respondents were asked: whether they used protection from unplanned pregnancy. 40% of the respondents said they use protection, 45.6% do not use protection, and 13.4% use protection from time to time, whereas 1% refused to answer the question.

43.8% of the women who said they use protection take pills, 18.8 % said their husbands use condoms, 12.5 % use injections, 14.1 % use an intrauterine device or diaphragm, and 7.8 % do it by interrupting intercourse.

45.6% of those who said they do not use protection said they do not know where to buy it, 20.3% cited lack of money, 27% report that their husbands do not allow them to use protection, 27.5% do not want to use protection, 12.5% do not know how to use it, 21.6% do not use protection because they are embarrassed to ask for protection and 17.8% are afraid to use protection.

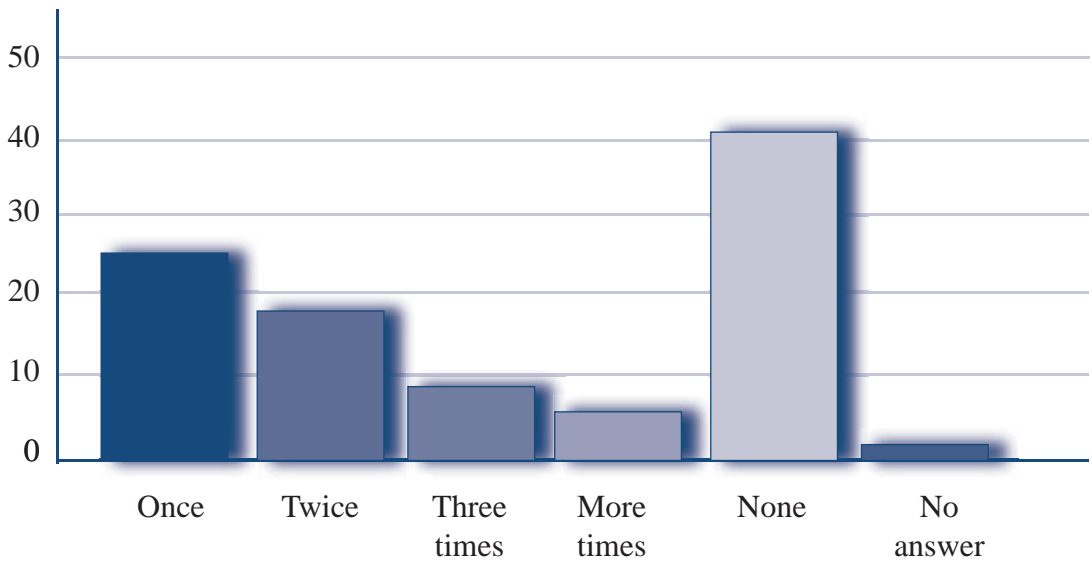
As a result of this there is a high frequency of unexpected pregnancies. Graph 3. shows that 66% of the respondents have had at least one unexpected pregnancy.



Graph 3. Unexpected pregnancy

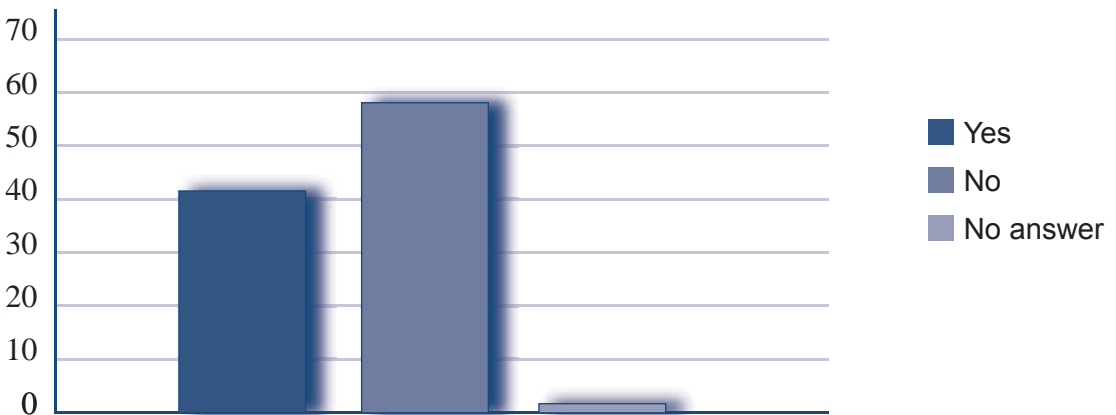
25% of the women have had one abortion, 18.1% two, 7.5% three, 5.9% more than three, yet most of them, 41% have not had any abortions, whereas 2.5% refused to answer the question. The main reason for the unplanned pregnancies in the Romani population is the lack of money to buy contraception (Graph 4).

Only 7.5% of the women decide themselves if they will have an abortion, 10.9% said that the man takes this decision, 38.8% said they decide together with their husbands, and the remaining 42.8% have to ask the in-laws and the husband.



Graph 4. Number of deliberate abortions

A significant proportion (41.9%) of the respondents said that they have had to carry through an unplanned pregnancy because they did not have the money for an abortion.



Graph 5. Pregnancy due to lack of money for an abortion

4. Awareness

The respondents were asked, “*What is family planning for you?*” Their reactions are presented in Table 1. Although a significant number of them did not know whether the offered answers in the questionnaire are a part of family planning, most of them tried to answer the question but chose the wrong answer. It is impressive that as many as 35% of the respondents gave the wrong answer to the question that family planning includes the decision about the number of the children in the family and when to have them.

Table 1. Romani women's opinion about family planning

Awareness about family planning	Wrong (%)	Correct (%)	Does not know%
When and whom to marry	14,7	62,5	22,8
The decision where and whom to live with	3,4	77,8	18,8
How to spend the family budget	12,2	68,1	19,7
The number of children and when to have them	14,1	65,0	20,9
Where the children will be educated	21,9	51,4	24,1

Being asked: “*Have you ever heard of any diseases (infections) of the female reproductive organs?*” 78.1% said yes, 21.9% said they have never heard of such ailments.

81.1% of the respondents had heard about AIDS, 20.6% about gonorrhoea, 4.4% about HPV (humano papiloma virus), 5.6% about chlamydia and 7.2% about candida, whereas the remaining number have never heard of these sexually transmitted infections.

The respondents were asked to answer positively or negatively whether sexual infections could be transmitted in various ways. The results are presented in Table 2. We can conclude that the respondents are generally aware of the ways in which sexual infections can be transmitted (sexual intercourse or infected gynecological instruments), but a great deal of them are not sure about the other alternatives or have wrong impressions (Table 2).

Table 2. How can sexual diseases be transmitted?

Possible ways of transmitting sexual infections	Wrong %	Correct %	Do not know %
Kiss	51,6	19,4	29,0
Handshake	58,4	13,8	27,8
<i>Sexual intercourse*</i>	3,7	81,3	15,0
Through air	53,4	14,4	32,2
Through cutlery	54,3	15,6	30,3
At a swimming pool	28,4	32,8	38,8
Public toilets	17,8	55,9	26,3
<i>Infected gynecological instruments*</i>	17,5	60,5	21,9

* In Table 2, the correct answers to the question are given in italics

The majority of the respondents, 87.8%, have never attended lectures on family planning, and 11.6% have attended lectures that included topics on family planning. Only 15% of the respondents have heard about the organizations which administer these programs, whereas 85% of them have never heard of them.

At the same time, 94% of the respondents approve of educational programs that would inform the women about family planning and their reproductive health, 4.7% think these would be useless, and 1.3% did not answer the question.

B) Survey results: men

The greatest number of the interviewed men, 50%, have completed primary education, 27% have no education, and 23% have completed secondary education. 25% of them got married before the age of 18, 18% when they were 18, and the remaining 57% got married after they were 18.

1. Number of children

6% of the men who got married before they were 18 had their first child at the same age, 17% had their first child at the age of 21, whereas the remaining 77% had their first child after they were 21.

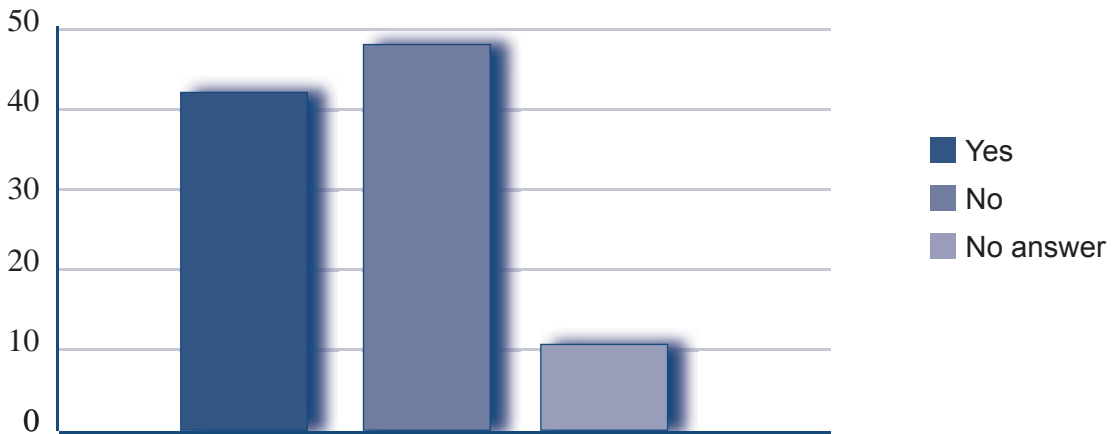
Being asked: "*How many children did you want to have before you got married?*" 51.3% said they wanted to have two children, 23.4% three, 21.6% more than three, whereas only 3.7% said they wanted to have one child only.

Being asked: "*How many children their wives wanted to have before they got married?*", 60.3% said they wanted to have two children, 24.7% three, 11.8% more than three and 3.2% only one.

At the moment when the survey was carried out, most of the adult male respondents, 33.1%, had two children, 24.7% had three, 16.6% had more than three, 20.9% had one child and 4.7% had no children. A quarter of the respondents planned to have more children, whereas the remaining 75% did not plan to have any more children.

Being asked: "*Who decides on the number of children in the family?*", 80.3% said they decide together with their wives, 11.9% decide themselves, 6.5% decide with the other family members, and 1.3% said their wives make the decision.

2. Contraceptive use



Graph 6. Using a condom

Graph 6. shows that as many as 47.7% of the respondents do not use condoms at all. 17% of them said they cannot afford condoms, 25% are ashamed to buy them, 48% say they feel uncomfortable, 29% as their partners refuse to use them, and 17% do not use condoms for other reasons.

Our findings indicate that condom use is not in correlation with the amount of the family income. Namely, 42% of the respondents whose monthly income is up to 2000 denars use condoms, 51% of them do not use any protection, whereas 7% refused to answer the question. Unlike this group, fewer of the group whose monthly income is up to 5000 denars, 38%, use condoms, and more of them, 55% do not use any protection at all. In each of those categories, 7% of respondents refused to answer the question. Among respondents whose monthly income exceeds 5000 denars, 47% use condoms, 34% do not use any protection and 19% did not answer the question.

3. Awareness

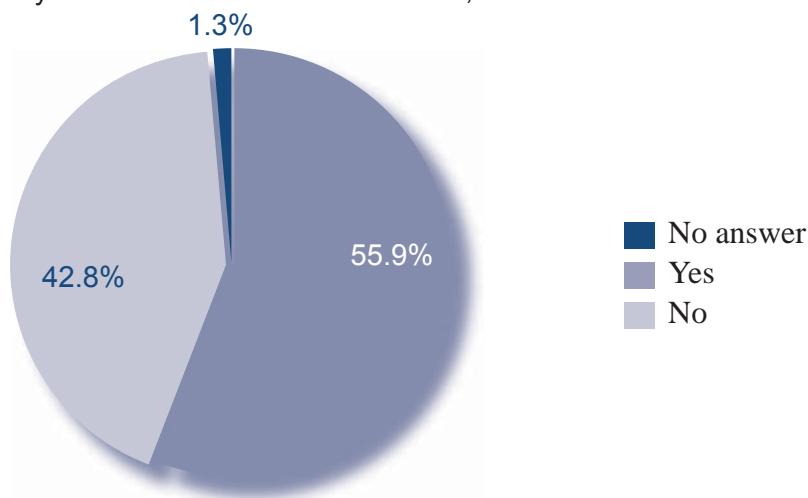
Table 3 presents men's answers as to what family planning means. The misunderstandings about these questions are similar to those of women, although fewer men replied that

they have no idea about the concept at all.

Table 3. Romani men’s opinion about family planning

	Wrong %	Correct%	Do not know%
When and whom to marry	10,9	73,4	15,7
The decision where and whom to live with	2,4	86,3	11,3
How to spend the family budget	7,2	77,5	15,3
The number of children and when to have them	6,3	80,9	12,8
Where the children will be educated	12,5	72,2	15,3

Being asked: “How can you best protect your wife from an unplanned pregnancy?” most of the respondents, 53.8%, said they can do it by using a condom, 20% said by interrupting sexual intercourse, 4.7% by abstaining during the so-called fertile days, 2.5% thought voluntary sterilisation as the best solution, and 19% did not answer the question.



Graph 7. Men’s awareness about the reproductive organs infections

Graph 7. shows that an alarming percentage of 55.9% have never heard about infections of the reproductive organs.

The respondents were asked to decide whether some statements about sexually transmitted diseases were correct or incorrect (Table 4). The table shows that a large number of the respondents are wrong about the transmission of sexual infections. Thus, 29.4% of the respondents believe that sexual infections can be transmitted in the public toilets, whereas only 29.5% believe that they can be transmitted by a kiss. Although most

of the respondents are aware that sexual infections can be transmitted through sexual intercourse, 7.5% of them are not informed about this. An additional 5.3% think that transmission of sexual infections cannot occur through sexual intercourse. In addition, a large percentage of the respondents thought these infections could be transmitted in some impossible ways.

Table 2. Men's opinion about the ways of transmitting sexual infections

Ways of transmitting sexual infections	Wrong %	Correct %	Do not know %
Kiss	52,8	25,9	21,3
Handshake	58,8	23,4	17,8
<i>Sexual intercourse*</i>	5,3	87,2	7,5
Through air	60,6	16,6	22,8
Cutlery	60,3	13,8	25,9
At the swimming pool	49,4	19,7	30,9
In a public toilet	43,1	29,4	27,5

*Correct answers to the questions are italicized

96.6% of the respondents have heard about AIDS, 39.7% have heard about gonorea, 14.4% know what HPV (humano papiloma virus) is, 13.4% know about chlamydia, 17.5% know about candida, and the remaining number have never heard of these diseases.

There is a very low rate of attendance of Romani men at educational programmes for family planning and sexual infections, with only 5% of the adult male respondents having taken part in such programs, whereas 95% are not informed there is such a thing at all. In spite of the fact that they are not informed about this issue, 88.2% of Romani men approve of programs for family planning, 8.4% find them useless, and 3.4% did not answer the question.

Being asked: "*Have you heard which organizations carry out these programmes?*" only 8.8% answered positively, whereas 91.2% answered negatively.

Conclusions

The survey information leads to conclusions and recommendations for further action aimed at resolving certain problems faced by the Romani population.

- There is an alarming percentage of underage marriages.
- Much of the population lacks sufficient awareness concerning issues of reproductive health, leading to early or unwanted pregnancies which in turn result in unplanned children for lack of money for abortions.

- The important role of education in the family planning process with the Romani population was confirmed in the survey, since uneducated families tend to be the ones with many children.
- Women do not visit the gynecologist often enough because they are not used to it, they lack money, or they need agreement from the rest of the family.
- Romani women tend not to visit the gynecologist also because they are not informed about the gynecological centres in hospitals.
- Unplanned pregnancies are frequent because many do not know how to protect themselves.

Recommendations

- Lectures on underage marriage and family planning should be organized in schools or in support centres, with an eye to reducing underage marriages and the further social and economic problems which tend to accompany them;
- Regular check-ups of the population, and advisory centres that would offer preventive health education. The centres would offer advice about ways of transmission of and the importance of protection against sexual infections. In this manner, the population would be properly informed about condom use;
- Campaigns, seminars and workshops to inform the Romani population in the cities where they live;
- Activities for vulnerable groups in the annual programmes of the Ministry of Health aimed at improving the health situation of the Romani population.

