



**Transition Assistance and Institutional Building
(IPA Component I) National Programme 2011**



Local Integration of Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Minority Groups

Contract No.: 12-8715/1

**REPORT ON POSSIBILITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL
ORIENTATION AND INCLUSION IN ACTIVE
LABOUR MARKET MEASURES FOR
INFORMAL WASTE COLLECTORS
Final – 30 June 2016**

Date 30/06/2016



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LOCAL INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES,
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Consultant:	Eptisa in consortium with CARE, MCIC and Roma Education Fund
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Project output #:¹	11. Report on possibilities for professional orientation and inclusion in active labour market measures for informal waste collectors

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Name:	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP)	Central Financing and Contracting Department (CFCD), Ministry of Finance	EPTISA SOUTHEAST EUROPE doo
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Overall Objective:	To enhance the state administration and implementation capacities for further strengthening and supporting the local integration process and inclusion of the residential and / or non-residential displaced persons (refugees and internally displaced) and minority groups (Roma), as well increasing the sustainability of their reliance.		
Purpose:	To contribute in supporting the process of residential and / or non-residential displaced persons in their access for provision of comprehensive state administration services, increase self-reliance via participation and inclusion of the displaced persons in the society, as well as improve the quality of life and access to rights and services for social inclusion of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in the country.		
Expected Results:	<p><u>Component 1: Support to the implementation of national and local public policies for Roma inclusion:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implemented training plan for capacity building of relevant institutions on the Local Action Plans (LAPs) within the implementation of the Roma Strategy and Decade; ○ Enhanced capacity for all the relevant stakeholders for implementation of Roma Strategy and Decade and memorandum for cooperation with the municipalities; ○ Local Action Plans for Roma implemented. <p><u>Component 2: Institutional CapacityBuilding and Access to Labour Market for refugees and IDPs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased capacity of state institutions and policy makers to deliver integration policies and facilitate access to services; ○ Achieved economic sustainability; ○ Increased employability; ○ Gained experience and best practices in the area of refugee integration. 		



<p>Key Activities:</p>	<p>Component I: Support to the implementation of national and local public policies for Roma inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activity 1: Supporting the national institutional structure of the Strategy for Roma and Decade of Roma Inclusion; ○ Activity 2: Supporting the local institutional structure for creation and implementation of Roma policies; <p>Component 2: Institutional Capacity Building and Access to Labour Market for refugees and IDPs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activity 3: Institutional Capacity Building and Access to Labour Market for refugees and IDPs
<p>Key Stakeholders:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit for Implementation of the Strategy and Decade for Roma (UISDR), MLSP • Unit for Migration, Asylum, and Humanitarian Aid (UMAHA), MLSP
<p>Target Groups:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLSP (UISDR and UMAHA) • Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio • National Coordinating Body for Implementation of Strategy and Decade for Roma • Local self-government units • Employment Service Agency • Civil society organizations active in the field of Roma issues, refugees and internally displaced persons



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ABBREVIATIONS

ALMM	Active labour market measures
CSO	Civil society organization
ESA	Employment Service Agency
EU	European Union
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
OPE	Operational Plan for Employment
PET	Polyethylene terephthalate
PETRA	Association of Plastic Collectors and Recyclers
PRP	Plastic Recycling Project
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ZNS	Association of Informal Plastic Collectors

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

There are no precise or official figures on the number of persons involved in the informal occupation of waste collection, but estimates gathered in preparing this report generally range from 3 000 to 5 000 persons. Available information indicates that Roma account for the vast majority of informal waste collectors, and that the occupation is most often shared among family members and passed from one generation to the next. Approximately three quarters of all informal waste collectors in the country are based in Skopje, with the remainder generally concentrated in the Roma quarters of other larger cities.

Key findings

- Low levels of educational attainment make for few occupational qualifications, as well as for ineligibility for active labour market measures offered by the Employment Service Agency.
- Widespread dependency on social assistance effectively demotivates recipients from taking initiatives to improve their lives beyond the guaranteed minimum.
- A considerable (if unknown) share of informal waste collectors lacks complete personal documentation.
- While waste collectors were targeted by Operational Plans for Employment in 2012 and 2013, available information suggests that this targeting was ultimately unsuccessful even among informal waste collectors meeting eligibility requirements.
- Other than active labour market measures, there have been few concerted efforts on the part of the state to address the situation of informal waste collectors.
- Non-government initiatives aimed at informal waste collectors have been effective from the standpoint of raising policy makers' awareness of the situation and in contributing to the generation of relevant policies, but have had little impact on informal waste collectors beyond the life of the respective projects.

Recommendations

1. Ensure access to personal documentation to facilitate use of public services.
2. Promote organization among informal waste collectors into legal entities with an eye to partnerships with public utility companies.
3. Facilitate completion of primary education by introducing and promoting programmes for skills recognition and informal completion of educational requirements.
4. Design employment measures around the specific needs and skills of informal waste collectors.
5. Incentivize entry into the formal labour market through the introduction of activations programmes which enable participants to continue to receive social assistance payments during a period of transition from official unemployment to participation in the labour market.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of report

Following a description of the methodology employed in the analysis, the report provides a brief overview of the situation of informal waste collectors in Macedonia, attending to their numbers, geographical distribution, educational profiles, and access to services. Next, the report reviews relevant legislation, policies, and procedures in terms of their consequences for informal waste collection. In Section 4 of the report, the focus turns to government programmes and non-governmental initiatives with potential to improve the situation of informal waste collectors. The report's final section consists on the one hand of a synthetic review of the problems, obstacles, and outstanding needs faced by informal waste collectors, and on the other hand of a set of guidelines for establishing system-level mechanisms for informal waste collectors' professional orientation and inclusion in the labour market.

