



**STRATEGY FOR INCLUSION OF
ROMA 2022 – 2030**

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Action plan
EARNM	Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia
LFS	Labor Force Survey
GMA	Guaranteed minimum assistance
GUP	General Urbanistic Plan
DUP	Detailed Urbanistic Plan
SSO	State Statistical Office
EU	European Union
WB	Western Balkan
IPHRNM	Institute of Public Health of the Republic of North Macedonia
MSCA	Ministry of Information Society and Administration
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MES	Ministry of education and science
MH	Ministry of Health
MLS	Ministry of local self-governance
MLSP	Ministry of labor and social policy
MTC	Ministry of transport and communication
MF	Ministry of finance
NCIRM	National Coordinator for the implementation of the Roma Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
UN	United Nations
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RNM	Republic of North Macedonia
REF	Roma Education Fund
RIC	Roma information center
RHM	Roma Health Mediators
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAD	United States Agency for International Development
FOO	Open Society Foundation
HIF	Healthcare Insurance Fund of the Republic of North Macedonia

INTRODUCTION

The realization of the long-term goal of joining NATO, as well as the aspiration for full integration into the European Union, explicitly shows the commitment of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia to create a society based on identical values as those of the Union - respect of human rights, equality, democracy, rule of law and establishing a functional market economy for all citizens. In that direction, improving the quality of life and striving to build an equal and cohesive society based on trust, cooperation, where citizens and communities feel safe and have equal opportunities for personal development, is one of the main pillars of the Government 2020-2024.¹

The attempts to start negotiations with the European Union and boost regional co-operation in the Western Balkans as part of the Berlin process in support of EU enlargement have resulted in several initiatives, including Western Balkan countries' efforts to speed up Roma integration. As a result of the Berlin Process, in July 2019, at the Poznan Summit, the Prime Ministers of the Western Balkans adopted the Declaration on Roma Integration², where they pledged to improve the situation of Roma in the region and achieve concrete results in the field of education and employment, health, housing, civil documentation and the fight against discrimination until they become members of the EU. Additionally, the Prime Ministers of the Western Balkan countries at their last meeting in Berlin stressed the importance of including Roma integration in general policies, as well as in the digital and green agenda for the Western Balkans (improving digital skills, digital education, environmental justice and green transformation).

On the European level, the evaluation of the Roma strategies of the European Union countries for the period 2011-2017 and the data from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights in 2011, 2016 and 2019 demonstrate that the overall progress of the integration of the Roma is limited. However, there are significant differences in policy areas and countries³. Considering the results of the evaluation, on October 7, 2020, the European Commission adopted a new 10-year "EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation (2021-2030)"⁴, which was supported by the Western Balkan partners at the Ministerial meeting on October 27 in Albania.

¹ Program work of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia in the period 2020-2024, Government of the RSM (2020). Available at: https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/programa-na-vlada-agenda2024-finalno_programa_1.pdf

² Declaration by the Western Balkan Partners on Roma Integration in the EU Enlargement Process. Available at: <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/866ab25893dd6d9271ebccbfd195349e.pdf>

³ Recommendation of the Council for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation, European Commission (2020) available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0621&from=EN>

⁴ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - Equality Union: EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation

The Republic of North Macedonia in the period 2005-2015 and 2016-2020 adopted two National Strategies for Roma⁵, adopted NAPs for all priority areas, set up infrastructure for monitoring and coordination of activities, as well as implemented targeted and mainstream measures to improve the position of the Roma community. Despite the implementation of the two national strategies, the reports of the European Commission, civil society organizations and the community indicate the need for accelerated implementation of public policies and activities that will focus on supporting and improving the position of the Roma community in the society.

The COVID19 pandemic imposed new challenges in social inclusion, highlighting the systemic flaws in housing, employment, and health, and further exacerbated the positive changes in education. Part of the Roma community in the margins of society is extremely exposed to negative health and socio-economic impacts manifested by limited access to clean water, basic sanitation infrastructure, and lack of capacity and digital skills of students to participate in the educational processes. Additionally, the COVID19 pandemic affected the labor market in both the formal and informal sectors, pushing the Roma community to higher unemployment and higher risk of poverty.

Steered by the commitments resulting from the Poznan Declaration on the Western Balkans for the integration of Roma within the EU enlargement process, as well as the conclusions of the meeting of ministers for Roma inclusion in 2020, the Republic of North Macedonia approached the preparation of a new Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022 - 2030 following the guidelines given in the EU Strategic Framework for Roma. The Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022 - 2030 is part of the public policies of the Republic of North Macedonia for levelling the degree of inclusion and integration of the Roma community with all ethnic communities. Investing in the development of the Roma community has long-term benefits in improving the social cohesion and economic status of Roma in the long run. In addition, the inclusion of Roma in society will positively impact the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and receive positive assessments in the part of Chapter 23, which refers to the advancement of the field of justice and human rights.

⁵ Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020.

Available at: <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/strategii/Strategija%20za%20Romite%20vo%20RM%202014-2020.pdf>

Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2005-2015.
Available at: https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/strategija_romi.pdf

METHODOLOGY

The process of preparation of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022 - 2030 is led by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia through the Advisor for Roma Inclusion of the Prime Minister, as a National Contact Point for Roma in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy as the responsible stakeholder of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022 - 2030, with technical support from the Regional Cooperation Council, project for "Roma Integration 2020".

According to the conclusions of the meeting of the Ministers for Roma Inclusion, the national strategic framework is based on the principles of equality, promoting the participation of the Roma community in all stages of policy making, reflecting on Roma diversity, combining mainstream and targeted measures in each area. The preparation of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030 is developed through a participatory process of the ministries and responsible institutions related to the priority areas of the EU Strategic Framework for Roma in consultation with the civil society organizations working on the integration of Roma in society. The process of creating the new strategy went through several stages:

- Phase 1 - Establishment of Working Groups within the competent ministries, in coordination with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy.
- Phase 2 - Open call for consultations with civil society organizations to collect proposals and nominate persons to participate in the working groups through the NGO Cooperation platform.
- Phase 3 - Implementation of two workshops for harmonization of the proposals and competencies of each of the working groups from the ministry and the representatives of the civil society organizations.
- Phase 4 - Conducted 45 focus groups with the Roma communities in 15 municipalities with the support of the Roma Inclusion Project, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Open Society Foundations, Roma Initiatives Office, Berlin
- Phase 5 - Forum with representatives of civil society organizations and working groups from the relevant ministries.
- Phase 6 - Coordinated public consultation through ENER by submitting proposals, opinions and remarks from the general public.
- Phase 7 - Adoption of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022 - 2030 by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.

During the preparation of the strategy it was used primary data from the relevant databases of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Employment Agency, the State Statistical Office, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, and the Ministry of Health.

Additionally, during the period August – September 2021, focus groups were conducted with the Roma community, and the conclusions of the focus groups are included in the analysis and proposed measures for the new strategy. Secondary data sources from shadow reports, reports by civil society organizations, UNDP regional surveys, multi-indicator cluster survey (MICS), social mapping of the Roma community, feasibility studies for Roma settlements are used to determine the situation and challenges, as well as other relevant research and policy analysis.

The participatory approach on developing the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030 enabled direct and substantial participation of civil society organizations and the community, providing space for proposals of measures and activities that they consider should be part of the Government's policies for Roma integration. The Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030 is projected until 2030, and it is recommended that in 2025 the processes to be reconsidered and analysis to be made for the further steps. The document consists of eight strategic areas, where firstly the situation is analyzed by assessing the strategic documents, institutions and stakeholders, the external environment providing conclusions about the challenges. The situation analysis is the basis for the developed priorities and priority goals in each strategic area, which are further developed in specific measures

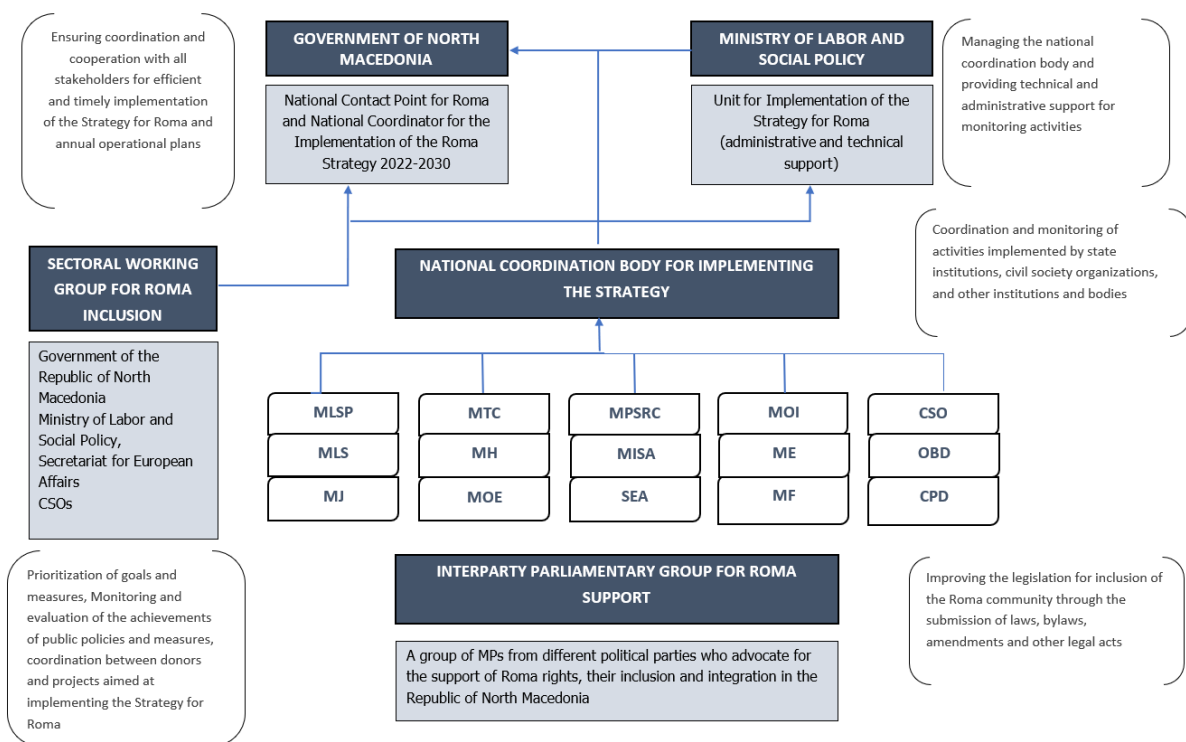
This document was subject of extensive consultations and discussions in the period May - December 2021 involving citizens, representatives of state institutions, civil society, and other stakeholders. It incorporates many of the submitted comments, suggestions from the public discussions. Through this process, the document in large extent reflects the steps needed to achieve the vision of an inclusive society.

INSTITUTIONAL SETUP

The position of the Roma and their social inclusion is high on the agenda of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. With the decision to abolish the position of Minister without portfolio, and the appointment of a Roma Inclusion Advisor within the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, the Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022-2030 and its implementation is set at the governmental level to ensure improvement in the quality of life of the Roma community. The institutional set-up for the implementation of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030 consists of:

- National Contact Point for Roma and National Coordinator for Implementation of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030,
- Ministry of Labor and Social Policy,
- National Coordination Body for the implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022-2030, which includes line ministries for the implementation of the strategy, civil society organizations, the Ombudsman, the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination,
- Sectoral Working Group on Roma Integration, and
- Inter-party parliamentary group for support of Roma.