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**ROMS' TRUST IN HEALTHCARE
INSTITUTIONS, THEIR EXPERIENCES
WITH THEM AND AWARENESS OF THE
RIGHTS TO HEALTH INSURANCE AND
PROTECTION**



Introduction

The low educational level, high rate of unemployment, inadequate housing, poor social and economic conditions and prejudices are part of the problems the Romani community in the Republic of Macedonia faces. These problems have been documented as cause for concern in several recent studies (ECMI, 2005; Lakinska-Popovska, 2000).

Most Roms live in sub-standard homes, in damp rooms, leading to frequent respiratory disorders (ECMI, 2005). The lack of competitiveness in the labor market results in a high rate of unemployment, which is 71.3% among able-bodied Roms. The low level of education, which unfortunately affects the youngest generation of Roms as well, reflects the quality of Roms' life in several ways in the field of health: through nutrition habits, vaccinations and regular check ups of children, and awareness about health and rights in the field of healthcare (ECMI, 2005). It is very likely that such a vulnerable position results in general distrust in healthcare institutions, which can further worsen the already bad conditions of the Romani population in this important segment of life.

The previously mentioned problems that Romani people encounter show the need for suitable steps to improve their health situation.

In the light of the recommendations and the activities listed in the Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia in the area of health protection, as well as of the fact that no research about the Roms' trust in healthcare institutions has been carried out, the Expert Group on Health established by the European Centre for Minority Issues has recognized the need to undertake research about Roms' trust in healthcare institutions and their awareness regarding their rights in the area of health protection and health insurance.

With this in mind, the research aims at collecting information about the degree of Roms' trust in healthcare institutions and their awareness of the rights in the area of health protection and health insurance. More precisely, the Expert Group on Health carried out a study from February to June 2006, to ascertain the situation of the Romani population in connection with health insurance, the degree of awareness about rights in the area of health protection and their trust in healthcare institutions.

The research was carried out in order to obtain results that will guide the activities focused on the improvement of the Roms' situation in Macedonia and the state institutions, and to carry out the action plans and to take part successfully in the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

RESEARCH METHOD

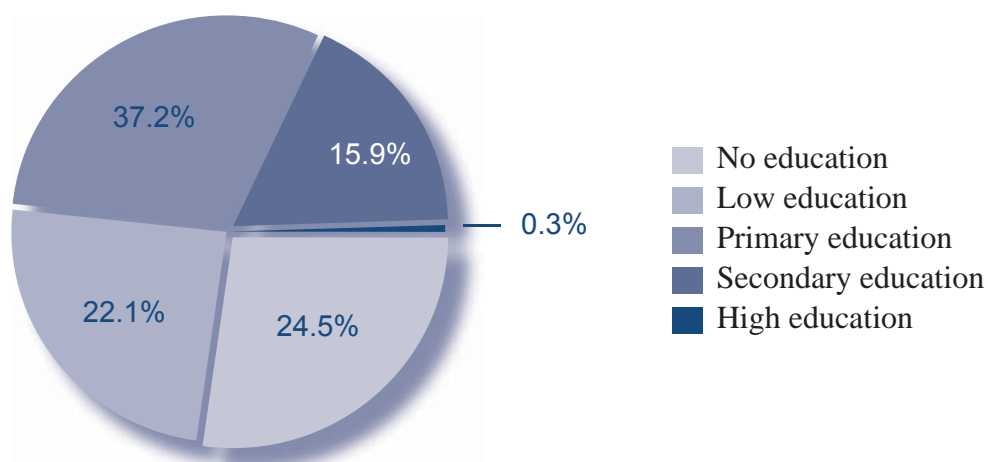
Interviewees

A research sample of Roms over 18 years old was used. The research was carried out in those cities where the Romani population exceeds 3%. 678 individuals were interviewed. The number of the interviewed individuals in each city corresponds to the number of Roms in each. The individuals were chosen by a rule agreed in advance to ensure a representative sample, using the door-to-door principle. The number of interviewed individuals by city is presented in Chart 1.

49% of the interviewed individuals are female, and 51% are men. The educational structure of the sample is presented in Graph 1.

Chart 1. Sample structure by city

	Number of individuals	%
Skopje	296	43%
Kumanovo	67	10%
Prilep	67	10%
Bitola	53	8%
Štip	47	7%
Tetovo	47	7%
Gostivar	34	5%
Kičevo	27	4%
Kočani	20	3%
Vinica	20	3%
Total	678	100%



Graph 1. Sample structure by education

Instruments

A questionnaire was used to measure the degree of awareness of rights in the area of health protection and health insurance. In order to check the clarity of the questions and to adapt them to the target group, which is characterized by its low level of education, the instrument was based on a pilot sample.

The questionnaire consisted of 31 questions. The first 5 questions, which record basic demographic information about the interviewee, are followed by questions about health insurance and trust in healthcare institutions. The final 5 questions are devoted to

establishing the individuals' awareness of their rights in accordance to the Law on Health Insurance and the Law on Retirement and Disability Insurance.

The research process

The interviews were carried out by the members of the Expert Group on Health, who were previously trained to interview and who are experienced in fieldwork. The field research was conducted from March to April 2006.

The interviewees were read the questions at the interviews. In areas where respondents spoke Romani, the interviews were conducted in that language. Respondents were also informed that their anonymity would be guaranteed.

3. RESULTS

1. Trust in healthcare institutions and relevant experience

As many as 89.4% of the participants answered positively to the question: "*Do you have health insurance?*" whereas only 10.6% of them answered negatively. When asked why they have not accomplished the right to health insurance 57.8% of respondents said that they have failed to register in the Employment Office or that they had failed to do so on time. Furthermore, a quarter of the participants cannot realize the right to health insurance since they lack necessary documents.

Chart 2. Reasons for lacking health insurance

Failing to register on time	31.0 %
Failing to register in the Employment Office	26.8 %
Lacking valid documents	26.8 %
Do not know how to do it	5.5 %
Others	4.2 %
No answer	5,7 %
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

Being asked where they first go when they are sick, 90.1% answered that they go to the doctor's. However quite a large number of the participants (6.4%) consult traditional alternative medicine.

The interviewees were asked where they first go when they get sick. As many as 6.4% of the participants answered that they first go to "quacks", regardless of the fact whether they later consult a doctor or do not see a doctor at all. This fact shows that even in the 21st century "quacks" take part in Roms' medical treatment, and what is more, they are of greatest importance for the health of a significant number of people.

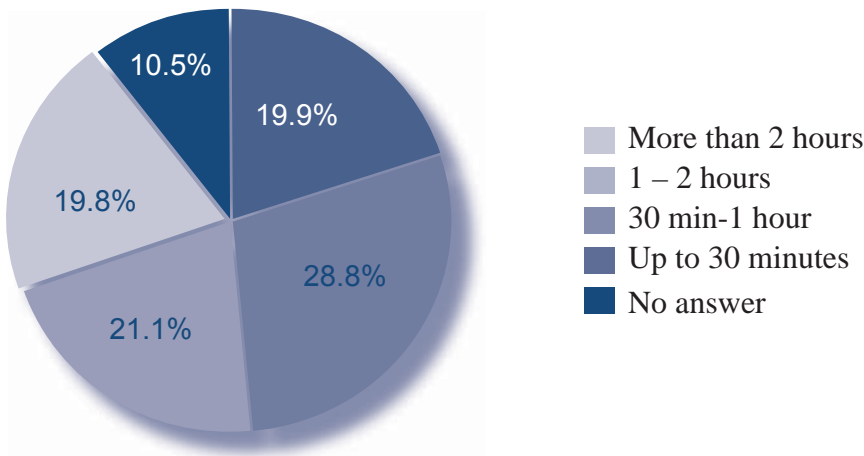
The interviewees evaluated the doctors and nurses who work in the state and private healthcare institutions according to their treatment. On a scale of 10 the doctors in the state healthcare institutions got an average of 4.86 ($\sigma=2.70$), whereas the doctors from the private healthcare got a much better average of 7.56 ($\sigma=2.29$). The family doctors got an average of 5.97 ($\sigma=2.92$) in the state healthcare institutions, whereas the ones

from the private practice got a considerably higher average of 7.65 ($\sigma=2.44$), which is the highest evaluation.

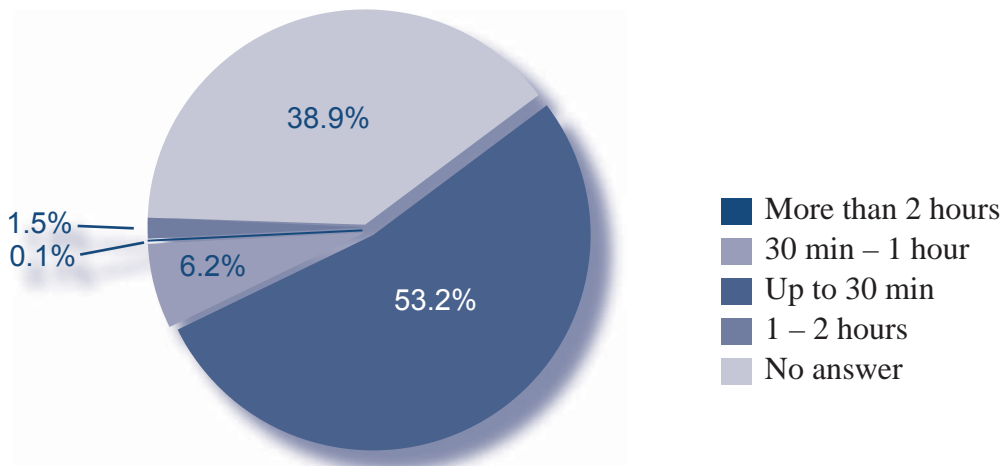
The nurses got an average of 4.80 ($\sigma=2.98$), or 7.15 ($\sigma=2.46$) in the private practice.

When asked: "Which institutions they trusted more?", 41.4% of the participants pointed to state institutions, whereas 42.2% said they trusted more the private healthcare institutions. The remaining 15.6% said they had no opportunity to experience either type of institution.

Responses concerning the average waiting time in the state institutions and private offices are presented in Graph 2 and Graph 3. The results show that 19.8% wait for more than 2 hours in state institutions, whereas 28.8% wait up to an hour. However, the waiting time in the private institutions is much shorter: more than half of the participants (53.2%) say that they wait up to 30 minutes, and only 0.1% have waited up to 2 hours.

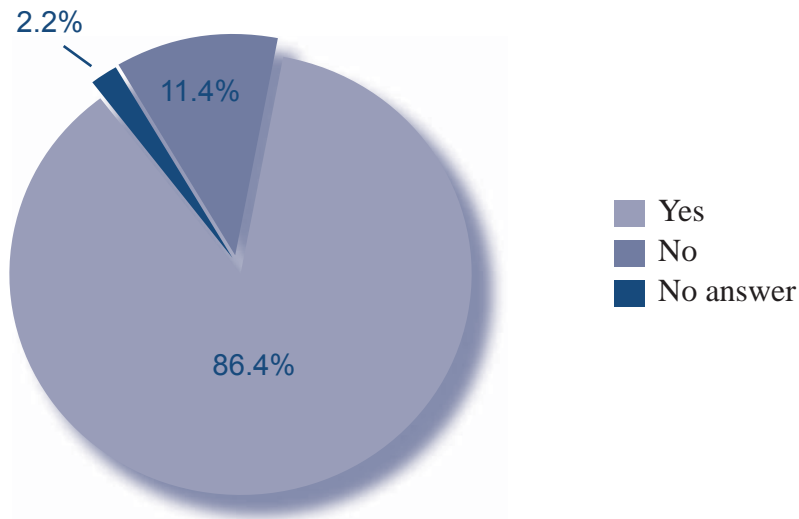


Graph 2. "How long do you have to wait to be admitted to a public healthcare institution?"



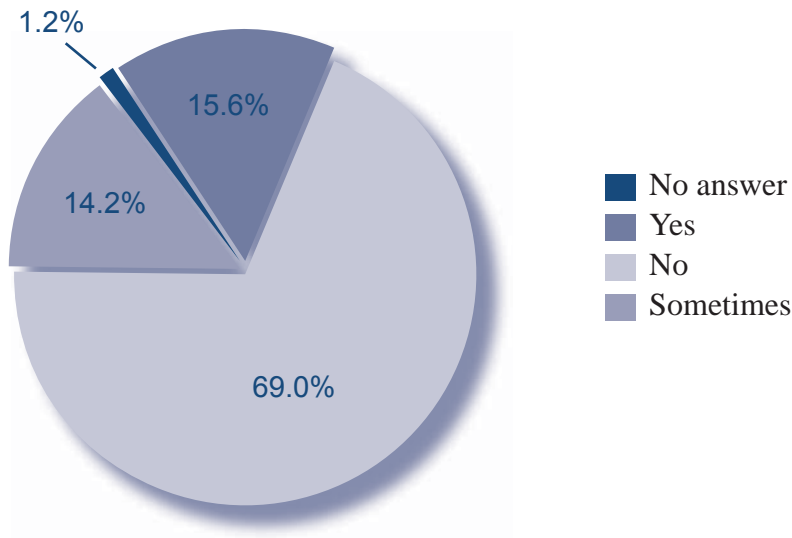
Graph 3. "How long do you have to wait to be admitted to a private doctor's office?"

The experience of 86.4% of the respondents tells us that patients make use of personal connections in order to receive quicker doctor's examinations and better treatment (Graph 4).

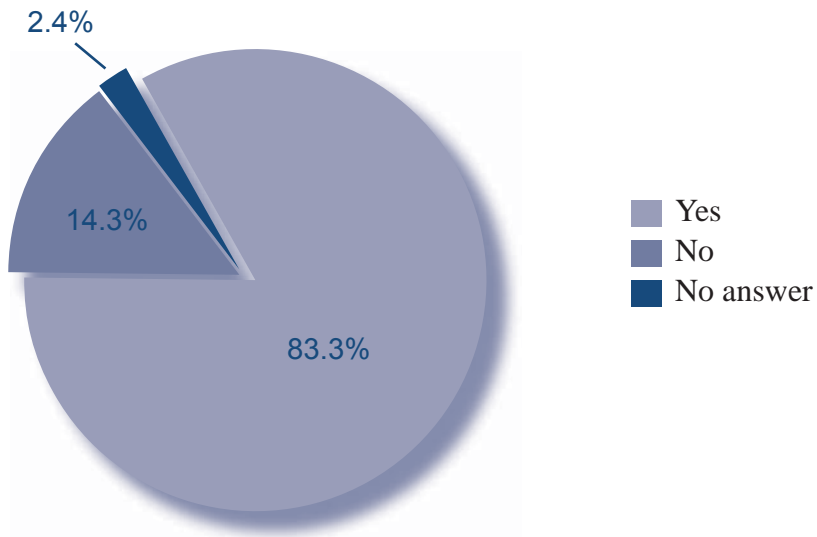


Graph 4. "Have you witnessed patients being admitted because of connections without having to wait with the others?"

As many as 29.8% think that the doctor should be given some gift for the intervention (Graph 5), whereas 83.3% think that bribery is present in the healthcare system (Graph 6).

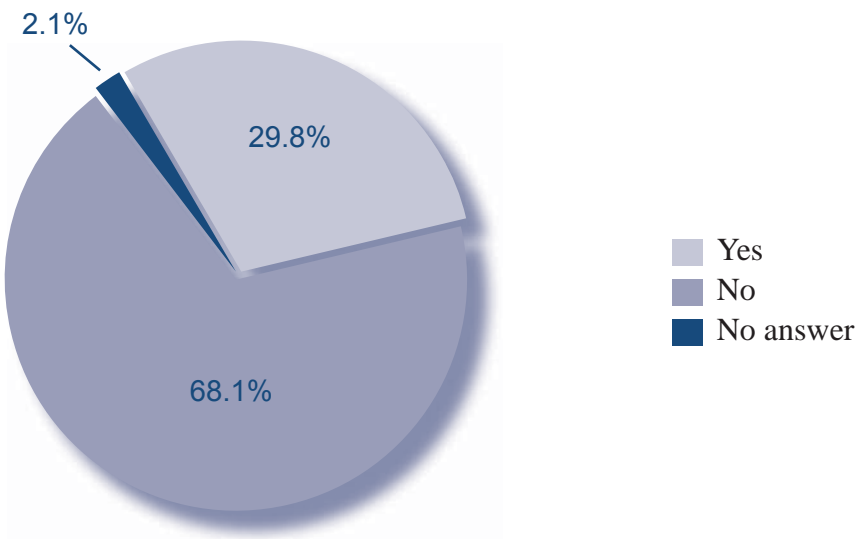


Graph 5. "Do you feel obliged to bring the doctor a gift?"