This report (Output 11) contributes to the implementation of Activity 1.5 (“Conducting an analysis with recommendations for persons involved in informal occupation of waste collection and setting a mechanism for their professional orientation possibilities and inclusion in the labour market through active labour market measures (main identified problems, needs and obstacles, main traditional jobs and educational level, professional orientation, opportunities and systematic measures necessary to be undertaken)”), of which it is also the sole output.

1.2 Methodology

The analysis on which this report is based was conducted using both primary and secondary research. The initial phase of the analysis emphasized secondary sources, including laws, operational and policy documents, and reports on relevant initiatives implemented by governmental and non-governmental actors. This initial phase in turn informed the design of the primary research, which consisted on the one hand of semi-structured interviews with representatives of eight relevant institutions and organizations,² and on the other hand of two focus groups: one with 10 informal waste collectors based in Skopje,³ the other with representatives of seven of the 12 Roma Information Centres established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in selected municipalities throughout the country.⁴ Interview guides and focus group questions are included in this report as Annex 1.

² The names and institutional affiliations of interviewed stakeholders are provided in Annex 2.

³ The focus group with informal waste collectors was held on 6 June 2016.

⁴ Representatives of the following Roma Information Centres participated in the focus group held in Skopje on 21 June 2016: Berovo, Bitola, Delchevo, Kumanovo, Shuto Orizari, Tetovo, and Vinica.

2. INFORMAL WASTE COLLECTION

2.1 Frequency

There are no precise or official figures on the number of persons involved in the informal occupation of waste collection, with the estimates gathered from the primary and secondary sources consulted in preparing this report generally ranging from 3 000 to 5 000 persons. Given the absence of figures on the informal waste collector population as a whole, there are also no statistics on the ethnic composition of this population. However, all available information indicates that Roma account for the vast majority of informal waste collectors in Macedonia, and that the occupation is most often shared among family members and passed from one generation to the next. Among non-Roma engaged in informal waste collection, the main exceptions appear to consist of agricultural workers who collect waste materials when the volume of available agricultural work is insufficient for earning a living.

The main focus of informal waste collectors in Macedonia is on plastic bottles made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET). Another type of recyclable material commonly collected informally as a source of income is paper. Materials collected less frequently include aluminum, copper, and iron, as well as old electrical appliances and vehicles.

Estimates of the share of recyclables delivered by informal waste collectors range from 70% to over 90%. The fact that informal waste collectors account for the majority of delivered recyclable materials places them in an ambivalent relationship with official structures. On the one hand, the collection and delivery of recyclables is a public service insofar as it benefits the environment. On the other hand, the dominant role played by informal waste collectors in this process is a reflection of a combination of inattention on the part of the public utility companies tasked with waste collection and illegal removal (i.e., theft) by informal waste collectors of materials from containers owned by public utility companies.

2.2 Geographical distribution

Informal waste collectors are generally concentrated in the Roma quarters of larger cities, with a considerable share of informal waste collectors living in the vicinity of garbage dumps, usually located on the outskirts of towns. According to the interviewed representative of the CSO MDC-Ti.Net, which has extensive experience in designing and implementing projects with informal waste collectors (see Section 4.2 of this report), approximately three quarters of all informal waste collectors in the country are based in Skopje. In Skopje, the largest concentration of informal waste collectors resides in an informal settlement at the foot of the Ottoman fortress (Kale). In a focus group with informal waste collectors from this location organized as part of the research for the current report, participants reported having lived there for 5-9 years.

Responding to the question as to how far their place of residence is from their place of work, informal waste collectors participating in the focus group explained that the location of the place of work varies with where there are recyclables to be gathered. The range of modes of transportation used for informal waste collection is also broad, from foot to cars via handcarts, bicycles, motorized scooters, and motorcycles. A common complaint among participants in this focus group was lack of access to a recycling yard for storing 25 kilogram sacks of plastic bottles, gathered at a rate of approximately two sacks per person per day. In light of these logistical constraints, participants in this focus group reported that they find themselves in a weak position to negotiate selling price, usually selling the collected materials to middlemen who have trucks of their own to transport larger quantities of recycling materials to major recyclers, often at prices considerably lower than those paid by the major recyclers.

2.3 Educational level and occupational qualifications

All available information suggests that the level of educational attainment of informal waste collectors is low, with few having completed higher than primary education. Among the participants in the focus group with informal waste collectors organized in preparing this report, the highest level of completed education was fourth grade. Additionally, several of the participants reporting never having attended school.

In light of informal waste collectors' low levels of educational attainment, it stands to reason that members of this population generally have few occupational qualifications, placing them in a pool of unskilled labourers who compete for the lowest-paid jobs. Consistent with this, all participants in the focus group with informal waste collectors reported having been involved in waste collection since childhood. At the same time, although few of the participants in this focus group had experience with any form of structured job training, several participants reported experience with occupations other than waste collection, including agriculture (mainly seasonal crop picking), cleaning (houses and restaurants), construction, demolition, raising livestock, and leather processing.

2.4 Access to services

Available information suggests that a considerable (if unknown) share of informal waste collectors lack complete personal documentation, including birth certificates and personal ID cards. This situation negatively affects access to a broad range of social services.

2.4.1 Education

The fact that the occupation of waste collection is often passed from one generation to the next from an early age contributes to the perpetuation of low levels of educational attainment among informal waste collectors. To the extent that they is indicative of a broader trend within the population

involved in informal waste collection, the lower levels of educational attainment among the younger participants in the focus group with informal waste collectors relative to their counterparts from the previous generation are cause for alarm.

2.4.2 Employment and social assistance

As will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.1.1.2, informal waste collectors' low levels of educational attainment mean that they are generally not eligible to benefit from active labour market measures offered by the Employment Service Agency (ESA). For informal waste collectors residing in informal settlements, the lack of a permanent address poses an additional barrier to accessing not only the services of ESA, but also to employment more broadly. Among participants in the focus group with informal waste collectors organized in preparing this report, most indicated that they had never been registered with ESA.