Figure 1 Institutional set-up of the implementation of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030



The implementation of this strategy at the political level is monitored by the National Contact Point for Roma and the National Coordinator for the implementation of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030, nominated by the Government of the Republic of Northern Macedonia. The role and responsibilities of the National Contact Point for Roma are defined in the governmental conclusion as of February 2021. The primary role of the National Contact Point for Roma is to ensure coordination and cooperation with all stakeholders for efficient and timely implementation of the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma 2022-2030 and the national and annual operational plans. The National Contact Point coordinates the process of monitoring, implementation and informs the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia on the measures taken regarding the implementation of the activities of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030 and also represents the country at the international level for the issues related to the Roma community.

As the Deputy Contact Point for Roma, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is responsible for the coordination between the line ministries and governmental institutions/offices to integrate Roma issues into the main socio-economic policies and action plans. Additionally, the MLSP coordinates the work of the National Coordination Body in ensuring the functionality of working groups in the line ministries in the process of preparation, implementation and monitoring of the annual operational plans in accordance with the provided budget at the level of the line ministries. Within the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, there is also a Unit for Implementation of the Strategy and Decade of Roma, which provides administrative and technical support for the work and tasks related to the implementation, information and data collection for the implementation of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030.

The National Coordination Body (NCB) has been established with a specific role as a structure that should observe and direct the implementation of strategies and policies for social inclusion and integration of Roma. Among other things, the NCB should ensure effective coordination between state institutions and civil society organizations; oversee the implementation of national action plans; preparation of annual operational plans (AOPs), periodic monitoring and evaluation, including the preparation of reports, as well as a database on social inclusion of Roma. Additionally, the representatives of international institutions and organizations (OSCE; USAID; EU; SDC, RCC, REF) should have a status of observers who can significantly improve the coordination of projects and provide expertise and support in planning the public policies.

In order to improve the level of implementation of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030, a Sectoral Working Group for Roma Integration was created in December 2019, which aims to apply the sectoral approach in programming the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in the direction of support in resolving Roma-related issues. The Sector Working Group monitors and evaluates the implementation and

progress of interrelated policies and strategic documents in the areas and monitors the processes. This working group serves as a platform that works on ideas for improving the process of Roma integration, thus directly contributing to the overall goal of achieving higher socio-economic standards for the Roma population. Additionally, one of the roles of the Sector Working Group is to assist in interdepartmental coordination for programming, monitoring and evaluation of donor support for projects related to the Roma community.

The Inter-Party Parliamentary Group for Support of Roma was formed in February 2021. One of the goals is to support the rights of Roma, their inclusion and integration in the Republic of North Macedonia, where members of the existing parliament from different political parties are members. The role of the Roma Parliamentary Group in the implementation of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030 is aimed at coordinating with representatives of the parliament, providing support, and promoting legislation that directly affects the Roma community.

This institutional set-up should enable a higher degree of realization of the measures and activities and contribute to the promotion of the cooperation of the line ministries, civil society organizations and international institutions and donors.

OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT DOCUMENTS AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Strategy for Inclusion of Roma 2022-2030 has been adopted in accordance with the priorities of the Program of the Government 2020-2024, associated with achieving accelerated and sustainable economic growth, higher living standards and quality of life of the citizens: quality education accessible to all and full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. These strategic priorities are directly linked to the inclusion of Roma in terms of advancing the position of ethnic communities and ensuring equal treatment with respect for the fundamental rights of all citizens, while the support for the Roma community is aimed at expanding access and improving the quality of education, employment, health, housing and other social services. The policy instruments to achieve these goals include general and targeted measures, including affirmative action to prevent or bridge the gap between different communities or a combination of both, with a particular focus on a gender perspective.

The strategic direction of the Government of North Macedonia is opening the negotiation with the EU as the country is now a member of the NATO alliance. The European perspective of the whole region was confirmed in March 2020, when the member states supported the Commission's proposals for strengthening the methodology⁶ for the accession process and decided to open accession negotiations with the Republic of Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia. The Commission indicated that it would use the enlargement package to assess the candidate countries' alignment with the acquis and provide more explicit guidance on specific reform priorities and compliance criteria and expectations for the next steps in the process.

To this end, the strategic approach to Roma inclusion, as stated in the new ten-year strategic framework for Roma inclusion, becomes part of the EU enlargement process and part of the acquis, hence the achievements in implementing the activities of the national plans are subject to regular screening. In essence, it is the responsibility of the Government to abide by the rules and procedures relating, among other things, to the inclusion of Roma in respect of fundamental human rights, the protection of minorities, discrimination, and the inclusion of Roma, which are included in Chapter 23 - The Judiciary and human rights from the Stabilization and Association Agreement.

⁶ Communication from the European Commission "Advancing the accession process - a credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans". Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2020-02/enlargement-methodology_en.pdf

International instruments and regulations

At the EU Summit for the Western Balkans in Zagreb in May 2020, EU leaders reaffirmed their support for the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries and their determination to step up support for its political, economic and social transformation⁷. Western Balkan partners and EU member states presented the annual economic reform programs (ERPs), including reforms to strengthen competitiveness and improve conditions for inclusive growth and job creation.

EU Strategic Framework for Roma Integration 2021-2030

The strategy has been prepared in accordance with the EU Strategic Framework for Roma Integration for the period 2021-2030, which promotes equality and socio-economic inclusion of the Roma population at the level of the European Union. The new EU Strategic Framework relates to the Commission's work in other areas, including the recently adopted EU Action Plan⁸ against Racism 2020-2025, the EU Victims' Strategy 2021-2025⁹ and the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025¹⁰. Under the guidelines set out in the strategic framework, the European Commission invites member states to submit national strategies by September 2021 and report on their implementation every two years. The countries of the Western Balkans have voluntarily joined this initiative to create new strategies for Roma due to the expiration of the previous strategies. The Commission will monitor progress towards the targets for the key indicators by 2030, relying on surveys conducted by EUROSTAT, the European Agency for Fundamental Rights and Civil Society Contributions. Additionally, an evaluation of the impact of the new 10-year strategic framework for Roma integration is envisaged.

Poznan declaration and the conclusion from the Berlin process

In July 2019, within the Berlin Process, the Declaration of the Western Balkan Partners on Roma Integration was adopted in the framework of the EU enlargement process. With the Declaration's adoption, governments pledged to strengthen further efforts to achieve Roma equality and full integration as part of regional cooperation and the European Union accession process. The Declaration envisages achieving specific goals in the areas of employment, education, housing, health care, documentation and the fight against discrimination. It also envisions the adoption of regional public budgeting standards related to

⁷ EU-Western Balkans Summit, 5-6 May 2020, Council Conclusions and COM (2020), Zagreb Declaration.

⁸ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Available

at:https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/a_union_of_equality_eu_action_plan_against_racism_2020_-2025_en.pdf

⁹ EU Victims' Rights Strategy (2020-2025) Available at:https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/criminal-justice/protecting-victims-rights/eu-strategy-victims-rights-2020-2025_en

¹⁰ Gender Equality Strategy. Available at:https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en

Roma integration and the establishment of formal channels and mechanisms for the joint involvement of local governments and Roma communities in policy-making and appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and reporting on policy implementation related to Roma integration. At the Ministerial Meeting held on October 27, 2020, in Albania, the representatives of the governments of the Western Balkan countries reached several conclusions regarding the mapping of Roma settlements, the end of statelessness, as well as the development, updating and harmonization of national strategies for the integration of Roma with the EU Strategic Framework for Roma.

At the last Berlin 2021 Summit, governments supported the conclusions of the Berlin Summit on 28 June 2021, identifying concrete measures to be taken to achieve progress in Roma integration in the areas of employment, housing and recovery from the COVID19 pandemic and its consequences. At the same time, the new Investment Framework for the Western Balkans is envisaged to be used as an additional tool to support integration measures, such as opportunities to finance social housing initiatives for vulnerable groups, including Roma.

EU Council Recommendation on Roma Equality and Inclusion¹¹

The Council's recommendations place particular emphasis on the need for EU member states to adopt a national strategic framework for the Roma community, with the primary aim of defining policies that improve the level of social inclusion and the position of the Roma. Particular emphasis is placed on the need to establish effective systems for combating discrimination, antigypsyism, social and economic exclusion and the participation and representation of Roma (including women, children, young and elderly members of the community, persons with disabilities), to ensure effective fight against discrimination in this community.

EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025¹²

The Racial Equality Directive¹³ has shaped legal protection against discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin for more than two decades. The Directive prohibits direct and indirect discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin in the areas of employment and occupation, education, social protection, including health care, social security, and access to and supply of goods and services available to the public, including housing. In recent years, the Commission has stepped up in the monitoring of its implementation. Particular focus was placed on discrimination against Roma children in education.

¹¹ Recommendation of the Council for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation, Council of the European Union (2021) Available at <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6070-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

¹² Equality Union: EU Action Plan against Racism 2020-2025, European Commission (2020)

Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/a_union_of_equality_eu_action_plan_against_racism_2020_-2025_en.pdf

¹³ Council Directive 2000/43 / EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin Available on: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32000L0043>

Economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans

The Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans aims to spur long-term recovery - backed by a green and digital transition - leading to sustainable economic growth, implementing the reforms needed to move the EU forward and bringing the Western Balkans closer to European single market. This plan aims to improve the region's economic potential and provide space for increased intra-regional economic cooperation and trade. The plan is based on a performance-based and reform-oriented proposal for Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance III (IPA III) and strengthened instruments to encourage investment in the public and private sectors. The Commission proposes to mobilize IPA III funds for 2021-2027 to support economic convergence with the EU primarily through investment and support for competitiveness and inclusive growth, sustainable connectivity and dual green and digital transition.

Digital agenda for the Western Balkan ¹⁴

The purpose of this agenda is to support the region's transition to a digital economy and the benefits of digital transformation, such as faster economic growth, more employment and better services. This support is primarily reflected in increasing cyber security, trust, and digitalization, strengthening the digital economy and society. The digital agenda will support the introduction of tools - e-Government, e-procurement and e-health, and the development of digital skills among citizens.

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe, in addition to the European Union, has a significant role to play in the policy development process of improving the position of the Roma community. In this regard, during the preparation of this document, special importance is given to the harmonization based on the membership in the Council of Europe, expressed in resolutions and recommendations on the issue of the position of the Roma population in North Macedonia. In accordance with the principles of these documents, Council member states are called upon to create inclusive living conditions through strategic policy planning and to eliminate discriminatory factors in areas such as health, education, employment and social protection. It is of particular importance that the Council of Europe, for the first time, called on member states to better integrate Roma history into their curricula and on member states to integrate commemorative activities related to the European Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day.

¹⁴ The European Commission has launched a digital agenda for the Western Balkans. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/ip_18_4242/IP_18_4242_EN.pdf

Agenda 2030 United Nations

North Macedonia is fully committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Union (EU) integration process. The government has adopted Agenda 2030 as a "universal framework for strengthening collective action towards common goals and challenges", with "reduced inequality" and "no one being left out" as key principles underlying its activities. These principles are visible through the National Reform Agenda that focuses on key sustainable development goals, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals: (GD1) - poverty-free, (GD4) quality education, (GD8) decent work and economic growth, (GD13) climate action, and (GD16) peace, justice and strong institutions. The new Strategic Framework for Sustainable Development 2021-2025¹⁵, harmonized between the Government and the UN, contains guidelines through defined measures for achieving targets of several employment and social inclusion indicators for Roma.