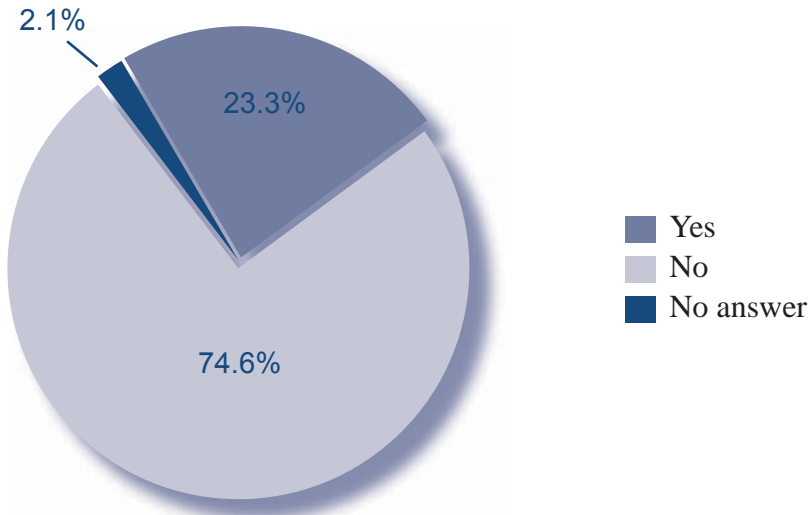


Graph 6. “Do you think bribery is present in the healthcare system?”

Being asked, “*Have you experienced a doctor asking for a bribe?*” 29.8% answered positively (Graph 7), whereas 23.3% did bribe the doctors themselves (Graph 8).

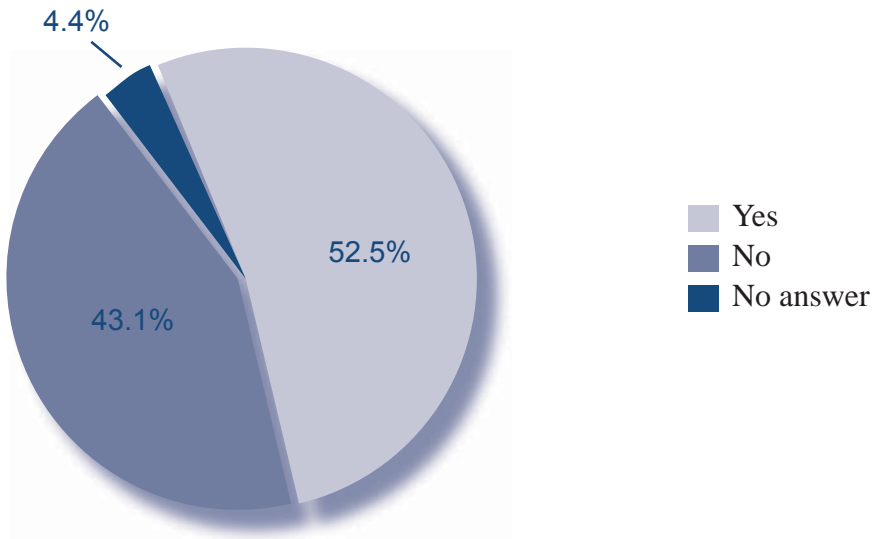


Graph 7. “Has a doctor ever asked you for a bribe?”

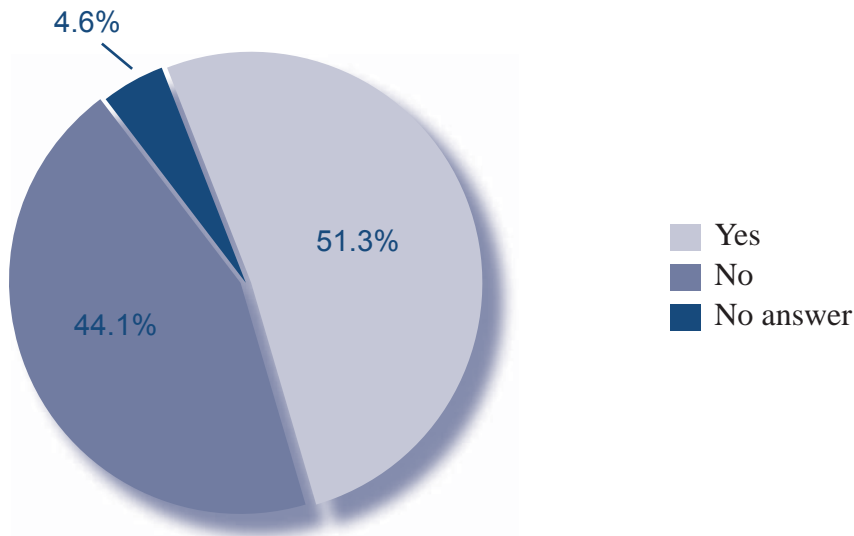


Graph 8. “Have you ever given a bribe?”

We devoted several questions to ascertaining whether the Roms feel discriminated against in the healthcare system. We asked: “*Have you felt that you have been teated poorly by doctors due to being a Rom?*” More than a half of the participants responded to this question affirmatively. The same question was asked about the nurses, and we got almost identical positive responses (Graphs 9 and 10).

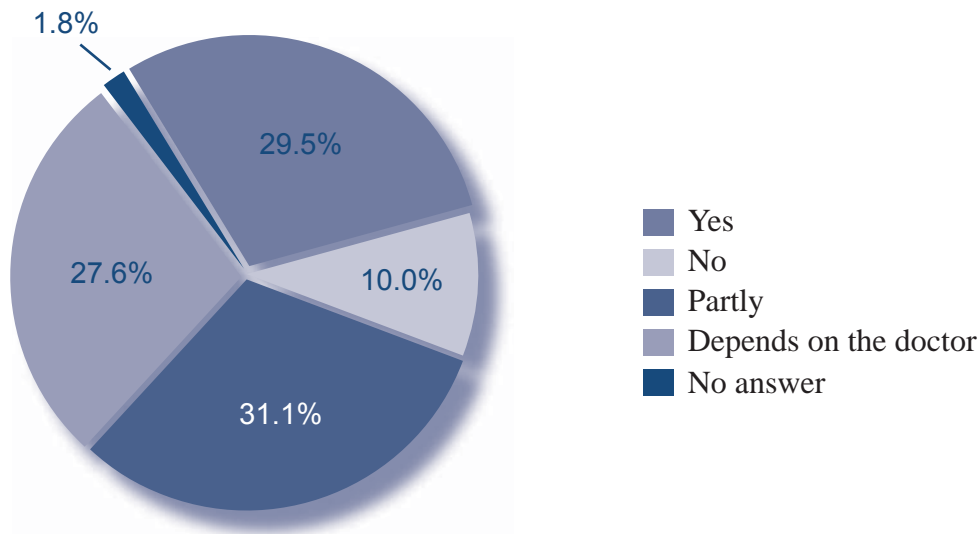


Graph 9. “Have you felt that you have been treated poorly by doctors due to being a Rom?”



Graph 10. “Have you felt that you have been treated poorly by nurses due to being a Rom?”

Only 29.5% of the participants answered positively to the question “Do you trust the medical services offered by doctors?”. A third of them state that trust depends on the individual doctor, and a similar number (31%) only partly trust doctors in general (Graph 11).



Graph 11. “Do you trust the medical services offered by doctors?”

2. Awareness of a right to healthcare

In relation to the healthcare rights, we tried to find out the degree to which Roms are informed about their rights guaranteed by the Law on Healthcare.

As many as 64.7% of the participants are not informed that they can request reimbursement of expenses for medicines on the state-issued positive list of medicines when bought with private funds because they were not available in the state pharmacies.

65.6% of the participants said that they are not informed that recipients of social welfare are entitled to a discounted rate on hospital stays, 24% said they were not sure about it, and 7.8% were completely unaware of this, whereas the rest of the participants did not answer the question.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The research was carried out in order to ascertain Roms' trust in healthcare institutions, their experience and awareness of their legally guaranteed rights in the area of health.

Healthcare insurance is one of the fundamental conditions for practicing the rights in the field of health protection. Our research shows that a part of the Romani population still does not enjoy the right to the healthcare insurance. The research shows that the number of those who cannot accomplish their lawful right to health protection and health insurance is not negligible (10.6%). The main reason for this is the failure to register in the Employment Office, or irregular registration with this institution. The participants stated that one of the reasons for the inability to realize the right to health protection is the fact that they do not have documents as a result of certain lawful or legal measures which impede the obtainment of personal documents or citizenship, which are in turn a condition for realizing rights related to healthcare. A study conducted for UNICEF shows that 56% of Roms enjoy some form of health insurance, 17% enjoy it partly (i.e. not all family members are ensured) and 27% do not have health insurance at all (Lakinska-Popovska, 2000).

Most respondents consult a doctor when they are sick, but the fact that a considerable segment relies on services provided by "quacks" points to the need for further research. Among the reasons for not consulting a doctor is the fact that respondents have to wait to be admitted, with a fifth reporting wait times of up to 2 hours. Another reason is hidden in the lack of trust in doctors, and yet another in the absence of finances, since it is evident that the prices of the health service, interventions and treatments are too expensive for the Roms whose living conditions are generally poor.

There is a significant difference in the participants' evaluation of doctors, family doctors and nurses between the public and private health sectors. The doctors and the nurses in public healthcare institutions got very low evaluation grades, whereas doctors in private healthcare institutions got the best grades. Indirectly, we can conclude that the evaluation is determined by the conditions in the private as compared to the public healthcare institutions (waiting time, atmosphere), as well as by the doctors' and other staff's treatment.

A large number of the participants claimed that some patients do not respect queuing and use their connections for obtaining a medical examination, which suggests that those who do not have connections have to wait longer to accomplish their right to a check-up. The fact that almost a third of the participants feel obliged to bring the doctor a present is worrying, and even worse is the fact that as many as 83% of the participants think that bribery is present in the healthcare system, which further confirms the claims about a high level of corruption in the healthcare system of the Republic of Macedonia. Almost a third of the interviewees reported that the doctors have asked them for bribe, and a quarter of them have actually bribed the doctors.

The information acquired from the question about the doctors' and nurses' bad treatment of the Romani population is quite alarming. More than a half of the sample claimed to have experienced poor treatment for being Roms. This suggests growing discrimination against members of the Romani population.¹ This fact also indicates the need for a law that would guarantee equal treatment for all patients. It could be that the feeling of being discriminated against together with the traditional belief in alternative medicine have led to a low level of trust on the part of Romani patients in medical personnel, such that 10% of the interviewees do not trust doctors in general, 31.1% trust them partly, and 27.6% trust certain doctors.

As for the awareness of their rights and possibilities, the research proved that Roms are not informed about certain advantages that the healthcare system offers. The low educational level of the members of the Romani community, the long transition the Republic of Macedonia is undergoing, and the prolonged health reforms in particular, cause the information about the possible advantages in the healthcare system fails to reach the users, especially those from the Romani population. This could also be due to the fact that there are no Roms present in the Ministry of Health and in the executive bodies.² Our research showed that more than half of the participants are not aware that they can be reimbursed if they pay for medicines from the positive list when these cannot be obtained in the state pharmacies. Also problematic is awareness of the discounts for the hospital stays available to recipients of social welfare: the fact that 65.6% are unaware of this proves that significant segments of the Romani population are not informed about the advantages the healthcare system offers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research shows that quite a number of Roms are not included in the healthcare system. Among the reasons for this state of affairs are lack of documents, financial means as well as untimely registration within the Employment Office. Therefore, the Expert team recommends:

1. Simplification of the administrative procedure for the completion of the necessary documentation, including most notably the procedure for administrative payments as well as for the evidence required for legal residence which could be particularly difficult for Roms to furnish. In the meantime, relevant information should be distributed concerning access to healthcare services for those who have not yet regularized their status;
2. Making basic healthcare available free of charge to all vulnerable groups, including Roms;
3. Removing educational requirements for access to healthcare;

1. It sometimes occurs that healthcare personnel neglects Romani patients or manifests prejudices toward them; there have been cases of segregation in hospital stays and care (Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia)

2. As of March 2006, the proportion of Roms employed in the Ministry of Health is 0.6%, with this count including technical personnel (i.e., janitors) (Source: Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Macedonia)

4. Introducing ordinances in the future Law Against Discrimination that refer to health, in order to prevent future possible direct or indirect discrimination in the healthcare system. In order to make the ordinances more effective, it is recommended to organize special training for the medical staff and their professional associations. It is expected that the medical staff adapt their approach to the patient's level of knowledge, with due respect to their dignity, confidentiality and personality;
5. Addressing immediately the low rate of participation of Roms in the Ministry of Health by employing Romani nurses who are registered at the Employment Office and who could directly improve the healthcare culture of the population;
6. Increasing awareness about health insurance rights, as well as the mechanism for their protection. Local civil organizations active and experienced in the field of health education can offer assistance and protection to persons not included in the existing healthcare system;
7. Checking bribery and corruption among medical staff. Better monitoring of the work of medical staff should be established. Illegal and unethical behavior should be punished and sanctioned. An organized anti-corruption campaign would contribute to the reduction of corruption and bribery. These measures would improve the work and the behavior of the medical staff towards the patients, and would at the same time restore patients' faith in medical institutions.

All of the previously mentioned measures are in accordance with the Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia, to which the Expert Group on Health of The European Centre for Minority Issues contributed with suggestions and recommendations.

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**ROMS AND POLITICAL LIFE:
ROMS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS POLITICAL
PARTIES AND REASONS FOR THEIR
(NON)PARTICIPATION**



Introduction

The democratization of the political system in the Republic of Macedonia created room for the integration of Roms in political life. For this purpose, ethnic Romani parties formed, with other Roms taking part in politics through various non-Romani political parties. At the moment there are four Romani political parties: the Union of Roms, the United Party for Emancipation, the Party for Integration of the Roms and the Party of Roms' Democratic Forces. In the parliamentary elections of 2006, the Union of Roms and the Party for Integration of the Roms were a part of the coalition "For a Better Macedonia" and have one MP in the Assembly. The United Party of Roms took part in the "Together for Macedonia" coalition and they, too, have a Romani member of parliament.

Most of the Romani political parties operate in the municipality of Šuto Orizari, where most of the Romani population is concentrated. These political parties represent mostly the interests of the Romani people in Šuto Orizari. As a result, it appears that the remaining parts of the Romani population who live in the other parts of Macedonia do not have their political representatives.

Experience to date shows that Roms do not play an important part in political life and they have little influence. Roms do not have significant representatives in the institutional system, and as a result, Romani participation in government bodies is not sufficient.

Romani political life from 1990 until the present can be divided into two periods: 1990-1994 characterized by a single Romani party, a strong political idea, and unity of all Roms in the Republic of Macedonia in a single political subject; and the second period since 1994 until present, characterized by: lack of a powerful political idea, absence of collective engagement, inadequate political culture (inconsistent political attitude, manipulation with Romani votes during the elections, abstinence from voting), presence of constant political fear to undertake important steps for the improvement of the quality of life of the Romani community, and individuals who are not prepared to represent Romani interests. Romani political parties are characterized by weak and inconsistent organizational structure without permanent members and insignificant party income. This results in little potential for exerting influence and applying serious political pressure over the majority parties. Abstinence from elections, frequent manipulation with Romani votes and inadequate political engagement and activism, point to Roms' passive political existence on the political stage in the Republic of Macedonia.

All these characteristics of the Romani citizen, who is at the margins of political life, lead to the conclusion that the activities of young Romani intellectuals, which are concentrated mainly in the NGO sector, tend to develop better awareness of the Romani community in order to acquire responsibility for the situation of Roms in the social life in the Republic of Macedonia.

After 15 years of experience in including Roms in political life, it is both necessary and challenging to try and analyse the effects of Roms' political participation. Therefore, the Expert Group for Civil Rights of the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) raised several questions on this topic. To what extent and how do changes of government influence the social life of Roms in the Republic of Macedonia, and how do Roms

regard the political parties? Have the political parties which were in the Government been promoting and addressing the problems of the Romani community? Have Roms acted as engaged and responsible political actors on the political stage in the Republic of Macedonia? How did their participation in the government reflect the changes in the social life of the Romani community? What is Romani attitude toward the political parties? The answers to these and other questions are presented and analyzed below.