Beyond narrowly defined issues of access, the primary and secondary sources consulted in preparing this report point to higher levels of interest among informal waste collectors in improving conditions for waste collection than in undergoing training for other occupations. At the same time, participants in the focus group with informal waste collectors organized in preparing this report expressed interest in training on health and hygiene, providing support for the approach taken in past non-governmental initiatives with informal waste collectors (reviewed in Section 4.2). Further, one participant in this focus group who participated in a previous non-governmental initiative on waste collection also expressed interest in employment with the public utility company.

The sources consulted in preparing this report indicate low levels of interest on the part of informal waste collectors in entry into the formal economy in exchange for a monthly salary with health and pension benefits. Apparently the main factor in accounting for this state of affairs is dependence on social assistance. As was noted in the National Employment Strategy 2016-2020, the current social protection system leads to inactivity among members of recipient households (Ministerstvo za trudi socijalna politika 2015a: 41). Further, long-term reliance on social benefits has been shown to increase the probability of passing on this model to future generations, with the corresponding negative implications for labour market participation (Ministerstvo za trud i socijalna politika 2014b: 35). Here, it is important to note that this dependence is not unique to informal waste collectors and stems from a system of social protection that is not oriented toward long-term development, instead effectively demotivating recipients from taking initiative to improve their lives beyond the guaranteed minimum. Such a system makes (re-)entry into the official labour market extremely difficult. An illustration of this situation comes from the focus group with informal waste collectors organized in preparing this report, with most participants expressing reluctance to undertake anything that would place their access to social assistance at risk despite the fact that the highest reported monthly income from state-provided benefits (including not only social assistance, but also the subsidy for the third child) was less than EUR 150 for a five-member family.

Closely related to the dependence on social assistance, available information suggests that informal waste collectors generally prefer to be paid on a daily basis, with participants in the focus group with informal waste collectors organized in preparing this report estimating average per capita daily

earnings at EUR 6. On the other hand, some participants in the same focus group stated that they would be willing to work for a monthly salary if it were sufficient to cover their needs and paid consistently on time.

Yet another factor complicating informal waste collectors' participation in the labour market are accumulated fines. The primary and secondary research conducted in preparing this report revealed that informal waste collectors often receive fines for taking recyclables from containers owned by public utility companies, littering, and use of horses in road traffic. Generally lacking the funds to pay the fines, informal waste collectors are sometimes punished with mandatory participation in public works which effectively prevents them from earning a living.

2.4.3 Healthcare

As mentioned above, many informal waste collectors lack complete personal documentation. As a result, they are not eligible for state-provided health insurance. Consistent with this, health insurance coverage among participants in the focus group with informal waste collectors organized in preparing this report, was uneven. On the other hand, the fact that all participants in the focus group with informal waste collectors reported being registered with the health clinic in the (Roma-majority) municipality of Shuto Orizari suggests that problems in access to healthcare cannot be attributed primarily to low levels of awareness.

2.4.4 Housing

The housing conditions of informal waste collectors in Macedonia are generally but not invariably poor. As might be expected, the housing conditions of informal waste collectors living in the vicinity of (or in) garbage dumps are particularly problematic. In light of the need for space in which to store collected recyclables, informal waste collectors rarely live in apartments. Nonetheless, some of the participants in the focus group with informal waste collectors organized in preparing this report expressed an interest in the apartments distributed through the state social housing programme.

3. LEGAL AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Legal environment

3.1.1 Legislation directly related to waste management

3.1.1.1 Law on Environment

Among the goals of the Law on Environment is “preservation, protection, renewal, and improvement of the quality of the environment.”⁵ Consistent with this goal, the Law calls for licensing in the areas of waste management and processing. For this purpose, entities active in the field of waste management are required to prepare an environmental impact assessment. Entities involved in treating and/or processing hazardous waste must also complete an additional study.

While informal waste collectors arguably contribute to the quality of the environment, they are poorly positioned to acquire the permits required by the Law on Environment. Reasons for this include their low levels of educational attainment and the closely related lack of awareness of relevant legislation and procedures, as well as a lack of capacity to form a legal entity that would allow them to perform their activities within the formal economy.

3.1.1.2 Law on Waste Management

The Law on Waste Management is a standardized EU legal act based on the principle that the polluter pays, accordingly introducing a system stipulating conditions for disposal of waste and processing of recyclables.⁶ The same law requires waste processors to be licensed for the operations of waste collection, transport, treatment, processing, storage, and disposal. Such licensed operators are the only entities authorized to collect waste materials and are required to possess documentation showing that the producers of the collected waste have disposed of it properly.

According to the Law on Waste Management, a waste collector is defined as a physical or legal person possessing a permit for collection and/or transportation of waste. An individual waste collector, on the other hand, is a physical person who occasionally or regularly collects and sells non-hazardous waste to a legal or physical persons possessing a permit for storing, treating, and/or processing waste. Beyond its direct provisions, the Law also calls for a strategy, plans, and programmes for waste management.

⁵ Zakon za životna sredina, *Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija* 81/2005, 24/07, 159/08, 83/09, 48/10, 124/10, 51/11, 123/12, 93/13, 42/14, 44/15, 129/15, 192/215, 39/16.

⁶ Zakon za upravuvanje so otpadot, *Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija* 68/2004, 107/07, 102/2008, 143/08, 124/10, 51/11, 123/12, 147/13, 163/13, 51/15, 146/15, 156/15, 192/15, 39/16, 63/16.

As one of the stakeholders interviewed in preparing this report put it, “there is no room for informal collectors” in the Law on Waste Management. Insofar as informal waste collectors lack the permits required by this law, their activities are technically illegal.