Domestic regulations

The basic legal framework for the above commitments can be found in the Constitution, the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the Law on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Communities Less Than 20%, the Law on Protection against Discrimination, and several other systemic and international regulations that regulate policy areas with an impact on the effective integration of Roma.

The program of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia 2020 – 2024

Within the Program of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia 2020 - 2024, various measures have been incorporated that support the inclusion of Roma. From a particular aspect for the inclusion of Roma are the measures for increasing employment in the economy - support through active employment measures, improvement of legislation and plans for the formalization of undeclared work. In the area of infrastructure, the construction of local roads and infrastructure as well as the construction of a sewerage network, are of particular interest. In the field of education, the strategy for digitalization of the education system is important, as well as the promotion of the mother tongue. From the aspect of health, the free hospital treatment of additional categories of health insured is of particular importance. In the field of culture, support for the institutions and cultural creation of the smaller communities is envisaged.

¹⁵ Set of CDO monitoring and reporting tools for UN teams in the country: Available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/unct-toolkit/>

Economic Reform Program 2021-2023

The economic reform program is the most important strategic document in the economic dialogue with the European Commission and the EU member states. This document is prepared every year and is a preparation for participation in the process of economic and fiscal supervision of the EU member states, i.e. for inclusion in the process of the European semester for coordination of economic policies in the EU. Additionally, the structural reforms identified in the PER and their implementation will provide significant investment support from the EU Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, with the Republic of North Macedonia preparing an annual report on the achievements, including the inclusion of the Roma community.

National Program for the Adoption of the Acquis 2021-2025

The National Program for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA) is a program document of North Macedonia to guide the process of European integration, defines the priorities, strategies, dynamics and necessary resources for harmonization of national legislation with European law, as well as adjustment activities of national institutions to European administrative structures. The NPAA's key goal is to chart a national trajectory to our membership of the European Union, reflecting the political commitment and determination for deep reform.

National Strategy for Development of the Concept of One Society and Interculturalism 2020-2022

In order to contribute to the promotion of the conditions of equality, equity and inclusiveness, equality between men and women, the inclusion of various identity, cultural, ethnic communities and vulnerable or marginalized groups in society, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia at its 162nd session adopted the National Strategy for development of the concept of One society and interculturalism. The strategy covers seven areas that are crucial for the interculturalism, i.e. legal framework, education, media, culture, social cohesion, youth and local self-government and the same together with the thematic action plans.

Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination

The Law on Protection and Discrimination expanded the grounds and better defined the glossary and the definition of discrimination. The new law also provides for appropriate changes in terms of judicial protection. The Law introduces a lawsuit for protection against discrimination of public interest, which means that civil society organizations, informal groups or other that have a legitimate interest in protecting the interests of a certain group can submit a lawsuit. This abolished the necessary written consent of the parties if it is a group, and the civil society organizations have the right to file lawsuits if they prove their

interest, and not as with the previous law to participate only as litigants in the procedure. The burden of proof with the new law passes to the defendant who has to prove that there is no discrimination in both the court proceedings and the proceedings before the Commission. New evidence was introduced in the discrimination procedure: statistics and situational testing. The law exempts the persons who will initiate court proceedings for protection against discrimination from court costs. The new Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination provides better mechanisms, measures and activities for legal protection. At the same time fulfils the obligation of the country to harmonize the national legislation with the European one, which is necessary for fulfilling the conditions for starting the membership negotiations in the EU.

Law on Housing

The right to adequate housing is one of the basic human rights guaranteed in numerous international conventions, laws and declarations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is one of the most important declarations ratified by many countries, including the Republic of North Macedonia, states that "everyone has the right to a standard of living that provides health and well-being to himself and his family, including nutrition, clothes, apartment, and medical care." The key legislation in the Republic of North Macedonia includes the Law on Housing, which regulates the types of housing facilities, the management of residential buildings, the relations between the owners of separate parts and third parties, the community of owners, the records of apartments, the manner of management and maintenance of the facilities, the rights and obligations of the country, the municipalities in housing, the inspection and administrative supervision and other issues in the field of housing. The law prescribes the minimum and adequate housing and regulates the possibilities for non-profit housing, rented housing, etc., which are the basis for affordable and safe housing.

Law on Spatial and Urban Planning

The Law on Spatial and Urban Planning regulate the system of spatial and urban planning as a basis for providing the conditions for humane living and regulating the purpose of the land. This law prescribes the conditions for providing basic services (water supply, wastewater drainage, electricity supply, etc.). The law does not specifically address substandard settlements but only mentions illegally constructed buildings and the conditions for their inclusion in urban plans.

Law on legalization of Illegally Constructed Buildings (2013)

The Law on Dealing with Illegally Constructed Buildings regulates the conditions, the manner and the procedure for registration, determination of the legal status and sanctioning of the illegally constructed buildings. A bylaw prescribes the standards for including illegal buildings in the urban-planning

documentation; they require legalization if they are not contrary to the conditions in the urban planning documentation and meet all urban and construction standards.

Law on Primary Education

The current Law on Primary Education establishes the right to education of every child and sets out the principles based on which primary education is developed. The law emphasizes the protection against discrimination and the promotion of equality, and the inclusive nature of primary education. Primary upbringing and education shall prohibit any direct or indirect discrimination, incitement or incitement to discrimination and aiding and abetting discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, color, national or ethnic origin, or any other ground provided by law or with an international agreement ratified in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia in the exercise of the rights from primary education.

Law on Secondary Education

According to the law, secondary education is compulsory for every citizen, under equal conditions determined by this law. Secondary education in public high schools is free. Discrimination is not allowed based on gender, race, skin color, national and social origin, political and religious beliefs, property, and social status. This law enables horizontal and vertical passage of students.

Law on Secondary Student Standard

This law regulates the establishment, organization, functioning and management of institutions for student standard as part of the system of upbringing and education. In the sense of this law, student standard means providing accommodation, food, scholarships, and meeting the work, cultural, educational, informational, sports-recreational and other everyday needs of students. The Law on Student Standard covers Roma students as a category to which they are awarded scholarships for secondary education.

Law on Adult Education

This law regulates the organization, structure, financing and management of the adult education system. Adult education is part of the education system that provides education, training, retraining and learning for adults. Adult education includes formal, non-formal and formal learning. Formal adult education includes adult primary education, adult secondary education, vocational training, vocational education, technical education, post-secondary adult education, and retraining and additional training and adult higher education. Non-formal adult education means organized learning processes to train adults for work, various social activities or personal development. The purpose of adult education is to provide an opportunity to

acquire an appropriate level of education for everyone and all age groups and enable them to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that will be in line with the demands of society and the labor market.

Law on Health Care

This law is one of the basic laws in the health system. The law guarantees that the health system is fully functional and regulated at the central and local level. In the area of health, the Macedonian legislation also has the Law on Protection of Patients' Rights, which regulates the protection of patients' rights, which are based on the principles of humanity and accessibility. The availability of health care is one of the basic principles regulated by the Law on Health Care of the Population, which is geographically, physically and economically accessible, especially health care at the primary level. Also, the law prohibits discrimination in the provision of health care in relation to race, sex, age, nationality, social origin or other beliefs, property status, etc. The principle of comprehensiveness, according to Article 10, ensures the inclusion of each individual in the health care system by applying measures and activities for health care that include health promotion and disease prevention at all levels.

Law on Social Protection

Through the social protection system, financial rights were exercised, such as the right to guaranteed minimum assistance, one-time financial assistance, compensation for assistance and care from another person, compensation for disability, housing allowance, compensation for part-time salary, permanent compensation and the right to social security for the elderly. In the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, a Decree with legal force was adopted to amend the Decree with the legal force for the application of the law on social protection during a state of emergency, whereby access to the right to guaranteed minimum assistance for persons whose employment was terminated during the pandemic is facilitated from April to December 2020. At the same time, this act enabled the monetary supplement to cover part of the household's energy consumption costs is provided continuously every month during 2020. To effectively respond to the social protection system, in order to provide facilitated access to the right to guaranteed minimum assistance to households that will be left without any means of subsistence during emergencies (i.e. determined existence of a crisis situation, declared an epidemic, pandemic, fires, floods or other major natural disasters), the government amend the Law on Social Protection was adopted ("Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" no. 302/20).

Law on Employment and Insurance in Case of Unemployment

In the field of employment, the Macedonian legislation envisages the Law on Employment and Insurance in Case of Unemployment and the Law on Labor Relations, which provide for the principle of equal

treatment, and explicitly prohibit discrimination between the candidate for employment and the employee. The Labor Law specifically emphasizes the obligation to ensure equal treatment and equal opportunities for women and men. The Law on Protection from Harassment at Work regulates the procedural and material aspects related to harassment at the workplace and protection against discrimination of a worker on the grounds of pregnancy, childbirth, and parenthood.

Law on unregistered persons in the birth register

The purpose of this law is for the people without documents to be registered in a special birth register, and obtain special birth certificate from the birth register and an identification document for exercising the right to education, health care, social protection and employment with compulsory social insurance in accordance with the law, until additional entry in the birth register and obtaining the first birth certificate. The persons registered in the special birth register will be registered in the birth register within five years from the registration.

Equal opportunities

The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men promotes the legal framework in the field of equal opportunities and completes the harmonization of the national legislation with the directives 2000/78 / EC, 2002/73/EC,2004/113/EC. The law fully regulates the issues related to the establishment of equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men, the basic and special measures for the establishment of equal opportunities, the rights and obligations of the responsible entities for providing equal opportunities, the procedure for establishing unequal treatment of women and men.

ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING SITUATION

According to the EU Progress Reports limited progress of the Republic of North Macedonia in terms of Roma inclusion is noted compared to 2019¹⁶. It is noted that the implementation of this strategy and the relevant action plans for education, employment, housing, health is not fully implemented.

In terms of employment, there is an increase in registered unemployment of Roma, with the increase in the absolute number of Roma registered as active job seekers as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Active labor market policies have a limited effect on increasing the employability of the Roma community, largely depending on the educational qualification, which is unchanged from the initial state. A positive aspect in the part of employment can be noticed in the part of creating the operational plan of employment, where a specific target for the inclusion of Roma was initiated. In terms of housing, the capital transfers of the Ministry of Transport and Communications to the municipalities contribute to the improvement of the infrastructure in the Roma settlements. However, in the area of urbanization of Roma settlements, the situation is unchanged, with municipalities neither urbanizing Roma settlements nor using state funds for urbanization. The new draft law on legalization is an opportunity to resolve the issue of legalization, and the process of creating new GUP and DUP plans should go hand in hand. In the field of health, the poor socio-economic situation further worsens the health situation; the budget within the Ministry of Health remains unused, while the number of Roma health mediators has decreased until they are all systematized in the health system. In the field of education, the most significant results have been achieved in the past period and the positive effect that has been achieved in recent years has decreased as a result of the crisis caused by Covid19. The key challenges remain in the process of implementing the Roma Strategy in the Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020 and the Action Plans - reducing unemployment and transforming the informal economy into a formal one, urbanization of Roma settlements and legalization, a transition from primary to secondary education of Roma students, while in the field of health - the short life expectancy of Roma and the high infant mortality rate. In terms of improving the situation of Roma women and promoting Roma culture, the situation is unchanged.