Relevance and goals of the research

Since there has not been a survey about the political attitude of Romani people in the Republic of Macedonia for a long time, it is justified and should be the future basis for the Romani people to act as engaged and responsible political actors on the Macedonian political stage. The survey aimed at collecting information about Roms' opinions about the political parties and the reasons for their political (non) participation.

The goal is not strictly academic. The survey was carried out in order to obtain results that will direct Romani activists and government institutions to undertake steps for implementing active measures toward a better integration and inclusion of the Roms in the political life and in the institutions of the system.

SURVEY METHODS

Bearing in mind the survey team and their varied experience, the research was carried out with a survey on an appropriate sample of Roms older than 18. It was carried out in the cities where there is more than 3% of Romani population. The sample included 670 respondents, 50,9% male and 48,8% female.

A questionnaire created for a target group characterized by a relatively low educational level was used in order to measure the degree of awareness. Therefore, the questions were formulated simply, in terms easy to understand.

The questionnaire consists of 25 questions divided into 4 groups. The first group consists of questions about the social and demographic characteristics of the respondents; the second consists of questions about their membership in political parties, and their enthusiasm and confidence in the political parties; the third group looks into their participation in the last elections, the influence of the parties and other bodies in their choice to vote, the knowledge of the election system and their opinion about the forthcoming elections; and the fourth group covers questions about the Romani political parties, respondents' opinions as to who represents Romani interests and the contributions from the political parties they voted for.

The survey was carried out in April - May 2006. It was realized by the members of the Expert Group for Civil Rights of the European Centre for Minority Issues in 10 cities in Macedonia where the major part of the Romani population lives.

SURVEY RESULTS

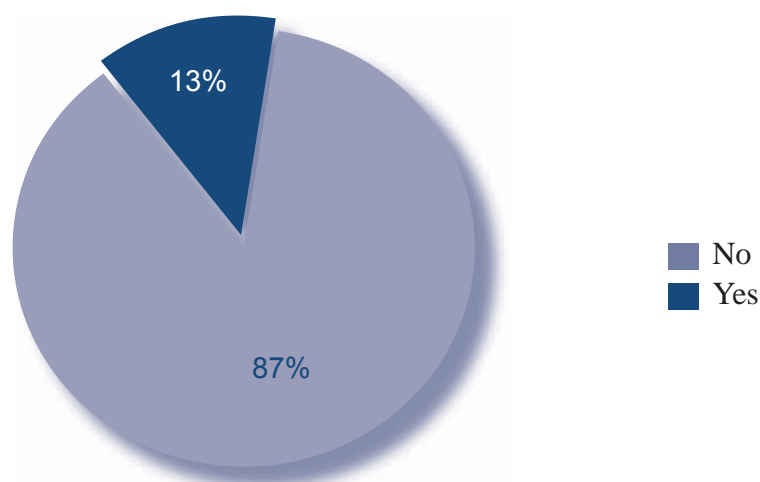
The survey data illustrate Roms' high level of participation in the electoral process in the Republic of Macedonia. Namely, asked whether they voted in the last elections (2005 local elections), 491 out of 668 respondents answered positively, which makes 73.5% of the sample (see Table 1).

Table 1. Voting structure according to educational level

Educational level/ Did you vote in the last elections?				
		Did you vote in the last elections?		Total
		Yes	No	
Educational level	Incomplete primary school	74	6	80
	Primary school	163	153	316
	Secondary school	244	18	262
	Higher education	10		10
Total		491	177	668

The declared electoral participation differs significantly from the real participation at the elections on the entire territory on the Republic of Macedonia during the local elections in 2005 and on the territory of Šuto Orizari municipality (which was about 57%).

As for the membership in the political parties, the data point to a low level of Romani membership. This only confirms the impression that the Romani community is not well motivated to become members of political parties, which can be interpreted as a consequence of their dissatisfaction with the current work of the political parties (Graph 1)



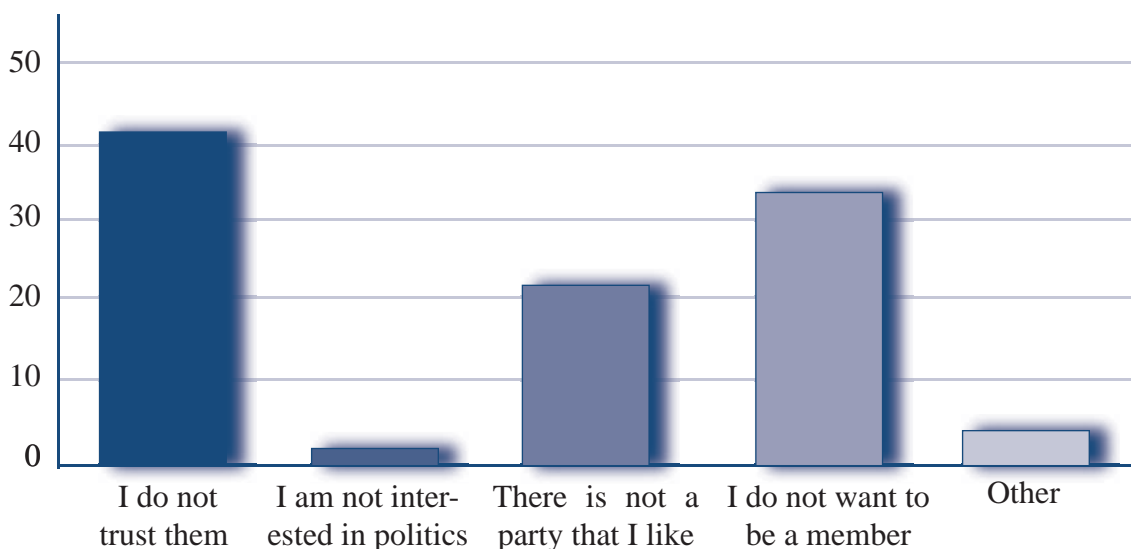
Graph 1. Are you a member of a political party?

The largest percentage of political party members (88.7%) are male, whereas Romani women participate with 11.1% in the very scarce number of party members (see Table 2). The insufficient participation of the Romani women also applies to the wider region. The survey carried out by UNDP-RSS-ILO in five countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania¹), documented a low level of female participation in political life in all of these countries. Therefore one of the main recommendations was to increase the awareness level of Romani women and include them more actively in political life.

Table 2. Gender structure of the party members

		Are you a member of a political party?		Total
		Yes	No	
Sex	Male	80	261	341
	Female	10	317	327
Total		90	578	668

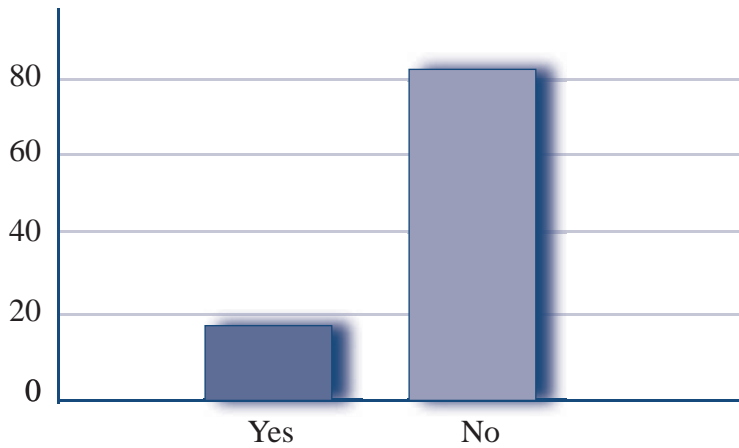
An analysis of the responses to the question: "Why are you not a member of a political party?" gives a partial explanation for the low Romani membership in the political parties of the Republic of Macedonia. The main reason is the lack of confidence in the political parties (see Graph 2). The results by reasons to avoid being a member of a party are as follows: 41% lack of confidence, 22% because there is not a political party they like, and 34% do not want to be members. These answers point to room for the future activities of both Romani and non-Romani political parties aimed at gaining citizen support.



Graph 2. Why don't you participate in a political party?

1. UNDP-RSC/ILO (April 2002), Toward Diversity with a Human Face: Roma Issues in Central and Eastern Europe from a Sustainable Human Development Perspective, Roma Regional Human Development Report.

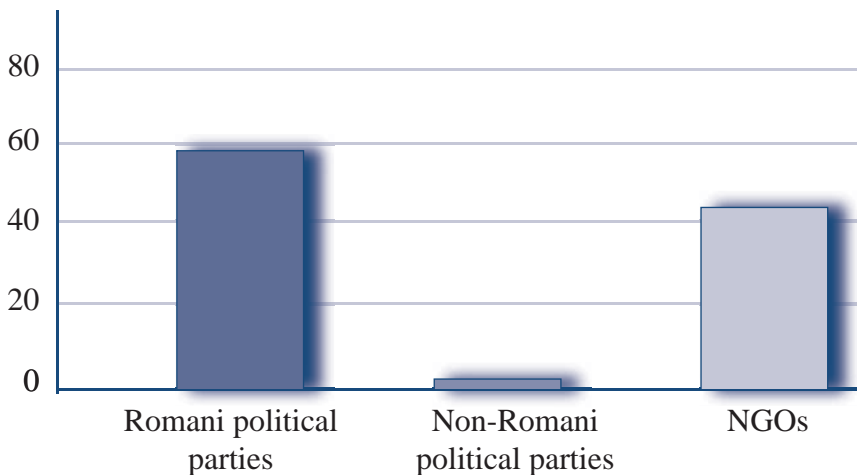
Although it might seem logical that the respondents have expected or felt some benefits from the political parties, when asked: “Have you felt any benefits from the political parties so far?”, 82% of them indicated not having felt any benefit whatsoever (personal or social) from the political parties (see Graph 3).



Graph 3. Have you had any benefit from a political party?

The graph illustrates that as many as 82% of the respondents have never had any benefit from the political parties. Besides the lack of confidence, the lack of benefit is another important reason for not being a member of a political party. In spite of the fact that the respondents lack confidence or benefit from the political parties, still a great number of them think their interests would best be represented by Romani political parties (56%)

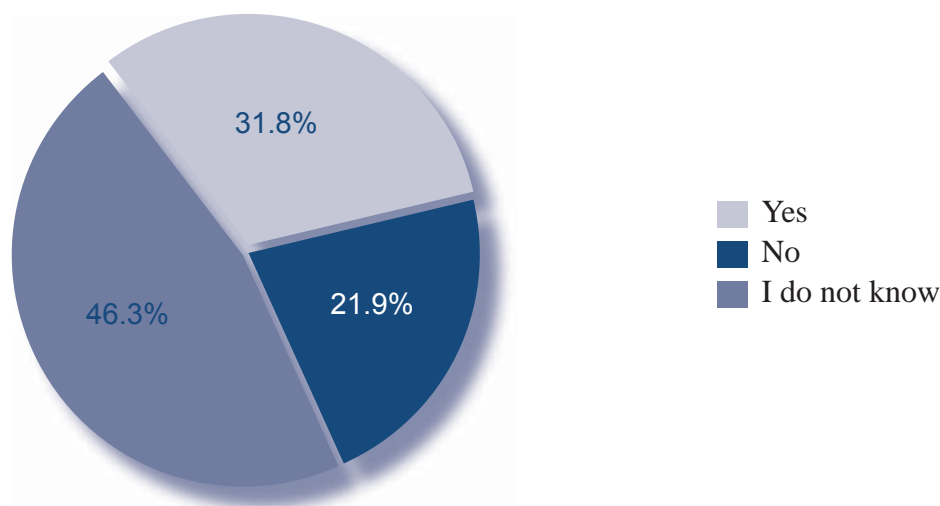
Apart from the political parties, the second important representative of the Romani interests are non-governmental organizations. 44% of the respondents think NGOs are most important representatives of the Romani interests (see Graph 4).



Graph 4. Who can best represent Romani interests?

Asked: “Do you think the Romani political parties represent Romani interests?”, (Graph 5), 46.3% of the respondents indicated that they are not sure (i.e., do not know) whether Romani political parties actually represent Romani interests. This percentage might be a result of the inactivity of the Romani political parties and their lack of dedication to solve the problems of the Romani community. The feeling of insufficient representation of community interests is present both in the Republic of Macedonia and elsewhere in the region. The UNDP-RSC-ILO survey carried out in five countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania)² show that Roms in those countries often feel that their interests are not represented properly.

When asked: “Do you think your interests are represented properly?” 13.7% of respondents to the UNDP-RSC-ILO survey said “Yes” on a state level, and 20.2% on a local level. The percentages in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are slightly higher, with 25% of respondents in these countries indicating that their interests are well represented both on state and local level.³



Graph 5. Do you think that the Romani political parties represent Romani interests?

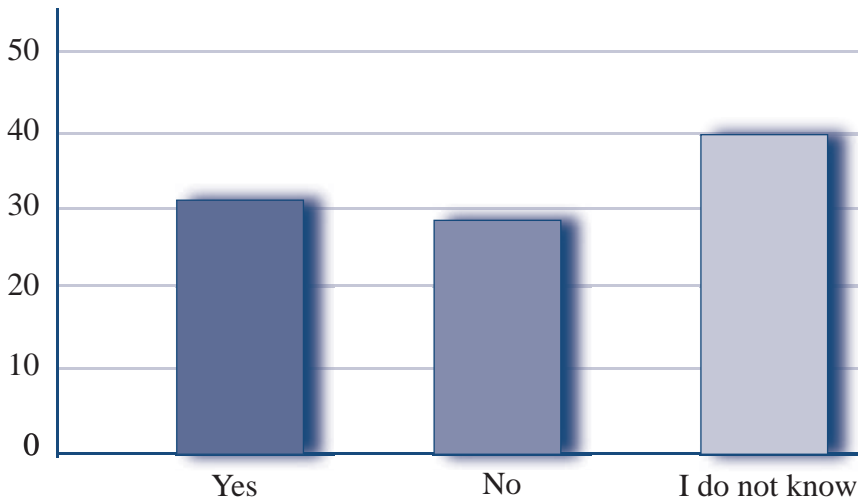
Respondents’ dissatisfaction with the work of the Romani political parties constitutes a reason for political inactivity. Asked: “Are you going to vote in the upcoming elections?”, 40% of the respondents did not know if they would, whereas 29% said they would not vote at all.

The survey was carried out shortly before the 2006 parliamentary elections. Here it is interesting to point out that the figures of the respondents who said they would not vote coincides with the percentage of electoral abstinance in Šuto Orizari at the 2006 parliamentary elections.⁴ In other words, the election was a direct indicator of the survey’s relevance.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. According to the State Election Committee, 29.49% of registered voters actually cast a ballot.



Graph 6. Are you going to vote in the forthcoming elections?

Conclusions

The survey results lead to the following set of conclusions:

- Roms' political organization in the Republic of Macedonia is weak. One of the indicators for this situation is the extremely small number of Roms who are members of a political party;
- Roms express a high level of distrust towards the political parties, which they at the same time consider the most relevant representatives of their interests;
- Roms place hope in Romani political parties as more serious representatives of their interests in future;
- The level of representation of Romani women is insufficient.

The survey results confirm the findings detailed in the Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia concerning skepticism on the part of the Romani citizens towards the political parties, which Roms identify with the party leaders and elites. The results also confirm the prevalence of expectations that Romani representatives should be more engaged in promoting and addressing the problems and the priorities of the Romani population.

Recommendations

Based on the survey information, it is recommended:

- To launch a serious debate about political activism among Roms in the Republic of Macedonia;
- To reform Romani political parties in such a way as to focus their efforts on motivating the citizens to become politically engaged;

- To start initiatives for raising public awareness about the active and responsible inclusion of Roms in politics;
- To organise educational campaigns for a better participation of Romani women in politics;
- To raise awareness of the importance and power of civic responsibility;
- To initiate future research activities to establish the correlation between the educational level and the political participation.

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**ROMS' SUBJECTIVE FEELINGS
IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
CONCERNING THE FRAMEWORK
AGREEMENT**



Introduction

The Ohrid Framework Agreement was signed on 13 August 2001. It rejected violence and put an end to the armed conflict that lasted for several months. The Agreement promoted peaceful and harmonious development of Macedonia as a civil society, with respect for the ethnic identity and interests of all Macedonian citizens.