3.1.1.3 Law on Management of Packaging and Packaging Waste

The overall aim of the Law on Management of Packaging and Packaging Waste is the create conditions for establishing a system of return, selection, collection, re-use, processing, and recycling of packaging waste.⁷ Consistent with the principle that the polluter pays introduced in the Law on Waste Management, the Law on Management of Packaging and Packaging Waste requires waste producers, suppliers, and managers to provide appropriate compensation for packaging waste and to recycle used packaging materials. The Law further provides for licensing of companies for management of packaging and packaging waste through the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, stipulating that a minimum of three companies will be licensed in Skopje.

The mechanization of waste management stipulated in the Law on Management of Packaging and Packaging Waste increases pressure on informal waste collectors to adapt because it channels funding for recycling through the formal waste management system (MDC-Ti.Net 2014). At the same time, the stipulated minimum of three licensed waste management companies in Skopje would seem to bode well for the inclusion of informal waste collectors in the labour market insofar as the companies can be expected to create jobs in collection and recycling centres. As of June 2016, however, only one of the three recycling centres foreseen for Skopje was operational, with a second expected to begin operations in the near future. Additionally, this tightening of the legal framework for waste management has drastically reduced the potential for cooperation between informal waste collectors and Communal Hygiene Skopje, which in order to adapt its operations to this Law established a unit for sorting waste materials by transferring staff from other departments. As a result, since January 2015 informal waste collectors no longer make use of Skopje’s sole recycling centre.

3.1.2 Organizational forms available to informal waste collectors

3.1.2.1 Law on Cooperatives

The Law on Cooperatives defines its objects as legal entities (enterprises) established on a voluntary basis and controlled by the persons who make use of them.⁸ According to the Law, the establishment of a cooperative requires three founders, who may be physical or legal persons. Required organs of a cooperative include a general assembly consisting of all members with voting rights; a steering committee consisting of at least three members and of which the majority must be members of the cooperative; and one or more auditors elected by the general assembly for a period of one year or more.

⁷ Zakon za upravuvanje so pakuvanje i otpad od pakuvanje, *Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija* 161/2009, 17/11, 47/11, 136/11, 6/12, 39/12, 163/13, 146/15, 39/16.

⁸ Zakon za zadrugite, *Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija* 54/2002, 84/2005.

From the standpoint of the inclusion of informal waste collectors in the labour market, organization in a cooperative is attractive for its potential to pool resources and risks in an entity which is owned and managed by informal waste collectors themselves. The formation of a functional cooperative could also be expected to contribute indirectly to informal waste collectors' access to services in areas other than employment, such as education, healthcare, and housing. Notwithstanding the existence of CSOs which work with informal waste collectors, however, initiatives to date to form a cooperative among informal waste collectors have proven unsuccessful. Information gathered in the course of the interviews and focus groups conducted in preparing this report suggests that reasons for the lack of success in this regard include the complexity of the required organizational structures relative to informal waste collectors' low levels of educational attainment and the need to manage ambitions among potential members not used to working with non-relatives.

3.1.2.2 Law on Concessions and Other Kinds of Public-Private Partnership

As the name suggests, the Law on Concessions and Other Kinds of Public-Private Partnership establishes a model of partnership between public enterprises and private entities.⁹ Under this Law, partnerships of this kind are foreseen where they can be expected to generate public benefits superior to those generated in the customary way of securing conditions for the provision of public services. Possible public benefits may include but are not necessarily limited to reduced costs for the public partner and a higher standard of the provided public services.

Given that informal waste collectors account for the majority of delivered recyclables in Macedonia, a partnership between them and public utility companies could be expected to benefit the latter by lowering costs associated with transport and increasing the quantity of delivered recyclables while bringing about the inclusion of informal waste collectors in the labour market and increasing their access to public services. Missing, however, is the required entity consisting of informal waste collectors.

3.2 Policy environment

3.2.1 National level

As foreseen in the Law on Waste Management, the Macedonian government has adopted a corresponding strategy and plan. Covering the period from 2008 to 2020, the *Strategy for Waste Management* calls on local government units to develop local waste management plans (Vlada na Republika Makedonija 2008). The *National Waste Management Plan*, on the other hand, which expired with the end of 2015 and has not been replaced, sets targets for recovering and recycling waste materials (Ministerstvo za životna sredina i prostorno planiranje 2009). Targets for 2018

⁹ Zakon za koncesii i drugi vidovi javno privatno partnerstvo, *Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija* 6/2012, 144/15, 33/15, 215/15.

contained in this document include recovery of 50% of waste materials, with 25% of recovered waste materials to be recycled.

Although most informal waste collectors are Roma, neither the *Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020* nor the corresponding *National Action Plan for Employment 2016-2020* attend to informal waste collection (see Ministerstvo za trudi socijalna politika 2014b; 2016).

3.2.2 Local level

Whereas the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning is the key central-level institution where waste management is concerned, responsibilities related to day-to-day waste management are generally decentralized. Relevant activities delegated to local government units include organizing collection, transport, disposal of municipal waste; supervising transport and disposal of non-hazardous industrial waste; and establishing, financing, and supervising waste dumps, as well as closing illegal waste dumps. While several municipalities (including Gostivar, Kočani, and Tetovo, as well as Brvenica and Strumica) have adopted a local action plan for waste management, the City of Skopje has drafted but not adopted such a plan.

Like water supply, maintenance of green spaces, and burial services, waste collection at local level may be undertaken by a local public utility company, with public utility companies for waste collection required to generate a plan and programme and to issue annual reports.¹⁰ Also involved in waste collection at local level are waste management companies established in accordance with the Law on Management of Packaging and Packaging Waste, such as Euro-Ekopak, Eko-Pak Hit, and Pakomak.

¹⁰ Zakon za komunalnitate dejnosti, *Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija* 95/2012; Zakon za upravuvanje so otpadot, *Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija* 68/2004, 107/07, 102/2008, 143/08, 124/10, 51/11, 123/12, 147/13, 163/13, 51/15, 146/15, 156/15, 192/15, 39/16, 63/16.