¹⁶ Progress report on the progress of RNM for 2020

Education

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the outcomes of the education system in the Republic of North Macedonia are among the weakest in Europe and the Western Balkans. According to the survey, two-thirds of 15-year-olds have poor reading, math, and science skills compared to their peers in 72 countries and economies¹⁷. The research shows significant differences in educational outcomes between different ethnic groups. As a result of this situation in the Republic of North Macedonia in the last few years, reform processes have been implemented to increase the quality of education. One of the significant reforms is the amendment of the law on primary education, revision of curricula and preparation of standards of achievement for each cycle of primary education. Piloting of curricula for dual vocational education has started for students to be ready to work in companies during their studies. The reforms focus on formal and non-formal education to increase the employability of young people, women and vulnerable categories. In 2020, many Roma children in primary and secondary education were not able to attend classes because they did not have electronic devices or did not have internet in their homes to attend classes online.

Assessment of the achievements of the Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020

The assessment of the progress in the implementation of the NAP for education for the period 2016-2020 is based on administrative data sources and the annual reports of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. Within the NAP for Education, the strategic goal was to improve the educational structure of the Roma community, especially for Roma girls and women. Outcomes in the NAP for education were defined such:

1. Improved approach and successful completion of pre-school education for Roma, especially Roma girls.
2. Improved access and successful completion of primary education for Roma, especially Roma girls.
3. Improved access and successful completion of secondary education for Roma, especially Roma girls.
4. Increased access and successful completion of higher education for Roma, especially Roma girls.
5. Increased number of Roma adults who have completed primary and secondary education.
6. The number of Roma students in the primary and secondary special schools in the Republic of North Macedonia has decreased.

¹⁷ OECD (2019), OECD Review of Evaluation and Evaluation in Education, OECD, Paris. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/079fe34c-en>

Table 1: Overview of achieved results 2016 - 2020 from NAP for education

Outcome	Target 2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Outcome 1: Improved access and successful completion of preschool education of Roma, especially of Roma girls	Over 90% of the planned children are successfully enrolled, and 50% of them are female children	It is not known; it is not measurable	620 children are planned, 521 are covered in 19 municipalities, 84%	628 planned, 514 children included in the 19, 81% of the planned target	Planned 613, covered 452 children included in kindergarten, 73% of the planned goal	Planned 390, covered 273 children included in kindergarten, 70% of the planned goal
Output result 1.1 Increased number of Roma children who successfully completed preschool education at the age of 3 to 5 years	Over 1000 new children from which what female to over 50% 2017-2020	During 2016, 583 children were included in the project, while outside the project 303 Roma children or 2.5% of the total number were Roma	During 2017, 521 children were included in the project, while outside the project 250 Roma children or 2.2% of the total number were Roma	During 2018, 514 children were included in the project, while outside the project 215 Roma children or 1.9% of the total number were Roma	During 2019, 452 children were included in the project, while from the project there were 276 children or 1.9% of the total number of enrolled children were Roma	During 2020, 273 children were exempted from co-payments, while a total of 762 children were enrolled
	1 new kindergarten was built and opened in Shuto Orizari on an existing building	Unrealized	Construction began in 2017 as after the fire in kindergarten	The construction is in the final phase, and it was officially opened in September 2019	In September 2019, the new kindergarten with a capacity of 160 children was put into operation. In addition, 90 children will be involved.	Expansion of space capacities is envisaged during 2020
Outcome 2: Improved Access and Successful Completion of Primary education of Roma, especially on Roma girls	10% increase in the percentage of Roma students who successfully complete primary education	Unrealized	93% of Roma students are completing primary education	94% of Roma students are completing primary education	94% of Roma students are completing primary education	No data
Output result 2.1 Improved legislation on access of Roma students to primary education	Adopted law and bylaw acts	Unrealized	Unrealized	Unrealized	with the new law for child protection, there is a new measure - educational supplement for children enrolled in primary and secondary. The amount for children is 8,400 denars per year enrolled in primary education and 12,000 denars per year for secondary education.	Unchanged compared to 2019

	Engaged additional 40 local educational mediators	Unrealized	Unrealized	During 2017/2018, 20 educational mediators were hired	During 2017/2018, 28 educational mediators were hired	During 2017/2018, 35 educational mediators were hired
Outcome 3: Improved access and Successful completion of secondary education for Roma, especially Roma girls	Increased by 3% the number of students Roma who successfully complete secondary education	Unrealized	The percentage of students who successfully complete high school for 2017 is 96%	It cannot be determined. Given that students are in three- and four-year studies, the indicator cannot be measured.	It cannot be determined. Given that students are in three- and four-year studies, the indicator cannot be measured.	It cannot be determined. Given that students are in three- and four-year studies, the indicator cannot be measured.
Output 3.1: Increased enrollment of Roma in high school	10% increased the number of students Roma who are write down in the first year in secondary	The number of enrolled students in secondary education for the academic year 2015/2016 is a total of 446 students	The number of enrolled students in secondary education for the academic year 2016/2017 is a total of 409 students	the number of enrolled students in 2017/2018 is a total of 572 students, while 2016/17	the number of enrolled students in 2018/2019 is 512.	the number of enrolled students in 2019/2020 is 478.
	Over 2500 awarded scholarships to high school students and Roma in secondary education	N/a	The number of awarded scholarships for 2016/2017 is 582	The number of awarded scholarships for 2017/2018 is 736	The number of awarded scholarships for 2018/2019 is 849	The number of awarded scholarships for 2019/2020 is 846
Outcome 4: Increased access and successful completion of higher education of Roma, especially of Roma girls	Increased the number of graduated and Roma by 5%	The number of graduates in 2016 is 16 students.	The number of graduates in 2017 is 30 students.	The number of graduates in 2018 is 25 students, 20 males and 5 females	The number of graduates in 2018 is 27, of which 12 are male and 55 female	N/A
Output 4.1: Increased number of Roma students enrolled in public and private universities	The number of Roma students enrolled universities is increasing by 10%	N/A	The number of enrolled students in the first year for 2017 is 95	The number of enrolled students in the first year is 86	N/A	N/A
	200 scholarships for Roma students	N/A	The number of enrolled students in the first year for 2017 is 95	90 scholarships for Roma students	104 scholarships for Roma students	100 scholarships for Roma students
Outcome 6: The number of Roma students in primary and secondary special schools has decreased	N/A	163 Roma students enrolled in special primary schools	185 Roma students enrolled in special primary schools	182 Roma students enrolled in special primary schools	N/A	N/A
	N/A	69 Roma students enrolled in special secondary schools	53 Roma students enrolled in special secondary schools	46 Roma students enrolled in special secondary schools	N/A	N/A

Challenges in the field of education

Preschool education

According to the Education Strategy 2018-2025 in the Republic of North Macedonia, the coverage of children in preschool education is worryingly low, with insufficient capacity for increased coverage to cover children with special educational needs. The lowest coverage rate is observed for children from marginalized communities, who have the strongest tendency towards dropping out, difficulties in reaching the standards and low achievement in learning¹⁸. Additional challenges in pre-school education are the insufficient staff and the lack of a mechanism for professional development and career advancement of the preschool education employees. The conditions in the institutions are not at a satisfactory level, and the norms and standards are inconsistently implemented, almost no ICT is used in the preschool institutions¹⁹. According to the strategy, inefficient management and management of preschool institutions and overlapping competencies of the MES, MLSP and MLSW are also noticed.

As noted in the education strategy, members of marginalized communities, especially the Roma community, have the lowest enrollment rate in preschool education and the strongest tendency towards dropouts. Regarding the inclusion of Roma children in preschool education in 2019, 762 children were included, of which 343 girls. In 2019, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy recommended to municipalities to release Roma children at social risk from participation, which enabled the long-term project with the Roma Education Fund to be systematized. Since the beginning of the project in 2016, about 20 Roma caregivers have been employed. At its 113th session on December 28, 2019, the Government adopted a Decision recommending the municipalities to consider the possibility of exemption from participation of 390 Roma children aged three to six in kindergarten for 2020. Out of the 390 targeted Roma children, a total of 273 children were exempted from participation. According to the Regional Roma survey, enrollment of Roma children aged 3-6 is 14% versus 29% non-Roma.

Table 2 Number of enrolled children in kindergarten

Year	Total	Girls
2015	840	383
2016	886	430
2017	771	367
2018	729	344
2019	762	343

Source: State Statistical office

¹⁸ Education Strategy 2018-2025

¹⁹ Ibid

Regarding the accommodation facilities in the period of the first half of 2021, a new kindergarten, "April 8" was opened in Shuto Orizari with a capacity of 306 children (236 children aged 2-6 years, organized in 6 playrooms and 70 children in nurseries). In the Day Care Center for Children at Risk in Shuto Orizari, which was put into operation in 2021, children receive non-formal education, preparation for enrollment in primary education and support for regular attendance.

The reasons for this situation are the insufficient capacity in the kindergartens, the distance of them from the Roma settlements, and the low awareness of the parents about the benefits of preschool education in terms of their socialization and early child development. According to the experience, the biggest problem for not including Roma children in preschool institutions is the lack of organized transportation to kindergartens in those places where kindergartens are far from Roma communities. Although some municipalities allocated funds for organized transport, unfortunately, the same measure is not implemented for various reasons such as untimely tender procedures, lack of funds, lack of interest.

Primary Education

Student achievement is worryingly low in primary education, proven by international testing results (PISA). In 2015, the average score of 384 points per science, compared to 493 points in OECD countries (OECD, 2016), indicates that students at the age of 15 in our country are four years behind their peers in OECD countries. From 2000 to 2015, the success in language literacy measured by the PISA tests decreased by 21 points. According to the International Study in Mathematics and Natural Sciences, a similar pattern of stagnation has been established for the success of VIII grade students between 1999 and 2011 (World Bank). On the conducted PISA test in 2018, although there is an increase in achievement compared to 2015, still, student achievement is very low, i.e. in literacy in natural sciences ranked at 62nd place, in mathematical literacy ranked at 67th place, in reading comprehension at 66th place in a group of 78 countries. The same research also states that there is a lack of consistency in the approach to tailoring learning to the needs of students, aimed at contributing to the improvement of the achievements of all students. It is pointed out that learning outcomes are at a very low level and do not improve, which can be attributed to the lack of understanding of the relationship between learning and their achievements and results in the educational system in general²⁰, which can be improved by creating effective teaching and improved learning environment. An additional challenge in primary education is the lack of content in the textbooks to promote multicultural/intercultural education.

²⁰ Concept for primary education

The challenges listed in the concept of primary education affect Roma students twice. According to the UNDP's Regional Roma Survey 2017, enrollment of Roma children in primary education is 78% versus 88% of non-Roma. In terms of attending classes in segregated schools aged 7-15, 40% are Roma, while only 11% are non-Roma.

The exact number of Roma students outside the education system is unknown. A large percentage of dropping out of education and the low level of literacy among children of Roma ethnicity is evident. The most common reasons for this situation are: insufficient knowledge of the Macedonian language, low level of education of parents and poor socio-economic situation of the family.

Table 3 Number of enrolled Roma in the primary education

Year	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
2016/17	1497	1332	1099	1115	941	946	840	811	747
2017/18	1361	1583	1253	1048	1037	964	861	691	696
2018/19	1441	1399	1420	1147	912	1044	785	758	596
2019/20	1574	1574	1310	1361	1064	977	819	701	644

Source: State Statistical Office

According to the data, about 1468 children are enrolled on average in the first grade, while in the ninth grade, about 670 students are registered. These data show a decrease in the number of children from one school year to another school year by about 6%. The percentage²¹ of Roma students who completed primary education in 2017 is 93%, and in 2018 the percentage of completion is 94%.