The Framework Agreement confirmed the unitary and multiethnic character of the country, at the same time giving directions for the future development of the Macedonian society. The Agreement called for reforms that introduced changes to several essential laws to allow an increased jurisdiction on the part of elected local representatives, as well as adoption of laws for financing local government. The laws that regulate employment underwent changes to enable an equal presence of the communities in all central and local public bodies and at all levels. A significant change was foreseen for passing the laws that refer directly to culture, language use, education, personal documents and the use of symbols. This means that the laws cannot be passed with a simple majority of the parliament members, but requires the support of the majority of parliament members who belong to the communities that are not the majority population in the Republic of Macedonia.

Changes were foreseen for the use of symbols, as well. The local authorities are now free to put symbols that mark the identity of the majority community in the municipality on the front of local public buildings, immediately adjacent to the symbols of the Republic of Macedonia.

Generally speaking, the Framework Agreement together with the constitutional and legal changes which followed the Agreement accelerated reforms in higher education, ¹ the equal representation of the communities in all central and local public bodies, the use of language and symbols and other significant areas. ²

Having in mind the tremendous importance of the Framework Agreement, the Expert Group for Civil Rights determined it to be justified to look into the subjective feelings of the Romani population in the Republic of Macedonia about the Framework Agreement and the effects of its implementation. The interest rests on the fact that the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement and the resulting legal changes affect the situation of all the citizens and communities, include that of the Romani community.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement is a document of compromise. The four biggest political parties took part in its passage³. The smaller political parties, including the Romani ones,

1. Before the Ohrid Framework Agreement the members of the ethnic communities did not have the right to higher education in their mother tongue, whereas after the Agreement only the Albanian ethnic community acquired this right.

2. Before the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the participation of the ethnic communities in the government and public administration was negligible, whereas after the Agreement the employment of members of the ethnic communities was given special attention.

3. The Ohrid Framework Agreement was signed by the presidents of the two biggest Macedonian parties (the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) and the International Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) and the two biggest Albanian parties (the Party for Democratic Prosperity and the Democratic Party of the Albanians), and under the patronage of the late president of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Boris Trajkovski.

were not involved in the negotiations. Roms did not have the opportunity to express their attitudes about the Framework Agreement. This says something about the place the Romani community holds in the power structures of the country. Particularly important for the Romani community is the implementation of the part that involves the equal presence of the Romani community in public administration and education, with particular emphasis on participation in state institutions of higher education, as is awareness about the contents of the Framework Agreement. These questions were the object of our research.

Research problem

The Framework Agreement and its implementation are extremely important issues in the public life of the Republic of Macedonia. It is a reflection of the profound changes resulting from its implementation. The effects are differently understood and interpreted by the citizens. Therefore, the Expert Group for Civil Rights at the European Centre for Minority Issues focused on researching the relationship of the Romani community towards the Framework Agreement. We aimed to discover whether Roms in the Republic of Macedonia are informed about the Framework Agreement, if they know its contents and what they expect from it, as well as their evaluations about the effects of implementation of the Framework Agreement on the situation of the Roms as compared to the other communities in the Republic.

Research methods

The poll method was applied in the research. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents personally and consisted of questions of both open and closed type, adapted for the target group. 670 Roms, aged 18-45, took part in the survey. The educational structure of the respondents is presented in Table 1, where we can see that the low educational level of the respondents – over 50% are with incomplete or completed primary education – corresponds with the educational structure of the Romani population in general.

There were more male respondents in the survey (64%). The survey was carried out in the period March - April 2006 in 10 cities in the Republic where more than 3% of the population is Romani: Gostivar, Tetovo, Kičevo, Prilep, Bitola, Skopje, Štip, Vinica, Kočani and Kumanovo.

Table 1. Level of educational attainment

	Number	%
Incomplete primary education	118	22%
Completed primary education	202	37,6%
Incomplete secondary education	48	8,9%
Completed secondary education	139	25,9%
Incomplete two-year higher education	7	1,3%
Completed two-year higher education	2	0,3%
Incomplete higher education	9	1,6%
Completed higher education	10	1,8%

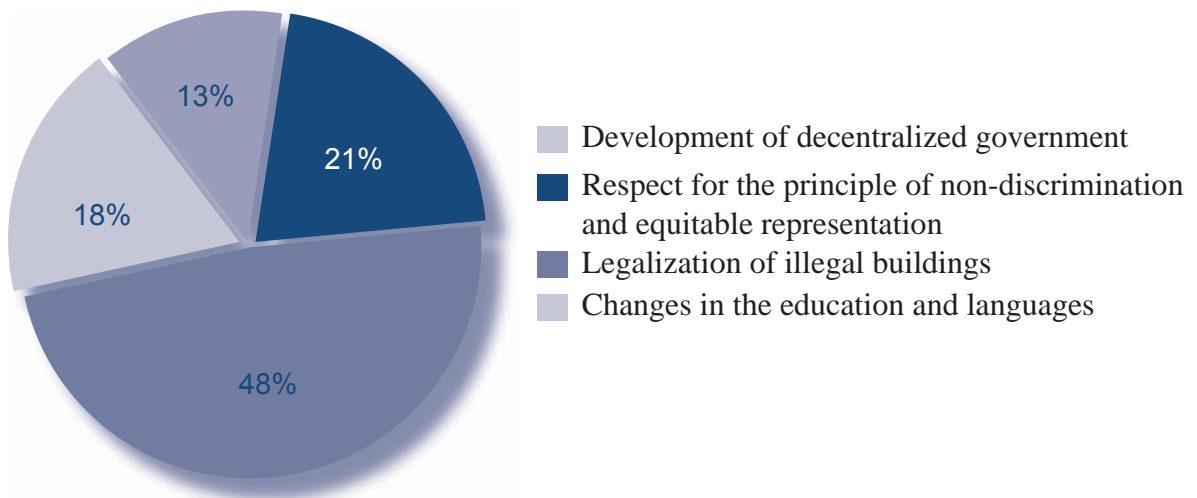
Results

In accordance with the goals of the research and the research problem, the results attained depict Romani attitudes in relation to:

- Awareness about the Ohrid Framework Agreement;
- Roms’ social status after the adoption of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and possible changes in this status;
- Roms’ attitudes about their treatment within educational institutions.

Roms’ awareness about the Ohrid Framework Agreement

The survey demonstrates a relatively high degree of awareness on the part of Roms concerning the Ohrid Framework Agreement. As many as 86% of the respondents have heard about the Ohrid Framework Agreement, and 48% of them are familiar with its contents (Graph 1).



Graph 1. Are Roms familiar with the contents of the Framework Agreement

Being asked where they heard about the Framework Agreement, as many as 79.29% said the mass media were their source of information, whereas the remaining 20.71% got the information from non-governmental organizations.

Despite the fact that Roms are familiar with the contents of the Framework Agreement, the survey revealed that Roms are not well-informed about some particular aspects of the Agreement's implementation. Namely, when asked if they have heard about job vacancies in the civil service for members of the ethnic communities with secondary and higher education, as many as 66.5% of the respondents said they have never heard of them (Table 2).

Table 2. Awareness of job openings for civil servants

Yes, I knew about both of them	16,4%
Yes, I knew about one of them	17,1%
I have never heard about it	66,5%

Anticipating such a state of affairs and with the survey's developmental goals in mind, we asked respondents about the best possible way for information to reach them. Television stood out as the main channel. 51.8% of the respondents said it would be best to receive information by TV, 10.5% from non-governmental organizations, and the remaining number would like to receive it from the newspapers, radio and organized public forums (Table 3).

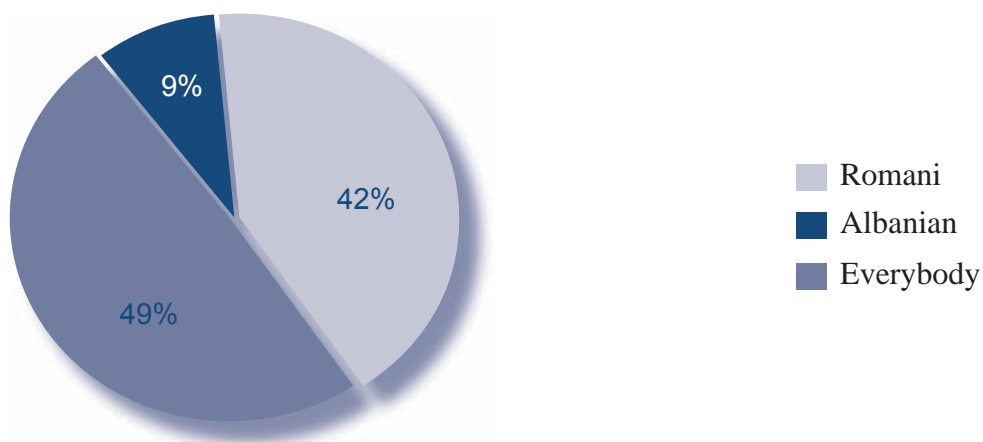
Table 3. Best means of informing Roms in the future

Television	51,8%
Non-governmental organizations	10,5
Newspapers	9,3%
Forums	6,5%
Radio	2,0%
No answer	19,9%

This situation with the information reflects on the respondents' attitudes on the following two groups of questions about the effects of the Framework Agreement's implementation on the general status of Roms in the country and their place in the educational institutions.

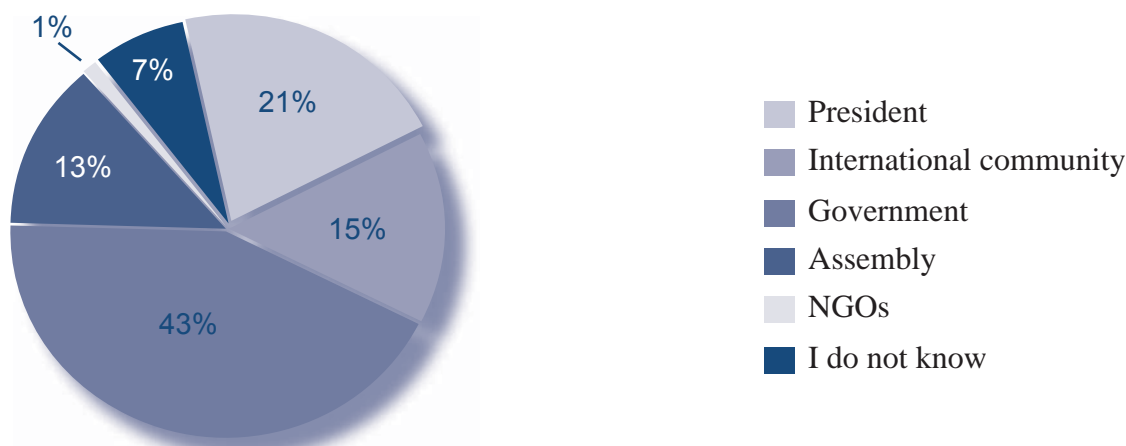
Attitudes about the social status of Roms after the Ohrid Framework Agreement

The evaluation as to whether and how the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement influences the population in Macedonia in general, or just some of them, is rather complex. Since we wanted to simplify the issue, we asked the respondents to give an indirect evaluation, and answer why they thought the Ohrid Agreement had been adopted. As many as 49% of the respondents said that it was adopted to improve the situation of all the citizens, slightly fewer (42%) said the Ohrid Agreement was adopted to improve the situation of the Albanian population and only a small part of them (9%) said it was meant to improve the situation of the Romani population (Graph 2).



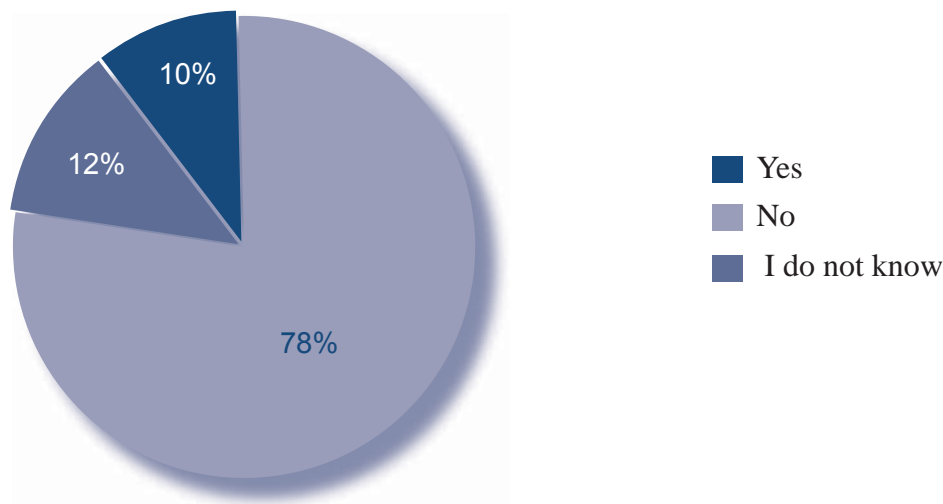
Graph 2. Respondents' impression as to whose situation the Ohrid Framework Agreement was meant to improve

Being asked: "Who is responsible for the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement?" the largest portion of the sample (43.8%) answered correctly that it is government's responsibility. 21% think the president of the Republic of Macedonia was the most responsible for it, whereas only a few of them mentioned the responsibility of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and the international community (Graph 3).

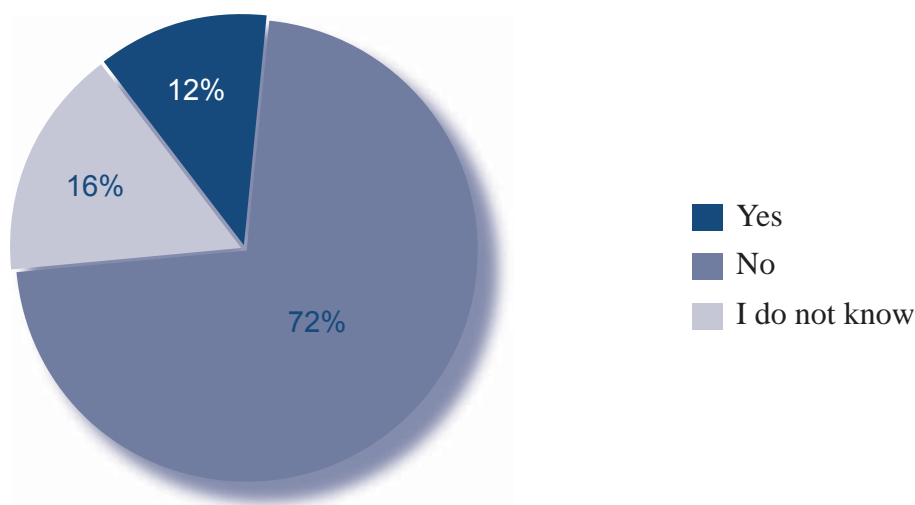


Graph 3. Responsible organ for the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement

The respondents demonstrated a high degree of criticism towards the effects of the implementation of the Framework Agreement to date over the social status of the Roms in the Republic. Namely, as many as 78.7% of the respondents think there is no equal participation of Roms in the public administration, and almost the same number (72%) of the respondents think that the participation of the Roms in the public administration has not improved after the Ohrid Framework Agreement (Graph 4 and 5).