4. INITIATIVES FOR INCLUSION OF INFORMAL WASTE COLLECTORS

4.1 Government initiatives

4.1.1 Active labour market measures

4.1.1.1 Inclusion of waste collectors in active labour market measures

Active labour market measures (ALMM) were first introduced in Macedonia in 2007. When the initial implementation of ALMM revealed difficulties on the part of various disadvantaged groups in accessing these measures, the need for more systematic and longer-term support to unemployed members of these groups was identified, with Roma and waste collectors included as separate categories in various Operational Plans for Employment (OPE).¹¹ More specifically, waste collectors have been included in two annual Operational Plans for Employment as a particularly vulnerable group (Ministerstvo za trudi socijalna politika 2011b; 2013). However, no indicators have been included to measure the participation of waste collectors in the available measures.

Although the 2009 OPE does not mention waste collectors as a category, the measure “Public Works” includes “support for establishment of garbage dumps/locations for waste collection” (Ministerstvo za trudi socijalna politika 2009). This measure targeted a total of 5 000 long-term unemployed, unemployed low-skilled workers, and unemployed aged over 55 years, providing for six-month work engagements without loss of social and other benefits available to registered unemployed. Data from ESA, however, indicate that Roma were not among beneficiaries of this measure due to lack of information sharing within the Roma population.

Waste collectors were first included as a target group in the OPE for 2012 (Ministerstvo za trudi socijalna politika 2011b). Together with other particularly vulnerable groups (including but not limited to Roma), waste collectors were targeted under the measures “Subsidized Employment” and “Community Works.” Under the first measure, a total of 600 unemployed persons including 100 members of vulnerable groups were to be employed at a monthly salary of MKD 14 000 (approximately EUR 225), with an additional monthly subsidy of MKD 3 000 (approximately EUR 50) to the host companies. Community Works programmes were piloted in the 2012 OPE, with programme participants receiving a MKD 6 000 (approximately EUR 100) per month to cover travel and meals for a part-time work engagement of six months. According to UNDP, which manages the Community Works programme in cooperation with ESA, none of the four municipalities included in the pilot programme made waste collection a priority action or identified waste collectors as service providers. Further, the expansion of Community Works to a total of 42 municipalities by 2015 did not bring increased attention to waste collectors.

In the 2013 OPE, waste collectors were again included as a target group, but again without specific indicators which would allow an assessment of their participation within the broader category of

¹¹ For a detailed account of the inclusion of Roma in active labour market measures, see EPTISA (2016).

“socially excluded” (Ministerstvo za trudi socijalna politika 2013). Unlike the previous year, however, waste collectors were not targeted under Community Works, but only under Subsidized Employment. While the overall design of this programme was largely unchanged from the previous year, the target numbers were reduced relative to 2012: from 600 to 500 unemployed persons in total, and from 100 to 80 members of vulnerable groups within the total.

4.1.1.2 Explaining low participation of waste collectors in active labour market measures

As mentioned above, specific indicators on the participation of informal waste collectors in active labour market measures are lacking and relevant data incomplete, but available information suggests that such participation has been low. Several factors contributing to this state of affairs receive attention below.

Taking into account informal waste collectors’ situation in relation to personal documentation and levels of educational attainment (as discussed in Section 2 of this report), the OPE basic eligibility criteria of Macedonian citizenship and completed primary education effectively exclude many informal waste collectors from benefitting from ALMM. Further, as noted during the focus group with informal waste collectors organized in preparing this report, even those who have completed primary education and are interested in principle to apply for self-employment programmes offered under the OPE face often find it difficult to complete the training in financial management that is not only required under the programmes, but also crucial for maintaining a business.

Another problem noted above (in Section 2) that affects informal waste collectors’ participation in ALMM is widespread dependency on social assistance. Beyond the characteristics of the informal waste collector population, however, there are significant gaps in relevant policies and legislation. On the one hand, some of the measures included in the OPE do not respond to the needs of informal waste collectors. As noted in the interviews and focus groups conducted in preparing this report, self-employment grants may be used for business registration and for purchase of technical equipment and raw materials, but not also for renting a recycling yard for gathering and processing collected materials. Some participants in interviews and focus groups also characterized the costs of obtaining the permits required to establish a recycling business as prohibitive in light of informal waste collectors’ access to capital.

A further gap in the design of the self-employment programme relates to joint ventures. In the course of the research conducted in preparing this report, it became apparent that the establishment of a waste collection company would require funding at a level of 10 or more individual grants. Lacking in the OPE, however, are provisions for multiple interested parties to submit a common application with a single business plan with an eye to merging their grants for start-up of a joint business.

In addition to shortcomings in the design of existing policies, the absence of legislation on social enterprises poses a barrier to the design of active labour market measures appropriate to bring about informal waste collectors’ inclusion in the formal labour market. While the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) developed a draft law on social enterprises in 2013, as of June 2016 the draft

was still pending adoption by the Government. Given the overall situation of the labour market in Macedonia, this is a significant gap, as social enterprises could contribute significantly to higher employment rates, as well as to improving the quality of community goods and services.

4.1.2. Inter-institutional cooperation

Other than active labour market measures, there have been few concerted efforts on the part of the state to address the situation of informal waste collectors. Although a cross-sectoral working group was formed in accordance with the *Strategy for Waste Management*, infrequent meetings have made for few concrete contributions. Closely related to the sparseness of concerted efforts, the stakeholders interviewed in preparing this report described a paucity of inter-institutional cooperation in relation to informal waste collection. With regard to the situation in Skopje in particular, the information gathered in the interviews suggests that the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning communicates on a regular basis with both Communal Hygiene Skopje and MLSP, while the latter two organizations communicate directly with one another. Also noted in the interviews was a lack of cooperation between the relevant ministries and CSOs, with communication between Communal Hygiene Skopje and CSOs assessed more favourably. According to the interviewed representative of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, this state of affairs has meant that the effects of projects implemented to date have been short-lived.