According to previous research²² and analysis, both at the regional level and at the national level, it is noticed that Roma students have low attendance and high dropout rates. There are several reasons for such situation: emigration of Roma families to Western European countries, lack of personal documentation, segregation even in the earliest stages of education, and lack of organized public transportation from Roma settlements (which are often far from educational institutions). Additionally, during 2020, the realization of the educational process among Roma children was aggravated by the realization of the online teaching. Many Roma children who are part of families at social risk were not able to attend school since they did not have electronic devices (computer, tablet, smartphone) and internet networks. According to the Regional Roma Survey, 42% of Roma versus 72% of non-Roma have access to a computer.

²¹ Analysis of the main policies aimed for Roma integration in the Republic of North Macedonia, 2020

²² UNDP and World Bank Regional Survey, Roma at a Glance - Republic of North Macedonia, 2018

Some of the textbooks are outdated and contain stereotypes, prejudices, stigmatization and lack elements of coexistence, respect for diversity, integration, multiculturalism, which is further complicated by the demotivating legislation for making and revising textbooks. Some of the challenges in primary education are targeted by the reforms in the new law on primary education, which impacts Roma students. The new Law on Primary Education²³ systematizes the position and competencies of the educational mediators that provide support to Roma students who come from socially disadvantaged families and/or have been out of the education system for a long time. Considering that in previous years Roma children had the opportunity to attend tutoring classes financially covered by a project, the Ministry of Education and Science introduced tutoring for children who show poor results in certain subjects, but also provides mentoring for children who are talented in using the potential to increase their knowledge. Additionally, in the past years, there was a problem with returnee children holding foreign diplomas/certificates, but due to the inability of parents to cover the funds for equivalence/recognition, students remained outside the education system.

The new law exempts the beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum assistance from costs. Regarding the introduced reforms in primary education mentioned above, unfortunately, the impact of scholarships, tutors/installers in increasing the enrollment of children in education and increasing their success has not yet been evaluated.

In primary education, affirmative measures are applied to overcome discrimination and exclusion of children and adults. Affirmative measures according to the law are: non-application of the provision for regionalization in the enrollment of students with disabilities, exemption from paying the costs of recognition and equivalence of certificates obtained abroad, free transportation for students with disabilities, educational mediators monetary compensation for winning the first place state competition, incentive to participate and financial reward for winning an award/medal in an international competition.

By law, schools are obliged to assist them in learning their mother tongue and the language of instruction of returnee children. Unfortunately, this possibility is not applied in practice and is the basis for Roma children due to language barriers to drop out and show poorer results compared to other students. Additionally, the law stipulates that those children who are not included in teaching and have exceeded the age limit for inclusion in appropriate education have the right to primary education under equal conditions as other children. For inclusion in education of this category, The Bureau for Development of Education prepares curricula for inclusion in an appropriate department of education. From September 2019, students with mild disabilities are enrolled in regular schools. This is a solution under the Law on Primary Education,

²³ Law on Primary Education, Official Gazette of RNM no. 161/2019

which provides for the transformation of special primary schools into resource centers. They will retain the educational component for students with complex needs and have additional activities.

Secondary education

Starting from 2007/2008, secondary education is compulsory for every citizen in equal conditions determined by the Law on Secondary Education and in accordance with this requirement, the enrollment policy in secondary schools is harmonized to provide equal access to quality education for all students, free textbooks, free transportation and free accommodation in dormitories are provided²⁴.

In the new Strategy for Education few challenges regarding secondary education are noted, such: overloaded and outdated curricula, there is no continuity of students' cognitive and socio-emotional development, absence of integrated approach to the study of phenomena, inadequately development of the generic and key competencies, absence of modern maintenance approaches of teaching. It is also noted that some textbooks are outdated and contain stereotypes, prejudices, stigmatization and lack elements of coexistence, respect for diversity, integration, multiculturalism, which is further complicated by demotivating legislation for the development and revision of textbooks. The motivation of schools and teachers to ensure interethnic integration and inclusive education is very low due to a lack of motivation or financial support²⁵.

As it was emphasized at the beginning, the biggest progress compared to the other areas Strategy for Roma 2014-2020 is in the field of education. In the last strategy, the biggest contribution in secondary education was scholarships for Roma students, the measure to reduce the criteria for enrollment in secondary education in public high schools, and the introduction of educated mediators tutors/mentors. In addition to these measures, which are explained in more detail in this section below, the challenge of having unified data on Roma students enrolled in secondary education remains a crucial issue to be addressed in the new strategy. The reason for such extreme differences between the data from primary and secondary education, as previously mentioned, lies in the lack of a single mechanism for collecting data from the State Statistical Office and the Ministry of Education. According to the data in primary education, an average of 1468 students are enrolled in the first grade, while in the ninth grade, an average of 670 students are enrolled. If these data are taken continuously, it is noticed that in secondary education, an average of 494 students are enrolled in the first year, while in the third year, 348 students. Such data indicate several reasons:

²⁴ Education Strategy 2018-2025

²⁵ Ibid

1. Lack of a system for collecting relevant segregated data
2. Dropout of Roma students or number of students quitting from the process of the education

Table 4 Number of enrolled students in the secondary education

Year	I	II	III	IV
2016/17	409	423	345	232
2017/18	556	357	371	228
2018/19	511	413	295	215
2019/20	500	466	382	171

Source: State Statistical Office

Since 2009, scholarships and mentoring / tutoring of Roma students have been provided. This initiative aims to improve the passing rate and success of Roma students from all educational years, from all public and private high schools. To encourage Roma students to continue their education in secondary schools, the enrollment criteria for members of this ethnic community have been facilitated. Every year, in the competition for enrollment of students in high schools, it is determined that Roma can be admitted to public high schools with 10% less points than required.

Every school year, scholarships are continuously provided for Roma students from socially disadvantaged families who regularly attend classes and scholarships for students from socially vulnerable groups, talented students, athletes, orphans, and children with special educational needs. There are different categories of scholarships for talented students, students with special educational needs and motivational scholarships for students who have achieved poor results in school. Scholarships are funded in accordance with the Law on Student Standards. In the academic year 2019/2020, 846 scholarships were awarded. Unfortunately, there is still no official evaluation of the success of this systemic measure in the passing rate of Roma students and the increase of their success in secondary education.

Table 5 Number of awarded scholarship and engaged mediators

Year	Scholarship	Mediators
2016/17	582	/
2017/18	736	20
2018/19	849	28
2019/20	846	35

Source: Administrative data from the Ministry of education and science

Students from the Roma ethnic community can enroll in a certain public high school if they have up to 10% fewer points than the number of points provided in accordance with the Competition for the respective curriculum and if they meet the additional criteria for examination of knowledge and skills in the respective school. This affirmative policy aimed to increase the number of students in public schools with higher criteria. Given Roma students' quality and the obstacles they often face, students enroll in vocational schools or schools that require lower criteria. This measure increased the number of students in better public schools, but the practice demonstrated that high schools do not consider this policy unless the student directly refers to it. Due to such cases in the future, this policy should become mandatory and those 10% to be directly included in the total points of Roma students.

Regarding the implementation of the measure tutors/mentors/mediators, although the number of mediators increased, no evaluation has been made for their impact on the passing rate and success of Roma students.

Special schools

One of the significant changes in 2019 was adopting the new law on primary education. The law provides full inclusion of all students (including Roma children in large numbers) with special needs in the regular. Starting from September 2019, students with mild disabilities are enrolled in regular schools, they should be educated in regular schools, while special education programs and schools will continue to educate only students with the most severe disabilities. This is a solution under the law on primary education, which transforms special primary schools into resource centers. They will retain the educational component for students with complex needs and have additional activities. Therefore, the staff will provide advisory, consultative, professional and practical support to teachers and students in regular schools where students with disabilities are enrolled. The goal is to include students with disabilities in traditional schools fully. It is expected that in 2022-2023 they will be transformed into resource centers that will help ensure the full inclusion of these children in regular schools.

Higher education

In the new Strategy for Education, although university enrollment criteria are low, access to higher education for various vulnerable groups is limited, and there is not enough information about their enrollment opportunities at universities.

Table 6 Number of enrolled students in the higher education

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Graduates
2016/17	95	51	47	26	4		24
2017/18	86	65	42	25	4	3	23
2018/19	75	51	47	16	5	1	29
2019/20	55	37	61	35	1	3	/

Source: State statistical office

According to the decision of the Government, from 2015 the Ministry of Education and Science through the Office for Development and Promotion of Languages of the members of the communities started awarding scholarships for Roma students. The purpose of this measure was to encourage Roma to enroll in faculties that produce teaching staff. This measure was in accordance with the National Action Plan for Education 2014-2020, which is part of the Strategy for Roma in the Republic of North Macedonia 2014-2020. Despite this targeted measure, Roma students can apply to major scholarship competitions. The awarding of scholarships to Roma students is regulated by the Law on Student Standard. According to the data of the State Statistical Office, the number of Roma students enrolled in the first year is decreasing from year to year.

Table 7 Number of awarded scholarship in the higher education

Year	I
2017/18	90
2018/19	86
2019/20	104

Source: Ministry of Education

Another affirmative action is the quota for university enrollment. This is a general policy for all non-majority communities in the country. There is no official information on the number of students who have used this affirmative action, and its implementation is not precisely defined. Additionally, as a risk in the implementation of this measure is the abuse of ethnicity when enrolling in universities.

Table 8 Number of graduated Roma students in the higher education

Year	Number of graduates
2016	16
2017	30
2018	25
2019	27
2020	22

Source: State statistical office

Employment

Although the general unemployment has dropped significantly over the past years, reaching 15.9% in the third quarter of 2021, the unemployment rate of Roma has remained unchanged. According to the Social Mapping report in 2018, the employment rate of Roma is 23%, almost twice lower than the national average, while the unemployment rate of Roma is at a record high of 67%. Among Romani women, the employment rate is 8%. The regional survey "Breaking the cycle of Roma exclusion in the Western Balkans" for 2017 conducted by UNDP and the World Bank shows lower results in terms of employment of Roma versus non-Roma. Approximately one in five Roma aged 15 to 64 was employed in 2017, while among young people, a large number of Roma were not included in employment, qualifications or training in 2017. Although there has been a slight improvement compared to 2011, the gap between Roma and non-Roma is widening.

Assessment of the achievements of the Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020

The assessment of the progress in implementing the NAP for employment for the period 2016-2020 is based on administrative data sources and the annual reports of the Republic of North Macedonia on the integration of Roma in public policies. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is in charge of adopting public policies related to reducing unemployment as well as the implementation of the NAP for Roma employment, while the employment agency is responsible for the implementation of the measures of the Operational Employment Plan.

Within the NAP for employment, the strategic goal was to increase Roma's employment opportunities in dignified jobs, defining two outcomes - improved access to government employment programs and higher income and sustainable employment for Roma. Regarding the achievements of 2016-2020, it can be noted that in terms of the first outcome, the projected target for inclusion of Roma in the active measures in the active employment measures has been reached. The target for higher income and sustainable employment is defined by the indicator for reducing the unemployment rate, whereby in the period 2016-2020 described as the share of registered unemployed in the total number of registered unemployed persons has increased.