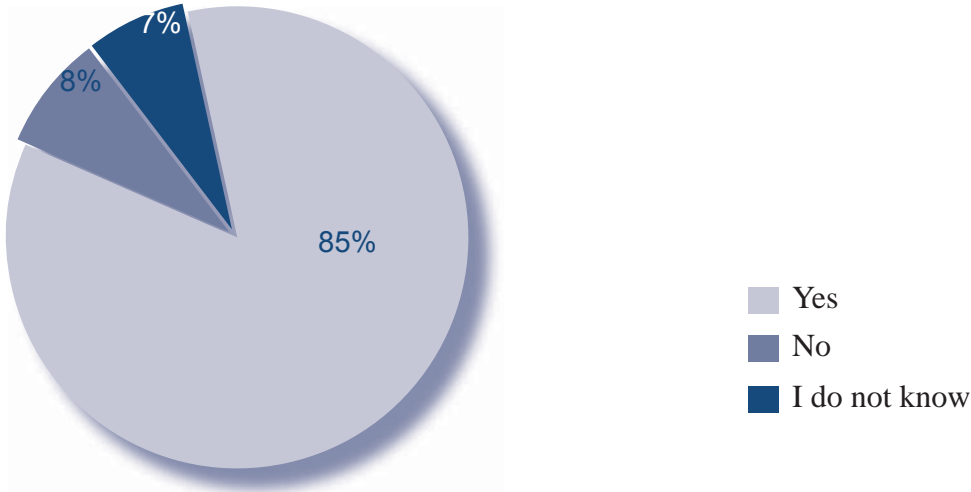


Graph 4. Roms' subjective feelings on equitable representation in state and public administration



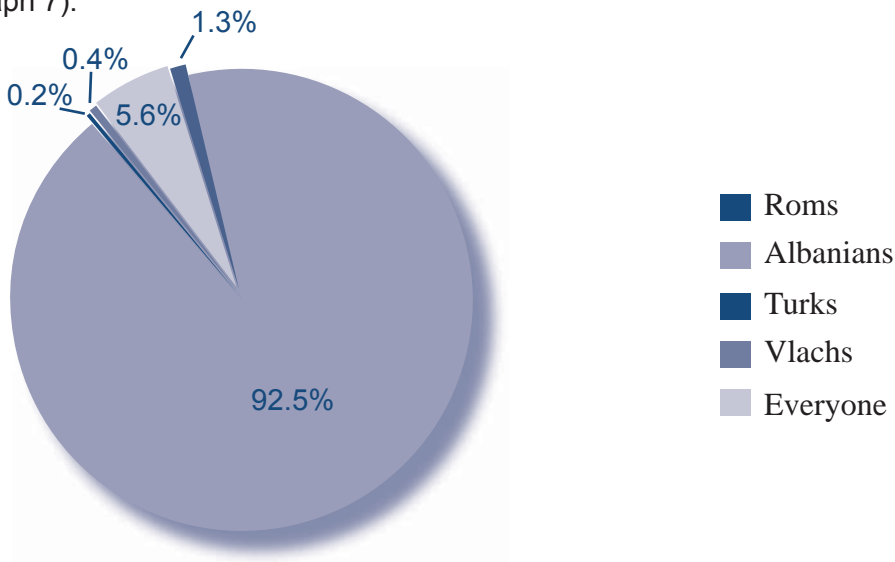
Graph 5. Has Roms' participation in state and public administration improved after the Ohrid Framework Agreement?

This negative evaluation is followed by an even more negative attitude that there is ethnic discrimination in the employment process in state and public administration. We can assume that the 85% of the respondents who said there is discrimination in the employment process within the public administration, perceive their own ethnic community as an object of that discrimination (Graph 6).



Graph 6. The presence of ethnic discrimination in the employment process

The above claims correspond with respondents' evaluation as to who is the greatest beneficiary of the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement. More specifically, being asked: "Who benefited most from the implementation?", as many as 93% of the respondents name the members of the Albanian ethnic community, whereas only 1.3% cited the Roms (Graph 7).

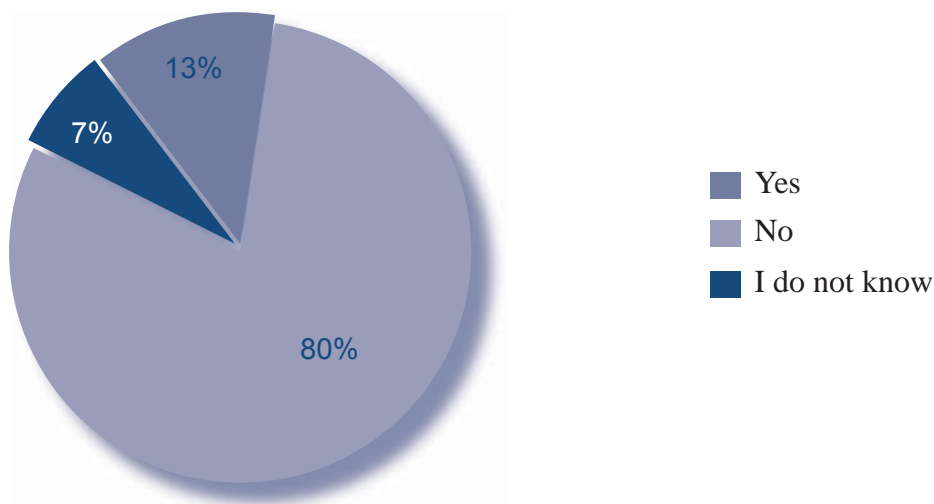


Graph 7. The greatest benefit from implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement to date

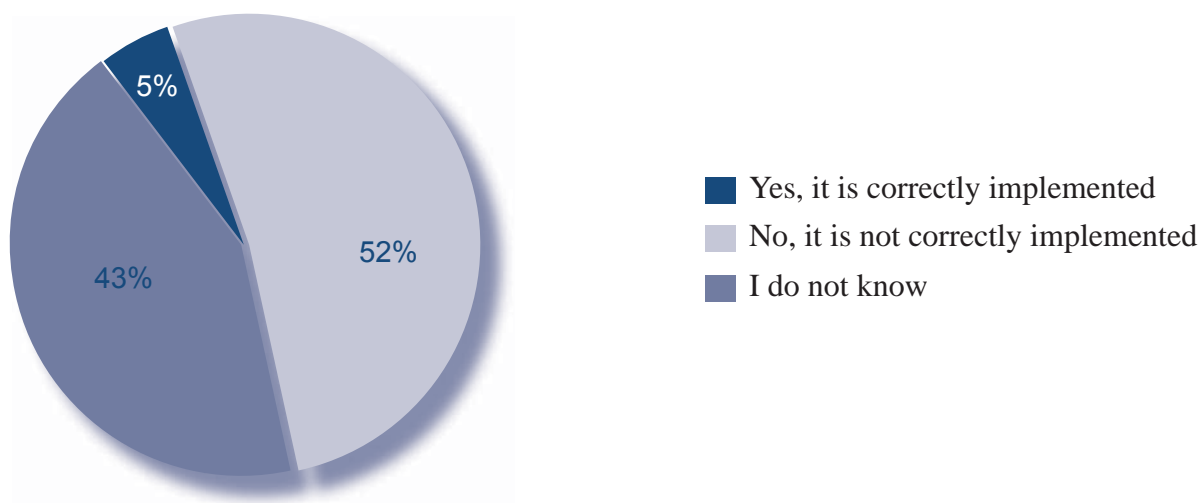
These assessments coincide with respondents' evaluation of changes in the treatment of Romani citizens in Macedonia in the educational system.

3.3 Roms' attitude about their treatment in the educational institutions

With regards to the Romani attitude about their treatment in the educational institutions, 80% of the respondents think that Roms are not treated equally in the institutions of higher education (Graph 8), whereas 52% of the respondents think that the national quota is not correctly implemented (Graph 9)



Graph 8. Equal treatment of the Romani students when enrolling in institutions of higher education



Graph 9. Correct implementation of the national quota in higher education admissions

Discussion and conclusions

Although the Ohrid Framework Agreement is one of the documents that change the democratic processes in the Republic of Macedonia essentially and is one of the conditions for the Republic of Macedonia membership in the European Union, our research demonstrates that the members of the Romani community are not satisfied with its implementation. In the respondents' view, the Agreement has improved the situation of the members of the other ethnic communities, but not the Romani ethnic community.

The results clearly show that a great deal of the respondents have heard of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and that almost half of them are familiar with its contents. This leads in turn to expectations that the Ohrid Framework Agreement was expected to improve the situation of all of the ethnic communities that live in the Republic of Macedonia, not only to improve the situation of the Albanian ethnic community.

Contrary to these expectations, a great part of the respondents think there is no just and equal participation of the Roms in administration and in public enterprises. This conclusion coincides with the official data about Roms' participation in public administration and public enterprises, where, as of February 2006, there were 392 Romani employees, or 0.55%.⁴ There are even fewer Romani civil servants⁵, lending support to the respondents' opinion that there is no equal Romani participation in the public administration.

There is a high degree of awareness that the Ohrid Framework Agreement has improved only the situation of the Albanian ethnic community, and that Roms have had no benefit from the implementation of the Agreement to date. In support of this perception we can mention the fact that the participation of the Albanian community has increased from 8,164, or 11.17%, in January 2003, to 11,417, or 16.3%, in February 2006.

In light of these findings, the evaluation of an alarmingly high percentage of the respondents (85%) that there is ethnic discrimination when applying for a job in the public administration or in a public enterprise seems logical. We can say that the Roms in the Republic of Macedonia do not feel equal and feel that the members of the Macedonian or Albanian community stand better chances to get a job.

Our research shows that job advertisements issued by the state institutions concerning job openings in state administration and public enterprises do not reach Roms.⁶

4. According to the still unpublished survey by Ibrahim Ibrahim, "Participation of Roms in the Public Administration", carried out for the needs of "Roma Diplomacy" program (information from the Ministry of Finances) the total number of people employed in public administration and public enterprises is 70,226, out of which 329 are members of the Romani community.

5. According to the same survey, there are 33 civil servants, of which 21 are junior assistants, 1 is an assistant, 5 are senior assistants, 3 are external assistants, 1 is a senior associate, 1 a department head, and one a sector head.

6. Ibid.

A high percentage of Roms did not hear about the civil service job openings advertised in 2004 and 2005 for members of the ethnic communities with secondary or higher education. We can say that as a result of the current means of dissemination, the information did not reach the members of the Romani ethnic community.

In part 6 of the Ohrid Framework Agreement,⁷ which refers to the right to education and the application of the languages, it is stated that the principle of positive discrimination and quotas will apply for new students who apply to the state universities. In spite of this, 80% of the respondents think that the members of the Romani ethnic community are not treated equally in the institutions of higher education. Also, many of the respondents think that the ethnic quota for higher education is not applied correctly. This can be interpreted as an indication of quota abuse, with quotas for Romani students used by members of other ethnic communities.⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Government should organize on an ongoing basis trainings, courses and preparations for employment in state institutions, with increased emphasis on the Romani ethnic community as the most marginalized community in the Republic of Macedonia;
- In future, the state should work to ensure equal opportunities for the global participation of the Romani population, as well as the participation of the other ethnic minorities, which are not equally represented in the legislative, executive, public and state administration;
- The state should continually work with the Romani ethnic community in securing funds and conditions for a higher level of information in the languages of the smaller ethnic communities on TV;
- The state should consistently work on the multicultural presentation of Macedonia in the world and should actively include the national minorities;
- Passing anti-discrimination legislation, which will be the main mechanism against any discrimination (both overt and hidden) because of ethnic affiliation, social status or political affiliation.

1. Line 6.3 of the Ohrid Framework Agreement says: "The principle of positive discrimination will be applied in the enrolment in State universities of candidates belonging to communities not in the majority in the population of Macedonia until the enrolment reflects equability the composition of the population of Macedonia" (www.president.gov.mk/prilozi/dokumenti/180/Ramkoven)

2. In some faculties, despite the legal obligation to apply ethnic quotas, there is no quota for members of the Romani ethnic community. In the 2006/07 enrolment at the Institute for Social Work and Policy at the Philosophy Faculty, there is no quota for Roms.

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**ACTIVE EMPLOYMENT MEASURES
AND THEIR APPLICATION IN THE
ROMANI COMMUNITY IN
THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**



Introduction

One of the main problems the citizens in our country face is the high unemployment rate (37%)¹. It is followed by increased and deepened poverty. Although macroeconomic stability in the country has dominated for more than a decade, it has not caused any significant improvements in the economy or employment. Unemployment is thus a serious challenge for the Republic of Macedonia.

In order to decrease unemployment and its accompanying negative effects, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), adopted new policies in mid 2004, the so-called Active Measures for Promoting Employment. The new measures were adopted at the same time when the National Employment Agency (NEA) and the network of 30 local Employment Centres for mediation between the employers and the work force were given a new proactive role. The active policies promoted on the labour market by the Government include three kinds of measures: (1) support in finding a job (information, mediation and counseling); (2) organizing training programmes (qualification and re-qualification) and (3) creating conditions and support for new job openings.²

Bearing in mind the relatively higher unemployment rate of the Romani community in the Republic of Macedonia, these policies and measures affect this group of citizens in a specific way.

ROMANI COMMUNITY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

It is generally known that the Roms are the largest, poorest, and fastest growing minority in Europe. Roms constitute a significantly younger population compared to the majority of the population in the countries where they live. At the moment, 25-30% of Roms are younger than 15, compared to 10% of the majority population. Their young demographic profile makes them the future of many countries from Central and Eastern Europe, so these countries should take the challenge for their economic and social development.³

According to the 2002 census there are 53,879 or 2.66% Roms in the Republic of Macedonia. 44% of them live on social welfare, 30% on personal incomes, 22 on "other" sources and 4% on pension. 39% of the cases have no employed family member, and 40% have one employed member.⁴

The Employment Agency registers 16,034 unemployed Roms⁵ as of 30 April 2006. This means that unemployment among the Romani population is still higher than 70%. The great unemployment rate is in part a result of the fact that the relevant institutions have not undertaken systemic measures to resolve this long-lasting problem with the Romani population.

1. National Employment Agency –NEA, April 2006

2. The policies and the measures for increasing the employment rate and decreasing the unemployment rate at the same time and the struggle against social exclusion are covered within the three horizontal priorities and the ten Directives for Employment of the European Employment Strategy, adopted by the European Council in July 2003 (Decision of the Council, 22nd July 2003, Directives for the Employment Policies in the Member Countries, 2003/578/EC).

4. Roma in a Wider Europe: Challenges for the Future, Conference held in Budapest, 29 June-1 July, 2003.

5. Romani Economic Forum, held 25-26.03.2004 in Skopje.

In June 2006 there were 11,316 unemployed Roms, which is 4.718 people fewer.

ACTIVE MEASURES FOR PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT

Seeing the above-mentioned situations, which are, more or less, similar in all of the European countries, the European Union has adopted Agenda EU 2000, according to which all members or future candidates for membership should develop a national strategy for Romani integration. The Republic of Macedonia was the last country in the region to develop a national strategy for Roms in 2005. Alongside this, the international organizations and foundations in Budapest promoted "The Decade of Romani Inclusion 2005-2015", in order to accelerate the integration of Roms in society. At the beginning of 2005 the Republic of Macedonia signed the Declaration for Initiating the Romani Decade 2005-2015, in so doing committing itself to support these initiatives and to bring Action Plans to contribute to reducing the social and economic difference between Roms and the majority of the population.

Besides the evaluation of the benefits Roms have had from employment programmes and policies implemented to date, the Association for Democratic Development of the Roms-Sonce-Tetovo (ADDR "Sonce"-Tetovo) in the micro survey, "Policies for Decreasing Roms' Unemployment", January 2006, identifies the problem of awareness and how interested Roms get informed about employment. The results show that over 45% Roms have never even heard about any of the programmes, 41% have heard about the so called "Branko's Law", 11,24% have heard about CARDS programme and 3.4% about "Prizma".

The state has no system or mechanisms for monitoring Romani participation in the development programmes for employment supported by the institutions or the donors. According to this survey, Macedonia has received over 2.1 billion euros financial aid in various sectors in 1991-2005, 185 million euros of which were directed in the business sector. However, there is no information about the amount used for the needs of the Romani population in Macedonia.

Since the Active Measures are relatively new in our everyday life, we feel the need to present them in accordance with the information obtained from NEA. Two groups of measures were established to prompt employment in the Republic of Macedonia: 1. Labour exchange of the unemployed and others who are looking for a job (Employment counseling, Professional orientation, Preparation for employment of the unemployed and other people), 2. Investing in financial compensation, 3. Public affairs, 4. Exemption from personal income tax, 5. the Law on Promotion of Employment, 6. Exemption from tax on agricultural activities, 7. Volunteer work, 8. Granting state-owned farmland for cultivation, 9. Employment of disabled people.

Several Active measures have already been established on the labour market. Labour exchange of the unemployed and others who are looking for a job (Employment counseling, Professional orientation, Preparation for employment of the unemployed and other people), investing in financial compensation, public affairs and employing disabled people are already in practice.

In 2004 the labour market policy was focused on creating a new concept for an active policy that would generate new employment possibilities through joint and coordinated action of labour market factors. Its measures and activities were concentrated on creating conditions and support for generating new jobs, organizing training programmes and modernizing the information system.

The promotion of the Active Measures for Promoting Employment has gained in intensity and has been presented in public by representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) and the National Employment Agency (NEA), along with the introduction of new employment measures and their results.