Although a lack of coordination among relevant institutions is problematic from the standpoint of developing an integrated approach to improving the situation of informal waste collectors, evidence gathered in the interviews conducted in preparing this report also suggest that this very lack of coordination has allowed informal waste collection to continue despite a hostile legal environment. More specifically, representatives of both the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning and Communal Hygiene Skopje noted that while the activities of informal waste collectors are often illegal, neither had alerted the Ministry of Interior to take measures against them for damaging infrastructure in order to access recyclable materials. Also worth noting is that all interviewed stakeholders presented informal waste collection as useful from the standpoint of recycling even if problematic in various other aspects.

4.2 Non-government initiatives

4.2.1 Plastic Recycling Project

The largest and arguably most significant initiative aimed at informal waste collectors in Macedonia to date was the Plastic Recycling Project (PRP). Funded by USAID and implemented by MDC-Ti.Net from 2005 through 2011, PRP aimed at establishing an efficient and economically viable programme for recycling PET waste (MDC-Ti.Net 2009). Key components of PRP included the following:

- Support to collection and recycling companies in obtaining environmental certification;
- Implementing a PET collection programme at local level;
- An information campaign to raise public awareness throughout the country;
- Local-level capacity building for plastic waste management;
- Establishment of a plastic recycling association (PETRA); and
- Support for institutionalization of the recycling industry via legislation on packaging waste.

Apparently drawing on experience from a project with informal waste collectors in Bulgaria, the first phase of PRP emphasized linking individual informal waste collectors to a specific territory on the one hand and sorting of waste materials on the other. PRP thus led to the division of Skopje into 19 distinct territories, which were subsequently assigned to an equal number of informal waste collectors who were also provided with protective clothing and keys to the corresponding recycling containers owned by the public utility company (Plastic Recycling Project 2011). As documented by the Project, however, within a day of the launch of the initiative to integrate the 19 informal waste collectors into the formal waste collection system, five of the initial group withdrew from the programme for fear of losing social benefits.

While a second phase of the project was aimed at bringing informal waste collectors together in a single legal entity, PRP ended before this phase was completed. This being the case, among PRP's most significant accomplishments was its contribution to increasing the volume of collected PET waste, from 350 tonnes in 2005 to 6 000 tons in 2009 (Plastic Recycling Project 2009). Although interviewed stakeholders' views on the merits of the attempt at formalization were more mixed, there was a broad consensus that the project did not ultimately succeed in bringing about informal waste collectors' integration in the labour market. The most negative view in this regard was expressed by one of the interviewed stakeholders from civil society, who maintained that the incomplete formalization of informal waste collectors had ultimately done more harm than good by upsetting previously functional informal relations without providing a viable replacement.

4.2.2 Inclusion of Informal Roma Waste Collectors into the Formal Waste Schemes

The second major project targeting informal waste collectors in Macedonia was "Inclusion of Informal Roma Waste Collectors into the Formal Waste Schemes" and was funded by the EU through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. Focusing on the Municipalities of Kočani and Strumica as well as the City of Skopje, the project aimed at developing a sustainable model that would improve informal waste collectors' access to education, employment, health, and social welfare services via their long-term employment in the formal recycling sector (MDC-Ti.Net 2014b). Activities undertaken in the framework of this project, which was implemented from December 2012 through February 2014 under the leadership of MDC-Ti.Net, included a situation analysis (MDC-Ti.Net 2013a) and the drafting of local action plans for the inclusion of informal waste collectors in the three targeted localities (MDC-Ti.Net 2013b; 2013c; 2013d).

4.2.3 New Partnerships for Socio-Economic Inclusion of Informal Waste Collectors

The project “New Partnerships for Socio-Economic Inclusion of Informal Waste Collectors” was implemented from December 2013 through May 2015 by MDC-Ti.Net in cooperation with PETRA and ZNS with financing from the EU under the National Programme for Transition Assistance and Institutional Building, IPA 2009. Broadly similar to the project “Inclusion of Informal Roma Waste Collectors into the Formal Waste Schemes,” this project was implemented in Kumanovo, Tetovo, and Vasilevo (MDC-Ti.Net 2014c). Key activities accordingly included a situation analysis and the development of municipal action plans for the inclusion of informal waste collectors in formal waste management.

4.2.4 From Trash to Cash: Sustainable Development and Economic Empowerment of Informal Waste Collectors through Waste Recycling in the Cross-Border Region with Albania

The most recent project implemented in Macedonia with informal waste collectors was “From Trash to Cash” and ran from November 2013 through April 2015 (MDC-Ti.Net 2014a). As the title suggests, this project was implemented not only in Macedonia, but also in Albania, with the municipalities covered in Macedonia Ohrid and Struga. Among the outputs of the project in Macedonia was a concept for a public-private partnership model involving the Municipalities of Ohrid and Struga, the respective municipal-level public utility companies, and informal waste collectors. From Trash to Cash was implemented by MDC-Ti.Net in partnership with PETRA in Macedonia, as well as Dorcass Aid International, Regional Development Agency Korcha, and Mission Emanuel Foundation in Albania.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Consisting primarily of Roma and largely concentrated in Skopje, informal waste collectors account for the majority of delivered recyclable materials in a legal environment which officially leaves no room for informal waste collection. At the same time, low levels of educational attainment make for few occupational qualifications, as well as for ineligibility for active labour market measures offered by the Employment Service Agency. Additionally, widespread dependency on social assistance effectively demotivates recipients from taking initiatives to improve their lives beyond the guaranteed minimum. Further, a considerable (if unknown) share of informal waste collectors lacks complete personal documentation, negatively affecting their access to a broad range of social services. Taken together, these factors combine to leave informal waste collectors poorly positioned to form legal entities that would allow their inclusion in the labour market.