Table 9 Overview of achieved results 2016 – 2020 of NAP on employment

Outcome	Target 2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Outcome 1: Higher income and sustainable employment for Roma by 2020, especially for Roma women	Roma represents 4.5% of the total number of unemployed	Roma represent 5.94% of the total number of unemployed in 2016 →6,211 Roma →total 102,388	Roma represent 5.99% of the total number of unemployed in 2017 →6,133 Roma →total 102,388	Roma represent 6.7% of the total number of unemployed in 2018 →6,333 Roma →total 94,720	Roma represent 9% of the total number of unemployed in 2019 →9,116 Roma →total 101,819	Roma represent 9.2% of the total number of unemployed in 2020 →14,401 Roma →total 156,432
Output 1.1 Employers are encouraged to employ Roma	100 Roma included in subsidized employment programs	11 Roma employed	8 Roma employed	51 Roma employed	100 Roma employed	143 Roma employed
	At least 15 interns per year	5 Roma interns	8 Roma interns	13 Roma interns	37 Roma interns	57 Roma interns
Output 1.2 Roma are empowered to develop and start their own businesses	20 businesses per year created by Roma through the OP for employment or other measures of Government, of which at least 10% are women	16 contracts have been signed, of which 4 women to start a business	19 contracts signed, of which 3 women for starting a business	20 contracts signed, out of which 7 women for starting a business	14 contracts signed, of which 7 women for starting a business	13 contracts signed, out of which 2 women for starting a business
Output 1.3 Equitable representation of Roma as a workforce in the central and local state administration	At least 1.5% of the total number of employees in the state and public administration are Roma	In 2016, the employment of Roma in the state and public administration was 1.3%, while the Units of Local Self-Government employed 0.7% Roma	In 2017, the employment of Roma in the state and public administration was 1.3%, while the Units of Local Self-Government employed 0.7%	In 2018, the employment of Roma in the state and public administration was 1.3%, while the Units of Local Self-Government employed 0.8%	In 2019, the employment of Roma in the state and public administration was 1.21%, while the Units of Local Self-Government employed 0.55%	In 2020, the employment of Roma in the state and public administration was 1.4%, while in the Units of Local Self-Government employed 0.96%

Outcome 2: Improved Roma access to Government employment programs by 2020, especially for Roma women	At least 200 Roma are successfully included in active labor market	237 Roma have successfully entered into active employment measures and services 38% are women	184 people, of which (23%) are 54 women	A total of 233 Roma, of which (47%) are 109 Roma women.	A total of 423 Roma (39%); are 166 Romani women.	A total of 253 Roma, of which 111 are Roma women.
Output 2.1 Increase the number of trained Roma for vocational qualifications for occupations in demand	Trained at least 90 Roma for occupations/ qualifications claimed on labor market,	11 Roma, of which 3 women	8 Roma, of which 1 woman	12 Roma, of which 11 women	42 Roma, of which 28 women	36 Roma, of which 23 women

The proposed indicator in the NAP – decrease of the Gini coefficient for Roma (a measure of income inequality) is not available regularly, in addition, the Gini coefficient cannot be considered as an appropriate measure of the position of Roma in the labour market, as the indicator describes the coefficient of inequality in society and is not directly related to employment or unemployment. Additionally, the defined indicators in relation to the decrease unemployment decreasing the unemployment refer on decreasing in the registered unemployment. As such, several factors can affect the registered unemployed, such as leaving the border and people outside the ESA. Public policies and measures which are implemented may also have a motivating/demotivating effect on the persons to register / or to be erased from the ESA. On the other hand, the targets set in the previous strategy do not correspond to the ambition to reduce unemployment and are set at a low level to achieve positive changes in the labor market.

In order to decrease the unemployment, the operational employment plan provides measures for employers to encourage Roma to employ other Roma or develop their own businesses, as well as measures to increase the skills of the unemployed. On average, about 3-4% of Roma have been beneficiaries of active employment measures in the last few years. Although the absolute number of Roma beneficiaries is increasing, the relative share of the total number of beneficiaries covered by active employment measures remains unchanged. According to the NAP, the provided target for Roma persons has been reached, although it is insufficient to achieve the outcome. At the level of public policies, the involvement of civil society organizations in proposing measures in the operational plan for employment is positive.

Key challenges in the field of employment

• Structure of unemployed Roma

Low labour force participation and high unemployment rates mean that employment opportunities for Roma of working age are limited. Romani women are much less likely to participate in the labour market than women from non-Roma communities. Given that the levels of educational attainment are lower among Roma, it also reflects on employment prospects and their employability. Young Roma women have lower rates of attending qualifications and skills training than young Roma men, who are more likely to be included in the qualification and training process.

Table 8 Registered unemployed persons (active applicants) according to waiting time and education, according to the situation on 30.06.2021

	Without education and primary education		Incomplete secondary education		Completed secondary education		Post-secondary education		Higher Education		Postgraduate studies	
	All	Woman	All	Woman	All	Woman	All	Woman	All	Woman	All	Woman
Below one month	249	129	12	4	19	11	0	0	2	2	0	0
One to five months	1039	521	43	7	105	52	2	1	9	6	1	0
From six to eleven months	2243	1203	62	26	153	75	0	0	9	0	1	0
From twelve to seventeen months	1892	944	72	19	113	56	1	0	6	4	1	0
From eighteen to twenty three months	1518	849	31	9	65	36	0	0	3	2	0	0
Two years	2994	1801	77	23	104	56	0	0	4	3	0	0
Three years	672	327	34	3	25	9	0	0	3	1	0	0
Four years	492	224	14	0	20	5	0	0	1	0	0	0
Four to seven years	1436	576	46	7	45	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eight years +	156	39	11	5	15	5	0	0	2	0	0	0
Total	12691	6613	402	103	664	315	3	1	39	18	3	0

Source: Employment Agency

As it can be seen from the table, 92% of the unemployed have no primary education and primary education, 7.7% have incomplete secondary and completed secondary education, while 0.3% of the unemployed have higher education and master studies. From a gender perspective, the percentage of women without primary and completed primary education is 94%, 6% have incomplete secondary and completed secondary education, while 1% have upper and higher education. According to the waiting time, 66% of the

unemployed who are long-term unemployed have no education or primary education, while 3% of the long-term unemployed have incomplete and completed secondary education.

From a gender perspective, 72% of the unemployed Roma women are long-term unemployed, with 68% without primary or with primary education, while 3% with incomplete secondary and completed secondary education.

Table 9 Registered unemployed (active job seekers) according to age and level of education, as of 30.06.2021

Age	Without education and primary education		Incomplete secondary education		Completed secondary education		Post-secondary education		Higher Education		Postgraduate studies	
	All	Women	All	Women	All	Women	All	Women	All	Woman	All	Women
Up to 19	385	207	9	5	31	17	0	0	0	0	0	0
from 20 to 24	1280	684	44	12	206	114	1	0	4	3	0	0
from 25 to 29	1104	561	41	19	173	81	1	1	11	6	1	0
from 30 to 34	1326	739	36	10	92	50	0	0	13	4	2	0
from 35 to 39	1407	728	33	10	32	15	0	0	5	3	0	0
from 40 to 44	1690	890	19	8	23	7	0	0	1	0	0	0
from 45 to 49	1642	844	28	10	20	6	0	0	1	1	0	0
from 50 to 54	1556	831	48	11	35	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
from 55 to 59	1354	703	81	12	38	12	0	0	1	1	0	0
60 +	947	426	63	6	14	3	1	0	3	0	0	0
	12691	6613	402	103	664	315	3	1	39	18	3	0

Source: Employment Agency

According to age, the share of young people up to 24 years is 14.1% of the total unemployment rate, 12% of the unemployed are without education and with primary education and 2.1% are with incomplete secondary and completed secondary education. By gender, the participation of young women is 14.7%, with 13.1% without or with primary education, while 1.6% have incomplete or completed secondary education. Regarding the age groups, unemployed persons aged 50+ participate with 30% in the total number of unemployed, while 28% have no education and primary education, while 2% have incomplete secondary and completed secondary education.

- **Informal economy**

According to a UNDP and the World Bank survey, the percentage of Roma involved in informal unemployment dropped by 26 percentage in the period 2011-2017, reaching 38%. According to data from the Economic Reform Program 2021-2023, an average of 25% of the population works informally.

The most common form of informal employment among Roma men is in trade, taxi services, construction and agriculture, while among Roma women, the most common form of employment is in trade and hygiene services. Many Roma families rely on seasonal work during the summer and harvest season. About 48% of Roma families are beneficiaries of social assistance, while 23% of Roma are not registered with the ESA, because they believe that they do not benefit from the registration in the Agency.

Informal employment is high among the marginalized Roma population, but the incidence of informality is declining compared to other Western Balkan countries. In terms of gender, Romani women have seen a decline in informal employment, with Roma women less likely to be employed informally than men.

- **NEET**

According to the UNDP and the World Bank, most marginalized young Roma (aged 18-24) were not in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2017. The reasons for the high rates of NEET among Roma are related to the level of education, and they have lower prospects in the labour market. In particular, young Roma women with lower education have a higher rate of NEET, at 81% versus 57% among young Roma men. Female NEETs are more often inactive or out of the workforce than males, often engaged in domestic and foster care activities. In contrast, male NEETs are more likely to be unemployed.

- **Covid19 challenges**

The impact of the Corona crisis had a negative impact on the labour market, both in the formal and informal sector where in conditions of reduced demand and supply, the domestic economy (real sector) faced numerous challenges - closing companies, reducing the number of employees and job losses. The Covid19 pandemic also had a significant impact on the Roma community: a large number of Roma who were formally employed were fired or received part-time contracts, many Roma entrepreneurs closed their businesses, and informal traders were unable to sell due to a large number of restrictions. A significant proportion of Roma who were hired as hygienists stopped their activities, while informal collectors of secondary raw materials faced reduced purchase prices, but also an inability to sell their raw materials. This situation undoubtedly contributed to the increase of unemployment in the Roma community but especially contributed to increasing the poverty level among Roma.

Regarding the effects and consequences of the pandemic, the forecasts are that household incomes will fall by 5-8% while the population's poverty will increase from 55,000 to 130,000 citizens²⁶. The predictions are that this crisis will last one to two years, the effects of the pandemic will be felt for a longer period, and the most affected by the crisis will be the marginalized communities, especially the Roma community. Concerning the projected targets under the National Action Plans, given the situation, the number of unemployed Roma has increased significantly., Although in the previous two years there was a higher coverage of Roma in the active measures, the pandemic again contributed for this year in relative terms the targets not to be achieved.

To reduce the unemployment, the operational employment plan provides measures for employers to employ Roma or develop their businesses and efforts to increase the skills of the unemployed. On average, about 3-4% of Roma have been beneficiaries of active employment measures in the last few years. Although the absolute number of Roma beneficiaries is increasing, the relative share of the total number of beneficiaries covered by active employment measures remains unchanged.

²⁶ Nearly half a million citizens are sinking into poverty, Deutsche Welle available at <https://p.dw.com/p/3kfuQ>

Housing

Housing issues at the local level are part of the competencies of many institutions which complicates the housing issue. According to the competencies and responsibilities of the local self-government unit, the municipality is directly responsible for the local economic and urban development of the municipality. Adequate housing is a fundamental human right that leads to the realization of social, economic, and cultural rights. Living in a poorly developed neighborhoods with poorly constructed houses, without access to water, sewerage, paved roads, electricity, and other basic utilities available in the modern world, contribute to an unequal starting point and life opportunities compared to other individuals living in a developed neighborhood, area, district or city.