The Expert Group on Employment of the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) thought there to be a need to research this problem among the Romani population, in order to ascertain whether these measures are promoted within the Romani population and the effects on their employment.

RESEARCH METHODS

Bearing in mind the complexity of the problem, the research focuses only on the particular question of Active Employment Measures in the Republic of Macedonia and their implementation in the Romani community.

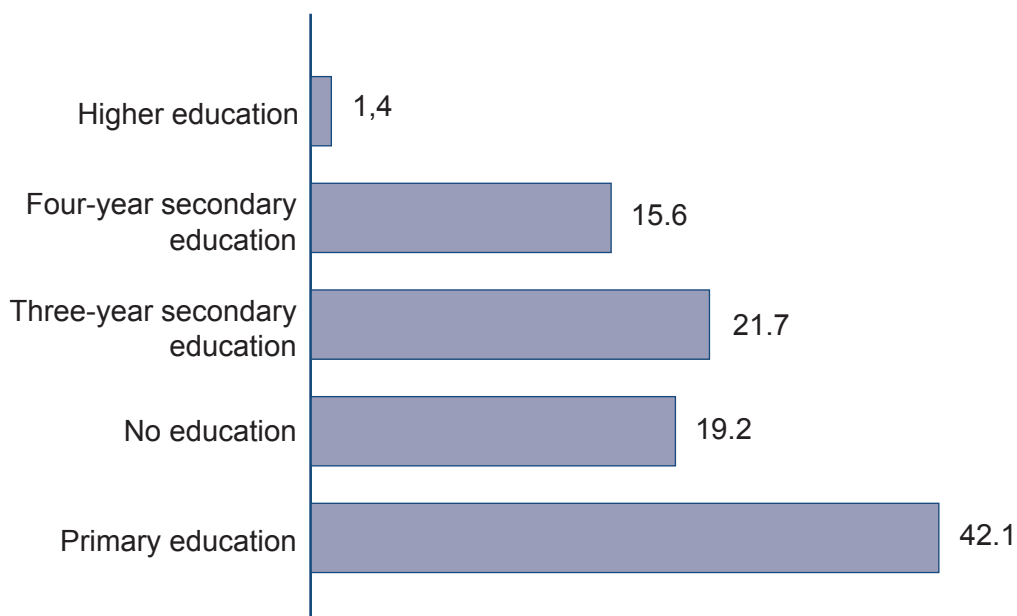
Three different research techniques were applied over the particular categories of interviewees: interviews with unemployed Roms, focus groups with representatives of the Romani business sector and extensive interviews with the representatives from the Employment Centres. 636 unemployed Roms took part in the interview; 62.3% male and 37.7% female from: Bitola 7.9%, Kičevo 5.2%, Kumanovo 10.5%, Prilep 11.9%, Skopje 52.8%, Tetovo 5.2% and Štip 6.4%. Four focus groups were organized with Romani businessmen. All the employed staff in the Employment Centres were interviewed. The aim of the interviews was to find out to which extent the Agency / Employment Centres are informed about the Active Measures, how they are implemented and if they include Roms.

SURVEY RESULTS

Table 1. Age of the respondents

Age	%
16-27	31,0
28-38	33,0
39-50	29,2
Over 50	6,8
Total	100,0

Most of the respondents are in their best able-bodied age: 64.0% are 16-38 (see Table 1).

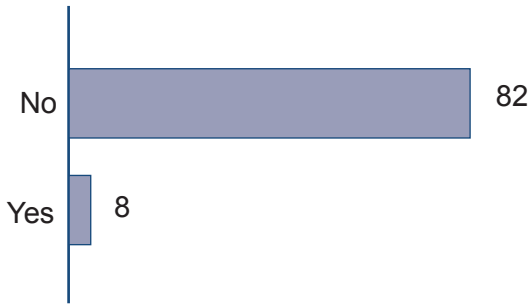


Graph 1. Unemployed Roms by educational structure

The greatest proportion of unemployed Roms (42.1%) has completed primary education. 19.2% have not completed any level of formal education, 21.7% have finished three-year secondary education, 15.6% four-year secondary education, and 1.4% have completed higher education.

The survey results show that out of 636 interviewed people, 25% used to be employed, and 87% of the sample have been looking for a job for more than two years, 4.8% for more than a year, and 8% for up to two years.

It is alarming that despite the fact that they are looking for a job, only 8% of the respondents have heard of the Active Employment Measures (Graph 2).



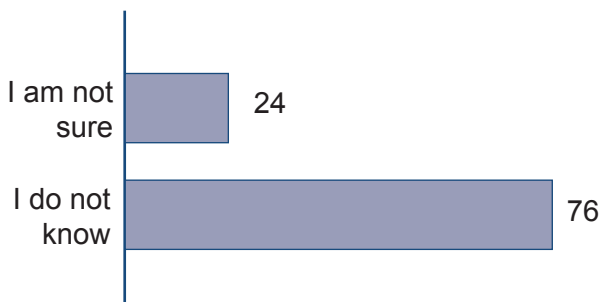
Graph 2. Have you heard of the Active Employment Measures

Many of those who have heard of the Active Employment Measures were informed about them in the Employment Agency (35.4%), whereas the remaining number got their information from the media, NGOs, friends, etc.

Table 2. Which active employment measures have you heard about ?

Which active employment measures have you heard about ?		
	Yes (%)	No (%)
Re-qualification	56,9	43,1
Prompt reaction	33,3	66,7
Professional orientation	13,7	86,3
Company competitiveness	3,9	96,1

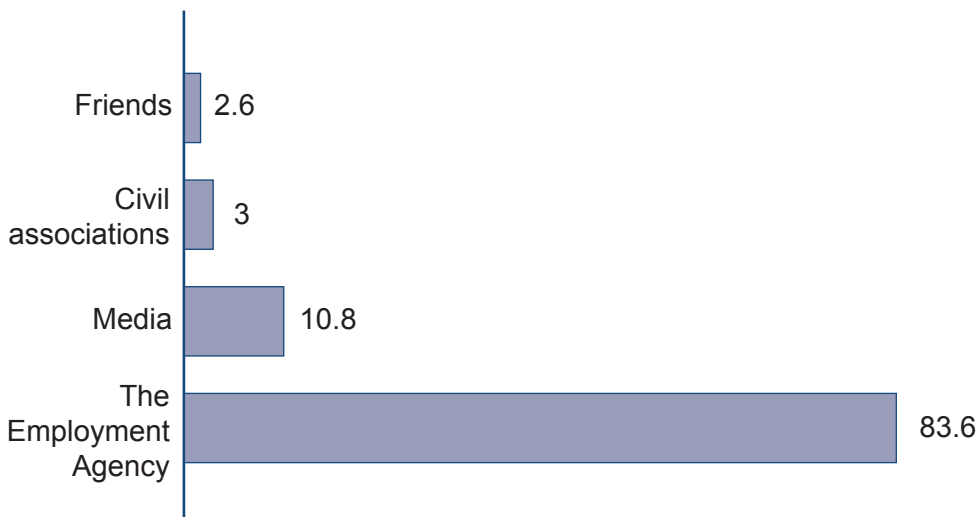
Although some of the respondents were informed about the Active Measures by the Employment Centres, they are not aware what the measures actually offer. The greatest proportion of the ones who are acquainted with the Active Employment Measures (56.9%) have heard about re-qualification, 33.3% prompt reaction, 13.7% professional orientation and 3.9% company competitiveness (Table 2).



Graph 3. Can the Active Employment Measures help you find a job easier?

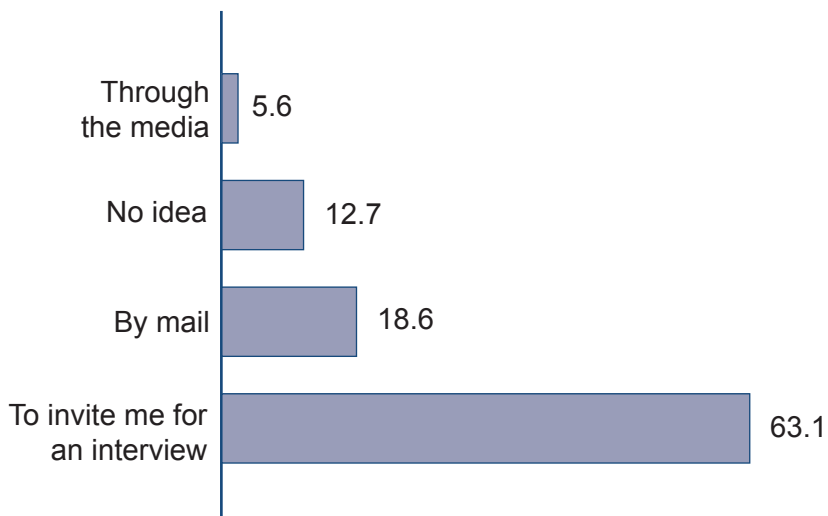
Only 4.7% of the interviewed that are informed about gaining a new qualification have actually taken part in a qualification course. This information leads to the conclusion that the Employment Agency has not informed unemployed Roms sufficiently about the existence of the Active Employment Measures.

It is interesting to see that three quarters of respondents who are informed about the Active Measures (76%) do not know if these measures can ease the employment process, whereas 24% are not sure if the measures can help them to find a job more easily (Graph 3).



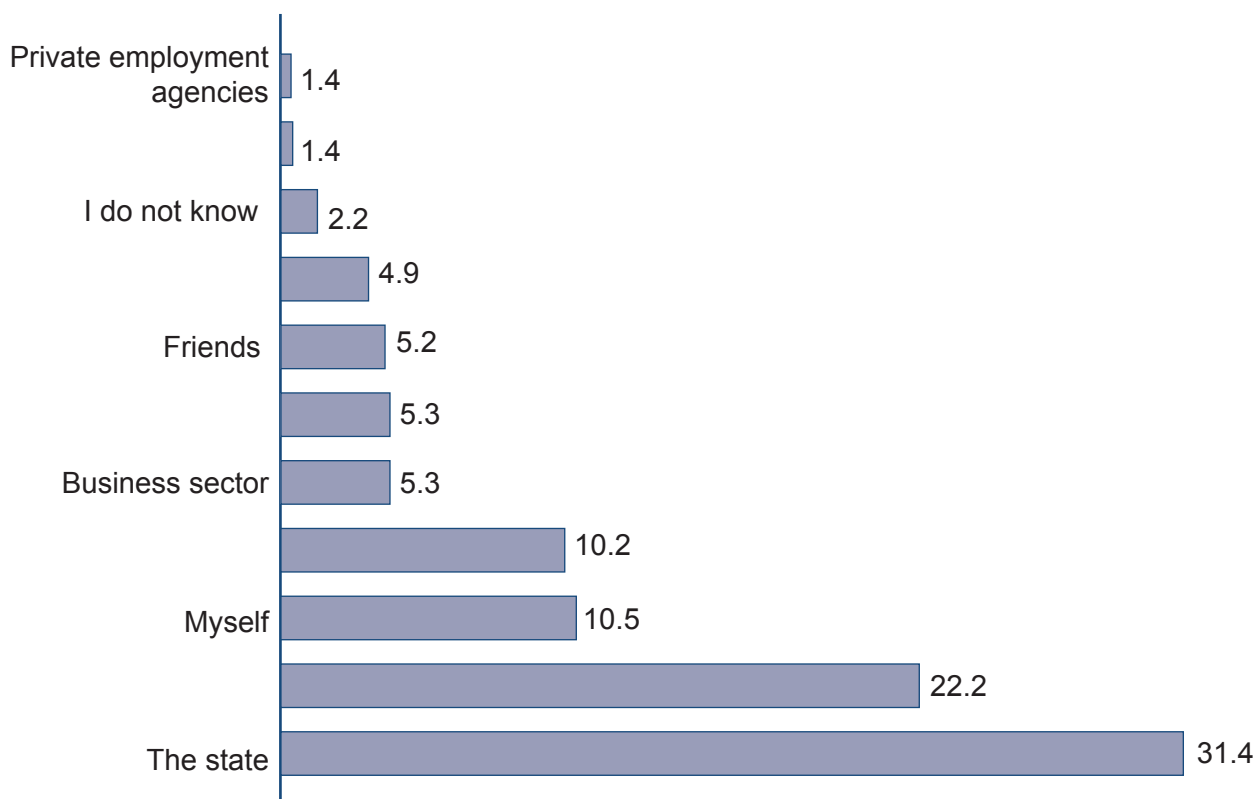
Graph 4. Who do you think should keep you informed about the Active Employment Measures?

63.1% of the respondents expect to be called for an interview to get fully informed about the application of the Active measures, while 18.6% think it would be more appropriate they were informed by a letter. 12.7% do not have a particular idea, and a very small percentage would like to be informed via the media (Graph 5).



Graph 5. How would you like to be informed about the Active Employment Measures

Being asked: “*Who can get you a job?*” most of the respondents gave priority to the Employment Centre and the state as responsible and key factors in the development and implementation of employment policy in the Republic of Macedonia. They think that the Employment Agency, together with the community Employment Centres are services that can meet their needs. However, a great deal of the respondents do not know where to go to get more job information (Graph 6).



Graph 6. Who can get you a job?

DISCUSSION

The survey results analyses indicate that the Employment Centres have inadequately promoted and implemented the Active Measures for prompting the employment of the Romani population. Ignorance about these measures is not typical just for unemployed Roms, but also for Romani businessmen. The discussions in the focus groups yielded the conclusion that the staff in the local Employment Centres resist giving objective information or benefits according to the existing Active Employment Measures. So, for example, a Romani company owner from Kičevo, who requested a training of the unemployed for the needs of his company, was told that apart from textile professions, the Centre does not support any other courses for gaining new skills. The discussions with the Romani businessmen in the focus groups show that there is no communication between them and the local Employment Centres. The lack of information on the side of the Romani businessmen leads to the impression that the Centres co-operate only with the unemployed. It shows that no one from the Employment Centres has ever initiated communication with the businessmen about new jobs.

Similar results were obtained from the interviews with the Employment Centres' staff. Although the same questions were asked in all Centres, each except for NEA gave a different answer to the question: "Which are the Active Employment Measures?" Most of them would usually mention three active employment measures, mainly in connection to the work clubs and the unemployed, whereas very few of them mention the employers' measures. The interviewees were able to recall the other measures with some help, but none could give information about all of the previously mentioned measures. The representative of the National Employment Agency was the only one who gave us a detailed presentation and information about the Active Measures. This shows that the Centres do not apply a uniform system or strategy to inform about or present the employment measures. The whole process for promotion and practicing the measures relies on the individuals in the local Employment Centres, i.e. on the personal motivation and dedication of the advisors and councilors for the Active Measures.

Furthermore, the whole process of applying the Active Measures by employers is completely centralized and under the control of NEA. Although employers are the potential elements for opening new jobs, the procedure is very limiting to the local Centre's staff, which in turn places limits on applicants for the Active Measures' benefits. This is due to the fact that if an employer wishes to use some of the Measures' benefits, s/he must communicate and apply to the director of the Local Employment Centre, who will further send the application to NEA. Based on its own judgment and the submitted documentation of the company's work, NEA decides whether the application is adequate and justified. The entire process, from the time of application to the time of receiving a reply by NEA, lasts 10-15 days, which additionally complicates objective and effective realization.

We have not found a particular example of a positive answer concerning the time and manner of payment for support of companies through the Active Measures. It was also revealed that the local Employment Centres are not legal subjects, such that they do not have their own bank accounts and can not apply independently from NEA for their local needs to develop their human and material resources.

In addition, in spite of the fact that all of the Centres said they have sufficient capacity for realizing the Active Measures, the discussion with the staff revealed that the opposite is the case, i.e. they do not have sufficient human resources. Each counselor in the 6 Centres has about 3000 unemployed, which only proves that the local Centres have too much work just to register the unemployed and they do lack time to devote to the promotion and the realisation of the Active Measures. The interviewed staff in the Centres claims that the average number of registered unemployed in similar centres in the developed European countries is 400-600 people a month. This is yet another argument which points to the lack of human capacities and inadequate promotion and implementation of the Active Employment Measures, not only for the Romani population, but also for the population in the whole country.

This means that in spite of the relatively high number of positive measures for employment motivation, there are no real results because of the inadequate structural organization of NEA and the 30 local Centres.