Although waste collectors were targeted by Operational Plans for Employment in 2012 and 2013, available information suggests that their access to relevant measures was limited by insufficient information and low levels of education, as well as by an imperfect fit between the measures and informal waste collectors' needs, including the lack of provisions for grants to establish a joint business, restrictions on the use of self-employment grants, the costs of obtaining required permits, and the absence of legislation on social enterprises. Other than active labour market measures, there have been few concerted efforts on the part of the state to address the situation of informal waste collectors. Non-government initiatives aimed at informal waste collectors have been effective from the standpoint of raising policy makers' awareness of the situation and in contributing to the generation of relevant policies, but have had little impact on informal waste collectors beyond the life of the respective projects.

5.2 Recommendations

Listed in approximate order of priority, the recommendations below are intended as guidelines for establishing system-level mechanisms for informal waste collectors' professional orientation and inclusion in the labour market.

1. *Ensure access to personal documentation.* Informal waste collectors who lack personal documentation should be identified by Roma Information Centres, local authorities, and/or CSOs and referred to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and other relevant institutions for assistance in birth registration and obtaining birth certificates and valid identification.
2. *Promote organization among informal waste collectors.* Experiences from neighbouring countries point to the potential of legal entities bringing together multiple informal waste collectors for sustainably increasing informal waste collectors' productivity and security (see,

for example, Council of Europe 2013; Nešić 2012; Peycheva 2012). Whereas the legislation currently in force in Macedonia covers cooperatives, micro-companies, and public-private partnerships, legislation on social entrepreneurship has been drafted but remains to be adopted. Given the inability to date of informal waste collectors to form their own legal entities and the centrality for social entrepreneurship of principles such as equality and non-discrimination, increasing the employment rate, solidarity, and volunteering for generating a positive social impact, the adoption of legislation in this area is likely to prove particularly important for the inclusion of informal waste collectors in the labour market. Once organized in legal entities, previously informal waste collectors become viable partners for public utility companies.

3. *Facilitate completion of primary education.* The introduction and promotion among informal waste collectors of programmes for skills recognition and informal completion of primary education would contribute significantly to the possibilities for informal waste collectors to compete on the labour market and to make use of employment measures offered by the Employment Service Agency. Efforts should also be made to convey to informal waste collectors the importance of their children's education with an eye to the next generation's smooth inclusion in the labour market.
4. *Design employment measures around specific needs.* Operational Plans for Employment should take into account the specific needs and skills of informal waste collectors. With an eye to allowing informal waste collectors to apply their skills in formal employment, consideration should be given to piloting a self-employment programme that would allow multiple applicants to submit a joint business plan and pool their individual grants to establish a waste collection business. Such a programme would also require enabling the use of the grants to cover costs associated with establishing the business, including but not limited to rental of a recycling yard and obtaining needed permits. The attractiveness and viability of a self-employment programme targeting informal waste collectors could be further increased by providing training and equipment for participants' health and hygiene. Another type of measure to be considered is subsidized employment with public utility companies.
5. *Incentivize entry into the formal labour market.* Activation programmes should be introduced to enable, encourage, and require social assistance recipients of working age to enter the labour market. Such programmes would enable participants to continue to receive social assistance payments during a period of transition from official unemployment to participation in the labour market, whether as an entrepreneur or as an employee.¹²Crucial for the successful and design of activation programmes in Macedonia is coordination between the Employment Service Agency and the Sector for Social Protection of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

¹² For details on activation programme models potentially relevant for Macedonia, see EPTISA (2016).

Toward successful realization of the recommendations above, consideration should also be given to the following supportive measures:

- *Coordinate for continuity.* The impact of donor-funded initiatives aimed at informal waste collectors should be maximized by combining funding from as many sources as necessary to ensure stable support for completing the entire set of activities needed to establishing working mechanisms for bringing about informal waste collectors' inclusion in the labour market.
- *Attend to informal waste collectors in local policies.* Treating the situation of informal waste collectors as a socio-economic issue, informal waste collectors should be included in public works projects incorporated in five-year local waste management plans.
- *Motivate to recycle.* Taking into account that the collection of recyclables benefits not only those who collect the recyclables, but also the environment, easily digestible information on recycling schemes and on the importance and ease of recycling should be disseminated widely, including in primary schools. Consideration should also be given to subsidies for participation in recycling schemes.

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ANNEX 1: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Interview guide 1

- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
- Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
- Employment Centre of the City of Skopje

Informal waste collectors: Available data

- Number of informal waste collectors
- Geographic distribution of informal waste collectors
- Types of waste collected, by frequency
- Educational profile(s) of informal waste collectors
- Occupational qualifications of informal waste collectors
- Employment history among informal waste collectors
- Access to health insurance among informal waste collectors
- Dwelling types among informal waste collectors
- Current number of formalized informal waste collectors
- Other sources of figures on population of informal waste collectors

Relevant policies, programmes, and activities

1. Strategic documents targeting informal waste collectors
2. Legal and other barriers to legalization of informal waste collectors
3. Inter-institutional cooperation: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, City of Skopje, Communal Hygiene
4. Cooperation with civil society organizations for inclusion of informal waste collectors
5. Recent/planned changes to legislation and/or strategies focused on/relevant to informal waste collection
6. Most important initiatives (recent/current/planned) with informal waste collectors (and relevant contacts)
 - a. Subsidies for establishing a formal business?
 - b. Public works?
 - c. Other?
7. Realistic options for informal waste collectors' professional orientation and inclusion in labour market
8. Other interlocutors/institutions on informal waste collection