Consequently, poor housing conditions affect access to education, health services, employment, and other basic human rights, which must be available to every individual. The lack of such an approach makes the community marginalized, poor, and uneducated, confined to their own neighborhoods (segregated communities).

Assessment of the achievements of the Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020

The assessment of the progress in the implementation of the NAP for education for the period 2016-2020 is based on administrative data sources and the annual reports of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Within the NAP for housing, the strategic goal was to reduce the housing quality gap between Roma and non-Roma communities. In the NAP for housing were defined the following outcomes:

1. Provided social housing for Roma families from socially vulnerable categories
2. Improved living conditions of Roma families through the development and implementation of programs for integrated urban regeneration and prevention of harmful living conditions
3. Provided systematic registration in the real estate cadaster for registering the property and land owned by Roma.

Table10 Overview of achieved results 2016 - 2020 from NAP for housing

Outcome / results	Target 2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Outcome 1: Provided social housing for Roma families from socially disadvantaged families	Increase in the number of Roma families who have access to social housing by 5%	By the end of 2016, 118 Roma received social housing	In 2017, there is no distribution of social housing	During 2018, there is no distribution of social housing	During 2019, there is no distribution of social housing	During 2020, there is no distribution of social housing
Output 1.1 Construction of residential buildings and housing units built in the areas where the endangered Roma population is inhabited	From 2017 to 2020 it is planned to build 16 new residential buildings with a total of 940 residential units in the cities: Skopje (Suto Orizari, Saraj and Butel) Tetovo, Veles, Strumica, Pehchevo, Gevgelija, Vinica, Kumanovo, Sveti Nikole, Probistip, Negotino and Debar	Makedonski Brod 10 built, 10 undistributed; Kocani 43 built, 43 undistributed, Gostivar under construction. Demir Hisar 25, of which 5 undistributed, Prilep 76, of which 3 undistributed, Resen 18. Of all of them in 2016 172 were completed, 111 were distributed, 16 to Roma	During 2017, residential buildings in Kocani and Makedonski Brod were completed. Still under construction in Strumica (41 apartments) and Gostivar (70 apartments)	During 2018, 41 apartments were built in Strumica and 41 in Gostivar	During 2019, no additional social housing was built	During 2020, there is no information on built residential buildings
Outcome 2: Improved living conditions of Roma families through the development and implementation of programs for integrated urban regeneration and eradication of harmful living conditions	Served 717. 389 inhabitants of which 40,011 Roma (5.5%) in 15 new municipalities	Residents of the cities where the projects were implemented: 212,928 of which 9,455 Roma (according to the 2002 Census)	200,483 inhabitants served, of which 8,997 Roma (4.4%)	Served 327,107 inhabitants, of which 29,439 Roma (8.2%)	345,928 inhabitants served, of which 22,560 Roma (6.5%)	Served 327,107 inhabitants of which 10,291 (3%) are Roma
Output 2.1 Realized projects from communal infrastructure in populated municipalities with predominantly Roma population	15 new projects from communal infrastructure in 15 municipalities (Berovo, Bitola, Veles, Kumanovo, Vinica, Gazi Baba, Delchevo, Gjorce Petrov, Kocani, Probistip, Prilep, Chair, Suto Orizari, Kicevo and Stip)	6 projects during 2016 (from the budget of MTV, Capital) Veles, Vinica, Delchevo, Kocani, Prilep, Pehcevo	3 projects during 2017 in the municipality of Kocani, Prilep and Bitola	During 2018, 14 projects were realized in the following municipalities - 2 projects Stip, Vinica, Suto Orizari - 2, Delchevo, Pehcevo, Kocani-3 Bitola, Kumanovo	During 2019, 8 projects were implemented in the following municipalities – Resen, Gostivar, Tetovo, Kicevo, Bitola, Berovo and Suto Orizari	During 2020, 4 projects were realized in the following municipalities - Stip, Kumanovo and Kocani with funds from MTV, while one project in the municipality of Gostivar was realized with funds from KFW

Outcome 3: Systemically provided registration in the Cadaster of property owned by Roma	% of Roma owners of dwellings	Over 5% of the Roma owners	It is not known	It is not known	According to certain estimates of NGOs, such settlements exist in the municipalities: Suto Orizari, Kumanovo, Prilep, Bitola, Tetovo, Kicevo, Veles, Strumica and Kavadarci	There is a new draft law on determining the legal status of illegally constructed buildings that, if not changed, will negatively affect the Roma community.
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Challenges in the field of housing

According to the 2017 Regional Roma Report²⁷ conducted by the UNDP for the countries of the Western Balkans, the situation in the field of infrastructure in the Republic of North Macedonia is as follows:

Table11 Overview of the housing situation

	Roma	Non-Roma
Access to water	90%	97%
Access to public sewerage	84%	92%
Access to the toilet in the home	74%	92%
Access to electricity	93%	97%
Overcrowding rate	61%	27%

Source: UNDP, 2017

Roma as a group often live in underdeveloped or poorly developed settlements and are faced with numerous challenges in their daily lives. These challenges lead to a negative perception of Roma by non-Roma communities, leading to discrimination in various areas and low quality of life. These facts additionally contribute to lower school attendance, lower employment rate, shorter life expectancy, higher mortality, higher migration rate, higher participation in the informal economy.

The Covid 19 pandemic highlighted all systemic shortcomings, especially in the Roma community, where in the field of infrastructure and housing, it could be seen that in the period 2020, most Roma settlements did not have access to water, sewerage and asphalt roads. It is especially critical throughout the period

²⁷Regional Survey for Roma 2017, available at <https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html>

that the recommendations for frequent hand washing and disinfection of the streets were not provided in the Roma settlements due to the lack of basic infrastructure.

Regarding the legalization process of illegally constructed buildings, there is no mechanism for monitoring the requests for legalization by ethnicity. According to previous analyses and mapping, about 28% of Roma have not legalized their homes due to lack of urban plan in the municipality for those settlements or inability to cover financial costs. Additionally, the citizens who have submitted requests for the legalization of their facilities have been waiting for more than five years for a response from the competent institutions for the status of their request. The new draft Law on Legalization of Illegally Constructed Buildings has been returned for additional consultation and is expected to be adopted by the Assembly of the RSM. However, the critical parts that need to be regulated by the bill remain to be discussed.

In order to realize the legalization process and meet the set standards for housing, the key basis is the existing Detailed Urban Plan. In the last 25 years, the municipalities have not found appropriate solutions (funds) for urbanization and inclusion of Roma settlements in the general urban planning of cities, which has deepened the problems related to legalization, and many Roma settlements have been left out of the legalization process.

The Republic of North Macedonia adopted the Poznan - Declaration from the Western Balkans on Roma Enlargement and the EU, which pledged to continue and strengthen the efforts for full equality and integration of the Roma, especially by implementing and following the Joint Conclusions of the Roma Seminars in of education, health, employment, civil registration, non-discrimination, and housing. In the area of housing, the goal that the country has committed to fulfill is "Whenever possible, legalize all informal settlements inhabited by Roma; or to provide permanent, decent, affordable and desegregated housing for Roma currently living in informal settlements who cannot be legalized for justified reasons".

Table 12 Overview of settlements that are not urbanized

	Municipality	Non-urbanized settlement
1.	Shuto Orizari	Baraki, st. Garibaldi, Walt Disney, Georgi Penkov
2.	Kumanovo	Sredorek
3.	Prilep	Part of Trizla
4.	Bitola	Bair
5.	Tetovo	Street 146
6.	Gostivar	Hole
7.	Kichevo	Mexico neighborhood
8.	Veles	Prcorek
9.	Kavadarci	Bushansko maalo
10.	Strumica	Kliment Ohridski, Transit

The Ministry of Transport and Communications in the Strategic Plan 2018 - 2020 envisaged as a measure the preparation of new urban plans to support the municipalities in the Republic of North Macedonia in order to accelerate urbanization and spatial planning. In addition, in accordance with Article 22 paragraph (2) of the Law on Spatial and Urban Planning, at the proposal of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Government adopts an annual program for financing the preparation of urban plans, regulation plans of general urban plans, urban planning documentation and urban-project documentation. However, the municipalities do not apply with projects to prepare DUPs and GUPs for Roma settlements. An additional remark regarding the Ministry of Transport and Communications is the non-utilization of the overall budget for infrastructure projects in Roma areas. The reason for non-utilization is the lack of interest or insufficient capacity of the municipalities to apply for such projects as well as the lack of methodology for distribution of the budget by municipalities.

Given the fact that one of the main obstacles is that the plots on which the houses of Roma families are built are not urbanized and are not included in the GUPs or DUPs, the slow implementation of measures related to the preparation of urban plans for Roma settlements has a negative impact on Roma. As a result, there is no legal basis for the construction of water supply and sewerage network and electricity connections, due to which these settlements have substandard living conditions. With the financial support of the EU, the process of creating new detailed urban plans is underway, as well as the legalization of a number of dwellings in three municipalities, the municipality of Vinica, Suto Orizari and Veles.

In the area of communal infrastructure, the Sustainable Development Strategy 2009 - 2030 envisages improvement and construction of ecological and communal infrastructure (water supply system, wastewater system, treatment plants and integrated solid waste management). In addition, the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Transport and Communications envisages implementation of the project for water supply and wastewater management services in the municipalities in the Republic of North Macedonia through further implementation of sub-projects within this project in cooperation with the European Investment Bank.

According to most analyses and research, in most of the Roma settlements in the municipalities, there is a need for construction / reconstruction of several meters of water supply, atmospheric and fecal sewerage, and construction of retaining walls to reduce the risk of landslides. The main streets in the settlements are mostly asphalted, but there is a need for additional asphalted of the side streets in the settlements, because most of them are dirt roads. In this regard, in the last few years (2016-2020) a total of 37 infrastructure projects were financed related to construction, reconstruction of streets, construction of pedestrian paths, retaining walls and other communal infrastructure projects in municipalities with a majority Roma population.

Regarding the implementation of the project for the construction of social housing intended for socially vulnerable categories, 18 buildings have been built so far in 16 cities on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. So far, 722 apartments have been distributed in 15 cities across the country. In 2020, the Ministry of Transport and Communications did not conduct a procedure for the distribution and allocation of apartments concerning this project. Regarding the access to social housing by the end of 2016, 118 apartments were distributed to Roma families. Unfortunately, from the beginning of 2017 until 2021, there is no distribution of social housing.

In addition to the project, temporary accommodation of 120 people from homeless families found under the fortress Kale (so-called polygon settlement) is provided, and NGOs and the Center for Social Work, work with them to achieve easier integration into the social protection system, documentation, employment, and health.

Health

According to the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia and the legal framework in the field of health (the law on health care, the law on health insurance, and the law on protection of patients' rights), every citizen is guaranteed the right to health care and the same right imposes obligation - the state to create conditions for exercising the right to health care for all citizens, including Roma.

Although there are no disintegrated data in the field of health statistics by ethnicity, the reports of (UNDP 2011, UNDP 2017, AECOM 2018, ESE 2019) show that the health status of the Roma community is significantly worse compared to other ethnic communities. Roma are at a disadvantage compared to non-Roma and have a significantly shorter life expectancy than non-Roma (ranging from 10 to 20 years), higher infant mortality rates by 25% compared to others and higher incidence of chronic diseases. In addition, the services provided by Roma are usually of lower quality than the services offered to the general population.