The survey results show that Roms have a clear perception of the responsibilities and the role of NEA and the local Employment Centres with regard to the Active Measures; they should mediate between the employees and the employers. Among the scant 8% of the respondents who have heard or are informed about the Active Measures, re-qualification is the best-known measure.

Data from NEA's 2004 annual report lead to the conclusion that Roms are excluded from the employment preparation programmes (trainings, acquiring new skills and further qualification). In the period 01.01. -31.12.2004, 60 programmes, which included 1759 unemployed, have been carried out. The analysis of the individuals who took part in them shows that most of them had at least secondary education. Also, the interviewed in the Local Employment Centres confirmed that the activities in the work clubs, English and computer trainings so far have included people with high education, whereas since May 2006, they have also invited unemployed persons with secondary education. This is another fact that confirms the exclusion of the Romani population from the Active Measures, having in mind that 85% of the Roms have no education at all, or have only primary education.

Also, we must point out that the skills Roms have are mainly inherited by tradition and they transfer from one generation to the next. The Employment Agency's lack of measures or activities for people with these skills contributes to their extinction, in spite of the fact that there is still a need for them on the labour market⁶

Conclusions

Since there are no ideal or unique solutions to the unemployment problem, we should respect the efforts the institutions make to resolve this complex problem. Still, certain shortcomings are clear which detract from the efficient work of the institutions, and, in turn, from the undertaken measures.

First of all, the Active Employment Measures are based on the previous experience (both domestic and international) and on a detailed analysis of the situation. The measures themselves are not practically connected with the needs of the labour market, i.e. with the needs of the work force. This, further, raises the question of including the business sector in the preparation of the Active Measures. At the moment, the Active Measures treat all categories of unemployed equally. The principle of equality makes the approach seem just at first sight, but in reality it is dysfunctional because it does not take into consideration the educational and social diversity of the unemployed. This is an important element, which dictates their starting position and chances to get a job. In practice, the unemployed population is treated as a homogeneous group, without special categorization and attention for marginalized groups.

6. Conclusion from the Romani focus groups held for the needs of the micro survey, "Policy for Decreasing the Unemployment of the Romani Population", January, 2006, The Association for Democratic Development of the Roms- Sonce-Tetovo (ADDR)

Secondly, the Centres do not co-operate well enough with the employers. This is so due to the fact that the Centres have too much work registering the unemployed, but also due to the fact that business sector managers are not in the habit of communicating regularly with the relevant institutions. Even if they sometimes communicate, the employers complain about the bureaucratic procedures, resistance and bias of the Employment Centre staff. We must add that the least informed employers complain the most, mostly owners of small companies who do not have relevant political and friendship relationships.

All of these elements influence the efficiency of the Active Measures and create a gap between the employers and the unemployed. Both sides find their own ways, without taking advantage of the systems' possibilities for the development of Roms' economic capacities. Roms do not use the development funds and programmes in this field, as a result remaining beneficiaries of social funds which do not offer the possibility of a better living standard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are in line with the data and conclusions presented above. Bearing in mind the lack of awareness mentioned above:

a) We recommend the Employment Agency to prepare an action programme and to establish indicators for a more efficient promotion and implementation of AEM;

The number of unemployed Roms in the past period has decreased as a result of the strict criteria for registering the unemployed in the Employment Agency and MLSP. In reality the figure is higher than the official sources state. This means there are still unregistered unemployed people. In other words, the number of unemployed Roms in the past period has actually been increasing, whereas officially it is reduced by every year as a result of the fictive decrease in the number of unemployed, thanks to the MLSP measures. By failing to register regularly with the Employment Agency, people are dropped from the registers of unemployed. As a result,

b) We recommend MLSP and the Employment Agency to suggest the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia to change the existing law, so that a person who does not register within a period of 30 days, could do so 6 months later. Thus the unemployed would get a chance to obtain health insurance and financial aid.

Another specific problem is the fact that AEM is focused on the unemployed with high and secondary education, whereas the unemployed with primary education are excluded from AEM. Therefore;

c) We recommend MLSP and the Employment Agency to focus on people with primary education, so that they can become competitive on the labour market.

With this in mind, the Expert Group on Employment recommends that:

1. The Employment Agency implement long-term measures in accordance with the needs of the Romani population and should introduce a special affirmative approach for the Romani population;
2. The National Employment Agency and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy make an effort to build the capacities of the Employment Centres' staff, and should take into consideration the equal representation of Roms for better communication and performance in the effort to employ Roms;
3. In order to get a more realistic and appropriate picture, the Agency directly involve unemployed Roms, as well as experienced Romani and international organizations who can share experiences and data from their countries;
4. Through the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science, the state prepare a law or rules to certify informal, traditional, and culturally acquired skills, so that the representatives of the Romani community can be certified for the knowledge gained in an informal manner.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- National Employment Agency (NEA)
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP)
- Association for Democratic Development of the Roms –Sonce – Tetovo (ADDR)
- National Employment Action Plan 1 (NEAP1)
- National Employment Action Plan 2 (NEAP 2)
- Active Employment Measures (AEM)
- NEA report 2004

ROMANI EXPERT GROUPS FOR ROMANI INTEGRATION



EXPERT GROUP ON EDUCATION

Žaklina Durmiš, Skopje. Trained as a lawyer, Ms. Durmiš is currently pursuing an M.A. in social work and social policy at the University of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, where she has successfully completed several courses on civil society. She also worked as a legal advisor for Romani families at the Caritas office in Skopje, as an assistant in a law office, and in this moment she is a director of a Romani children and youth centre.

Ahmet Jašarevski, Kumanovo. One of two leading activists in the Kumanovo-based Romani NGO Drom, Mr. Jašarevski has designed and implemented projects in pre-school, primary, and adult education for the local Romani population. He also is a member of the National working group for the Decade of Roma. Additionally, Mr. Jašarevski has taken part in events organized by the US-based NGO Project on Ethnic Relations (PER) toward developing a government Strategy on Roms in Macedonia.

Gjulsefa Kurteši, Skopje. A university-trained primary school teacher, Ms. Kurteši worked at the “Brothers Ramiz and Hamid” school in the Romani-majority municipality of Šuto Orizari. She was also a member of the working group on human rights formed in the framework of the ECMI project “Securing Implementation of the Ohrid Agreement through Concrete Policy Action”.

Sabina Mustafa, Skopje. Ms. Mustafa is a last-year student of journalism at the University of Skopje’s law faculty. She works as an assistant OSI project “Equal educational possibility for Roma children” and she is an active member of the team of the Romani students magazine “Roma index”. She completed an extended internship in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, and in the office of the World Bank – Macedonia.

Robert Rustem, Skopje. A final-year student in metallurgy, Mr. Rustem worked as an advisor on Romani issues in the Skopje mission of OSCE and now he works in Council of Europe – Strasbourg. With a broad range of experience gathered from his previous work in the NGO sector, Mr. Rustem has a special interest in conflict resolution, education, and intercultural studies.

Ljatife Šikovska, Skopje. Born and raised in the West Macedonian city of Gostivar, Ms Šikovska eventually settled in Skopje, where she is currently employed at the Youth Centre Nadež in Šuto Orizari. A former professional sportswoman with a university degree in physical education, she also serves as a add and a certified trainer for the Open Fun Football School.

Fatma Bajram, Skopje. Last year student in the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Skopje. During her career as a student, she has been active in the NGO sector, attending in particular to issues affecting Romani women and youth. She completed an extended internship in USAID .Currently, she is a co-ordinator of a Romani Children’s Centre in Skopje.

Ramčo Kundevski, Berovo. Mr. Kundevski is a student at the Faculty of Law in Skopje. He is employed as an assistant in the Romaversitas programme. Mr. Kundevski also has considerable experience in the NGO sector, having worked as a researcher and project manager in various initiatives for improving the situation of the Romani population in Macedonia.

Ajsel Memet, Skopje. A student of social work and social policy at the University of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Ms. Memet has experience as an NGO activist, as well as in volunteering in FOSIM’s Romani education programme. Having taken part in numerous seminars on education and human rights, Ms. Memet is currently undertaking an internship in the department for social work of the Skopje municipality of Gazi Baba.

EXPERT GROUP ON CIVIL RIGHTS

Redžepali Čupi, Gostivar. Mr. Čupi is a last year student at the Faculty of Law in Skopje. Since 2004, he works as Assistant in the programme for higher education Romaversitas/FOSIM. Additionally, Mr. Čupi has been involved in various projects aimed at improving the situation of the Romani population in Macedonia.

Erdžan Demir, Skopje. A second-year law student at the University of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Mr. Demir is also employed within the Ministry of Defence.

Anifa Demirovska, Delčevo. Macedonia's sole Romani female lawyer, Ms. Demirovska is concerned with issues closely related to gender, including domestic violence and human trafficking. Actively involved in the Romani non-governmental movement since 1995, she is currently president of the Romani NGO Phurt in Delčevo.

Ferki Demirovski, Delčevo. A native of Eastern Macedonia, Mr. Demirovski is also active in Central and Western Macedonia. In Central Macedonia, Mr. Demirovski acts as coordinator for a citizens' advising centre founded by the Romani NGO Mesečina to serve Skopje and Veles. Additionally, he was employed as an assistant within Romaversitas in Skopje. In Western Macedonia, on the other hand, Mr. Demirovski studies public administration at the South East European University in Tetovo. He currently works as State Counsellor in the Cabinet of Minister Taškovič.

Feat Kamberovski, Kumanovo. Mr. Kamberovski is a founding member and president of the Kumanovo-based NGO Arka. From his work in the NGO sector, Mr. Kamberovski brings to the Expert Group considerable experience in monitoring police procedures and court cases, as well as in administering legal aid and human rights education. Through this work, Mr. Kamberovski has built an excellent working relationship with the Ministry of the Interior.

Idaver Memedov, Veles. Mr. Memedov is trained as a lawyer in Roma Access Program in Budapest. He has also currently enrolled in the Macedonian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Skopje.

Elvis Memeti, Tetovo. A student of politics at the University of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Mr. Memeti is also employed within the Ministry of Local Self-Government, where he serves on a specialized working group for Romani integration.

Senad Mustafov, Delčevo. Originating in Eastern Macedonia, Mr. Mustafov has worked with the Romani NGO Phurt. In this moment he is a Coordinator in the (FOSIM) Romani higher education programme, Romaversitas. Additionally, Mr. Mustafov has a background in law.

Alma Mustafovska, Kriva Palanka. After completing primary and secondary education in Kriva Palanka (northeastern Macedonia), Ms. Mustafovska enrolled in and graduated from the law faculty of the University of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Skopje. Her concern with human rights in general and equal treatment of Roms in particular manifests itself both in her choice of profession and in her work in the NGO sector.

Amza Pini, Gostivar. A native of Western Macedonia, Mr. Pini completed secondary theology school in Skopje before moving on to a dual programme of study in theology and political science at the University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mr. Pini has also been involved in various initiatives in the NGO sector.

Muhamed Toči, Gostivar. A member of the presidency of the West Macedonian Romani NGO Mesečina since its founding in Gostivar in 1993, Mr. Toči has specialized in human rights monitoring and the provision of legal aid. Most recently, he put his extensive experience in this area to use in designing the citizens' advising centres now in operation throughout the country. Additionally, Mr. Toči has taken part in events organized by PER toward developing a government strategy on Roms in Macedonia.

EXPERT GROUP ON HEALTH

Atilan Etemi, Tetovo. Mr. Etemi holds a degree in pharmacy from the Anadolu University in Turkey, where he graduated in 2001. He is owner of the first Romani pharmacy, "Ati Farm".

Šermina Jašareva, Štip. Ms. Jašareva is a student of biochemistry at the Faculty of Natural and Mathematical Sciences in Skopje. Additionally, she has worked since 1997 as a volunteer for the Štip-based Romani NGO Association for the Rights of the Romani Population. She has also been involved in various training activities in the field of human rights.

Memet Memet, Skopje. Actively involved in the NGO sector since 1999, Mr. Memet was co-founder of the Romani NGO Roš in Šuto Orizari. He has also worked as local coordinator on gender and trauma issues for the Dutch NGO Admira. Supporting his work in the NGO sector, Mr. Memet has undergone a considerable number of seminars in the areas of health, psychology, and trainer training.

Senad Memeti, Skopje. Having previously worked as a medical technician in Šuto Orizari, Mr. Memeti is currently employed within the Ministry of Health. He is also a student at the University of Skopje's law faculty and collaborates on a regular basis with several Romani NGOs.

Arif Pini, Gostivar. An advanced medical student in Skopje, Mr. Pini has been active in the NGO sector in Gostivar as well as in Skopje. Mr. Pini work in NGo Sumnal as assistant and he is a member in the Advisory Board of Romaversitas, FOSIM.

Islam Šakiri, Tetovo. Mr. Šakiri is employed as a medical assistant at Tetovo's general hospital. Additionally, he has been active in the NGO sector.

Misadet Amet, Skopje. After completing her secondary education at the specialized medical school in Tetovo, Ms. Amet enrolled in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Skopje, where she is currently a student. Ms. Amet has also served as a medical educator herself in various projects of the Romani NGO Roš.

Jasmina Sadulova, Makedonska Kamenica. A 1985 graduate of a secondary school for medicine in Sarajevo, Ms. Sadulova has worked in the public healthcare sector since 1986. She is currently employed as a head nurse in the hospital in her hometown and is a member of the national nurses' union. In the NGO sector, Ms. Sadulova has been a member of the Kumanovo-based Romani women's organization Daja and has participated in seminars on themes such as medicine, domestic violence, and Romani women in politics.

Gjulten Bekir, Skopje. Ms. Bekir completed secondary school as an economic technician, and now she is a student in the Faculty for Pedagogy. From 1999 to 2002, she worked on research projects focusing on diseases commonly faced by Romani women and their families. Since 2005, Ms. Bekir has worked as local coordinator in the Skopje civil advising centre of the Romani NGO Mesečina.

EXPERT GROUP ON EMPLOYMENT

Gjulten Dalipovska, Skopje. Ms. Dalipovska is a last-year law student at the University of Skopje with a particular interest in women's human rights. In addition to her work experience relating to equal participation of Roms in public institutions in Macedonia, Ms. Dalipovska is an able trainer in advocacy and lobbying. Currently she works in the Cabinet of the Minister of Finance.

Enver Jonuz, Skopje. Trained and employed as a social worker, Mr. Jonuz works in the Skopje municipality of Čair. Since 1997, he has also been a member of the amateur theatre group Roma.

Mabera Kamberi, Tetovo. Ms. Kamberi's professional training and experience as a labour sociologist already constitute sufficient grounds for her selection to participate in the Expert Group on Employment. Adding to her qualifications are her interest in issues of gender, her membership in the World Bank Country Working Group, and her employment with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Ms. Kamberi also serves on the board of the Foundation "Open Society Institute Macedonia".

Dilbera Kamberovska, Kumanovo. President and founding member of the Kumanovo-based Romani women's NGO Daja since 1993, Ms. Kamberovska is one of Macedonia's leading Romani activists. Particularly successful have been Daja's vocational training initiatives, which Ms. Kamberovska designed.

Remzi Medik, Bitola. His own youth and that of the NGO he co-founded notwithstanding, Mr. Medik has already proven his skills as a community organizer in Bitola. In the area of employment in particular, he has played a crucial role as a liaison between the local Employment Office and the Romani community. Mr. Medik has also taken part in events organized by PER toward developing a government strategy on Roms in Macedonia.

Nadir Redžepi, Tetovo. Mr. Redžepi brings to the Expert Group on Employment his eight years of experience as a programme and project coordinator in the Romani NGO Sonce. In the past, he coordinated preparation of a shadow report on implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, as well as a micro-study on future employment policies for Roms in Macedonia. Mr. Redžepi is also a member of the National Working Group for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, preparing policy documents and presentations with national and broader regional application.

Samet Skenderi, Gostivar. A founding member of the Romani NGO Mesečina, Mr. Skenderi currently serves as assistant coordinator on a project connected to education, human rights, and public policy. Additionally, he serves as advisor to a programme on improving interethnic relations, and as a member of a board established for writing shadow reports on the implementation of standards concerning the rights of national minorities in Macedonia.

Nijazi Elmazov, Skopje. Final year student at the Faculty of Physical Education. An active member of Romani NGO sector (worked for ANGLUNIPE, FERYP). Mr. Elmazov is interested especially in the area of Romani education and employment. He has followed many seminars on project development, discrimination and domestic violence.