Interview guide 2

- Public Utility Company Communal Hygiene Skopje
- Pakomak

Informal waste collectors: Available data

- Number of informal waste collectors
- Geographic distribution of informal waste collectors
- Types of waste collected, by frequency
- Educational profile(s) of informal waste collectors
- Occupational qualifications of informal waste collectors
- Employment history among informal waste collectors
- Access to health insurance among informal waste collectors
- Dwelling types among informal waste collectors
- Current number of formalized informal waste collectors
- Other sources of figures on population of informal waste collectors

Relevant policies, programmes, and activities

1. Cooperation with informal waste collectors
2. Inclusion of informal waste collectors in programmes and plans
3. Legal and other barriers to legalization of informal waste collectors
4. Inter-institutional cooperation: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, City of Skopje, Communal Hygiene
5. Cooperation with civil society organizations for inclusion of informal waste collectors
6. Most important initiatives (recent/current/planned) with informal waste collectors (and relevant contacts)
 - a. Subsidies for establishing a formal business?
 - b. Public works?
 - c. Other?
7. Realistic options for informal waste collectors' professional orientation and inclusion in labour market
8. Other interlocutors/institutions on informal waste collection

Interview guide 3

- Association of Informal Plastic Collectors (ZNS)
- Association of Plastic Collectors and Recyclers (PETRA)

Informal waste collectors: Available data

- Number of informal waste collectors
- Geographic distribution of informal waste collectors
- Types of waste collected, by frequency
- Educational profile(s) of informal waste collectors
- Occupational qualifications of informal waste collectors
- Employment history among informal waste collectors
- Access to health insurance among informal waste collectors
- Dwelling types among informal waste collectors
- Current number of formalized informal waste collectors
- Other sources of figures on population of informal waste collectors

Relevant policies, programmes, and activities

1. Legal and other barriers to legalization of informal waste collectors
2. Contacts/communication with:
 - a. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
 - b. Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
 - c. City of Skopje
 - d. Communal Hygiene
 - e. Private firms
3. Most important initiatives (recent/current/planned) with informal waste collectors (and relevant contacts)
 - a. Subsidies for establishing a formal business?
 - b. Public works?
 - c. Other?
4. Realistic options for informal waste collectors' professional orientation and inclusion in labour market
5. Other interlocutors/institutions on informal waste collection

Questions for focus group: Informal waste collectors

- 1. What are your main sources of income at present (waste, social welfare, other)?**
 - a. What kinds of work do you do to sustain your family?
 - b. For how long have you been involved in waste collection? (Who in your family participates in waste collection? Who does not participate? (Why?))
 - c. How have you earned a living in the past?
 - d. How did your parents earn a living? (Their parents?)

- 2. What kinds of waste do you collect?**
 - a. Which the most? Which the least? Why?
 - b. To whom do you sell what you collect?

- 3. Where do you live?**
 - a. For how long have you lived there?
 - b. How far is the place where you live from the places where you collect waste?
 - c. Which modes of transport do you use to collect waste?

- 4. Where do you go if you need a doctor?**
 - a. How do you pay for medical services? (Vouchers? Privately?)

- 5. How many years of school have you completed?**
 - a. In what kinds of vocational training have you participated?
 - b. What were the main reasons for not completing more schooling/training?

- 6. If you could choose any kind of work, what would it be?**
 - a. What is missing in order for you to be able to do the kind of work that you would choose?
 - b. What are your experiences with the Employment Service Agency?
 - c. In what kinds of training would you be interested to participate?

Questions for focus group: Roma Information Centres

- 1. How much is known about informal waste collectors in your municipality?**
 - a. How many informal waste collectors in your municipality? (How are they registered?)
 - b. Where in your municipality do informal waste collectors live?
 - c. Where do informal waste collectors sell the collected material? (To whom? At what price?)

- 2. What kind of communication exists between Roma Information Centres and informal waste collectors?**
 - a. For what kinds of concerns do informal waste collectors contact Roma Information Centres?
 - b. In which areas do informal waste collectors seek help (social, economic, health, housing, etc.)?

- 3. How do you assess collaboration between Roma Information Centres and other institutions in relation to informal waste collectors?**
 - a. With which institutions are you in most frequent contact in relation to informal waste collectors?
 - b. Where do you see a need for improvement in collaboration with institutions?

- 4. Which employment measures do informal waste collectors use? (Statistics?)**
 - a. About which employment measures do informal waste collectors request information? (Statistics?)
 - b. How much do informal waste collectors make use of active labour market measures?
 - c. Which problems do informal waste collectors face in the area of employment?

- 5. What is the situation of informal waste collectors?**
 - a. What are the living conditions of informal waste collectors?
 - b. What share of informal waste collectors have health insurance?
 - c. What level of education have informal waste collectors completed?
 - d. What share of informal waste collectors' children attend school?

- 6. How familiar are you with the legal framework relevant to informal waste collection?**
 - a. How much do you know about public utility companies responsible for waste collection? Private waste collection companies? Recycling associations?
 - b. What kind of information do you need to be more helpful to informal waste collectors?

ANNEX 2: INTERVIEWED STAKEHOLDERS

Name (Last, First)	Organization/Institution	Date
Bosilkovski, Dobre	Communal Hygiene Skopje	26.05.2016
Kamberi, Mabera	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	31.05.2016
Lazarov, Aleksandar	Association of Plastic Collectors and Recyclers (PETRA)	14.06.2016
Makaloski, Igor	PAKOMAK	14.06.2016
Mazleva, Ana	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning	26.05.2016
Tikveshanski, Aleksandar	Association of Informal Plastic Collectors (ZNS)	27.05.2016
Toska, Arijan	MDC-TI.Net	22.04.2016 and 27.06.2016
Zilbeari, Vedat	Employment Service Agency	27.05.2016

Note: In addition to the interviews conducted with the stakeholders listed in the table above, an interview was also requested with a representative of the waste management company Grinteh. The request was not granted with the explanation that the company lacks the information necessary to respond to the questions in Interview guide 2.