Assessment of the achievements of the Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020

The assessment of the progress in the implementation of the NAP for Health for the period 2016-2020 is based on the reports from the health mediators and the annual reports of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia on the integration of the Roma in the public policies. The Ministry of Health is responsible for adopting public policies related to creating programs to improve the health of the population and the implementation of the NAP for Roma Health. At the same time, the Health Insurance Fund implements regulations and policies to promote health care in relation to compulsory health insurance.

Within the NAP for health, extending the life expectancy of Roma is a major strategic goal, defining three outcomes - improved access to integrated, quality, preventive and curative health services; reduced risks and prevented diseases related to the mortality rate of the Roma community and prevention of discrimination in the area of access to health services. Regarding the achievements of 2016-2020, it can be noted that in terms of the first outcome, the projected target for improved access to health services is not measurable due to lack of basic conditions and the definition of the indicator itself.

Regarding the second target for reducing the mortality rate, positive results can be noticed, while the reduction of discrimination in the field of health according to the number of registered cases of discrimination cannot be determined due to the non-functionality of the commission for protection against discrimination.

Table 13 Overview of NAP Health Achievements 2016-2020

Outcome / results	Target 2020	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Outcome 1: Improved access for Roma to integrated, quality, preventive and curative health services	To increase for 50% the number of new Roma which have access to health services, by municipalities	It is not known, it is not measurable	It is not known, it is not measurable	It is not known, it is not measurable	It is not known, it is not measurable	It is not known, it is not measurable
Output 1.1 Increase the type and scope of health services in Roma communities	90% of the informed and referred population exercises the right to health care	It is not known, it is not measurable	The health mediators for 2018 performed a total of 1,445 services for exercising the right to health insurance, of which 660 women and 785 men	The health mediators for 2018 performed a total of 1,548 services for exercising the right to health insurance, of which 887 women and 661 men	Health mediators for 2019 provided 1461 services for exercising the right to health insurance, of which 719 women and 742 men	Health mediators for the first six months of 2020 provided 206 services for exercising the right to health insurance, of which 95 women and 111 men
	Total 30 medical sisters and 15 Roma who graduated of medicine, dentistry and pharmacy	202 people employed in public health institutions or 1.2%	191 people employed in public health institutions or 1.0%	195 people employed in public health institutions or 1.0%	No data	No data
	Total 30 accredited Roma health mediators	It is not known	The number of engaged mediators is 10	21 Roma health mediators were accredited, 12 of which were engaged in the field	21 Roma health mediators were accredited, 10 of which were engaged in the field	21 Roma health mediators were accredited, of which 9 were engaged in the field
Outcome 2: Reduced risks and preventable diseases related to mortality in Roma children from (0 - 6 years)	Reduction at the rate of mortality in infants Roma by 3% compared to 2013	It is not known	Infant mortality rate 13.2 / 1000	Infant mortality rate 8.3 / 1000	Infant mortality rate 10.4 / 1000	Infant mortality rate 10.4 / 1000
Output 2.1 Reduction of the incidence of infectious diseases in Roma children up to 6 years	Increase the range of immunization according to the calendar for 25%	It is not known	During 2017, 1,447 children were immunized, of which 839 boys and 608 women	During 2018, 1,540 were immunized, of which 882 boys and 658 girls	During 2019, 1220 children were identified	During the first six months of 2020, 164 children were identified

	Educated a total of 6,000 parents / guardians Roma	It is not known	During 2017, 3,527 people were covered with educational workshops, of which 1,638 men and 1,889 women	During 2018, 4,924 people were covered with educational workshops, of which 2,201 men and 2,723 women	During 2019, 3,954 people were covered with educational workshops of which 1746 men and 2208 women.	During the first six months of 2020, 419 people were covered by educational workshops of which 183 men and 236 women.
Outcome 3: Prevention of discrimination against Roma in accessing health services	Reducing the number of cases of discrimination related with access of Roma to health services by 80%	It is not known	Approximate indicator: During 2017, 35 complaints were submitted by Roma in the field of health	Approximate indicator: During 2018, 20 complaints were submitted by Roma in the field of health	Approximate indicator: During 2019, 45 complaints were submitted by Roma in the field of health	Approximate indicator: During 2019, 7 complaints were submitted by Roma in the field of health

The proposed indicator in the NAP - to increase by 50% the number of new measures that have access to health services is not available and measurable, primarily due to the lack of a basis and the comparison of achievements over the time frame of the action plan is not possible to determine. From the reports of the health mediators in the part of the output results, it can be noticed an increase in the number of Roma who have exercised the right to health insurance.

Additionally, the establishment of the Roma Health Mediators Program had a positive impact in terms of informing the Roma community. Health mediators were involved through various field activities in the Roma community to convey information in the field of preventive and curative programs of the Ministry of Health to improve Roma's health status. However, the number of health mediators in the past few years has drastically decreased, and as of 2020, 9 mediators were hired. An additional shortcoming noted by the Roma community is the poor visibility of health mediators. In the last few years, the percentage of realization of the funds intended for the Roma is 55%, which is approximately 1.7 million denars out of the total planned 3, 2 million denars received through the program to support the implementation of the Roma Strategy for Roma by the Ministry of Health (3.2 million denars). The percentage of realization of the funds intended for the Roma within the budget of the Ministry of Health ranges on average of 47-55%, approximately 1.7 million denars of funds received through the program for support of the implementation of the Strategy for the Roma.

Regarding the reduction of infant and Roma child mortality, the definition of the indicator and the setting of the targets are not appropriate due to the different scale of measurement of the indicator. The output results show that the number of immunized Roma children has significantly increased, while the key challenge remains the provision of a gynecologist in the municipality of Suto Orizari and prenatal care of mothers. In the area of reducing discrimination, the non-functionality of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination in the period 2016-2020 prevented the indicator from being measured, while

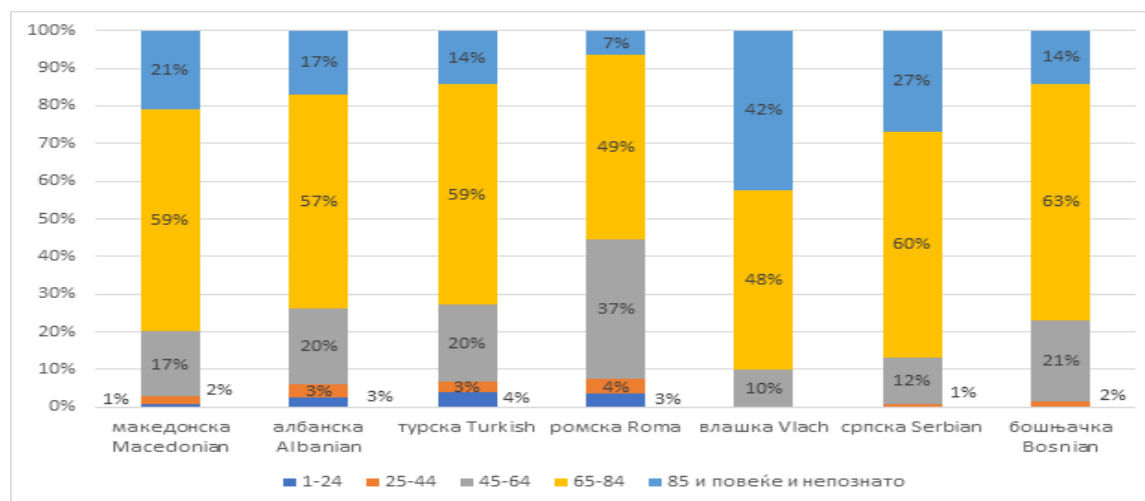
according to the reports from the Ombudsman, an increase in the number of submitted complaints in the area of health care can be noticed.

Key challenges in the field of health

- **Infant mortality rate and Roma participation in the total number of deaths**

According to the indicator for measuring the infant mortality rate, it can be noticed that during 2019 in the Roma community, it is 10.4 per 1000 inhabitants, which is relatively high compared to other ethnic communities. Graph x shows the percentage of deaths of members of the communities in relation to the total number of deaths. The short life expectancy of Roma has been documented in many reports, with the results of the State Statistical Office indicating that 7% of the Roma community die at the age of 25-44, while 37% die at the age of 45-64. About 49% die at the age of 65-84, with only 7% experiencing age 85. If we compare with the old-age pension, only 45% of the Roma can receive an old-age pension, while for the Non-Roma, the average percentage is 75%.

Figure 1 Participation of ethnic communities in the total number of deaths, 2018



Source: State Statistical Office, deaths by age and ethnicity, 2018

- **Socio-economic determinants of health status**

In general, the health status of Roma is worse than other communities, and the reasons are usually related to the socio-economic situation of the community and is manifested differently in certain groups within the Roma community. An additional reason for the poor health is the poor conditions in the housing sector and the poor environment around which they live. In the winter days there is enormous air pollution in Roma areas due to the way of heating. According to a survey by the Regional Report on Roma, 87% of Roma and 81% of non-Roma use solid fuels (coal, wood) to heat their homes. Unfortunately, no air meters have been installed in any Roma settlement, nor in the municipality of Suto Orizari, so that the air quality in these parts can be checked.

- **Health insurance**

According to the UNDP regional survey from 2011 and 2017, it can be noticed that there is some progress in terms of health insurance coverage and compared to other Balkan countries, the Republic of North Macedonia is in the first place. However, health insurance remains a problem for many people who have a problem with personal documentation. According to NGOs, the latest official information from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is about 700 people, but that number is much higher. Those who have received a special ID card still cannot use a health service due to non-compliance of the system in the health insurance fund with the ID numbers of persons who have obtained a special ID card.

- **Unequal treatment by health professionals**

During the work, many civil society organizations working in Roma communities record cases of discrimination and unequal treatment of Roma in providing health services. Additionally, the Roma community shares several personal experiences that testify to negative narratives towards Roma patients, both by health professionals and support staff. This state of stereotypes and prejudices towards the Roma community is a consequence of ignorance of the culture, tradition, social and economic determinants that affect the health of Roma.

According to the ombudsman's annual report on the level of provision, respect, promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms for 2020, most of the complaints about violation of rights are in the area of social protection, judiciary and health care. CSOs working in the field of health record cases of discrimination and unequal treatment in the realization and access to emergency medical services by the emergency medical service. When the ambulance receives calls and concludes that they need to visit a Roma settlement, they usually refuse to visit or arrive late. The most common cases are noted in the municipality of Suto Orizari where the residents are forced to go to the health institution

Challenges for the health condition of Romani women

One of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups is Roma women. They are subject to double discrimination on the grounds of gender and ethnicity. In addition to discrimination, Roma women face physical and financial barriers to accessing health services. Due to living in neighborhoods that are largely excluded from access to health facilities, Roma women are restricted from receiving services. Thus, many Roma women do not receive health education and are unaware of their rights.

According to the NGO sector, the new abortion law stimulates illegal abortion due to the high cost. The community has no information on the possibility of contraception. Abortion is used as contraception instead of contraceptives. An additional remark is that young Roma women do not visit a gynecologist for fear of condemnation and low information. The percentage of women who do screening and other preventive examinations after the reproductive period is low. There is a negative narrative by health professionals

towards women giving birth. Illegal payments to family gynecologists continue. Juvenile pregnancies are becoming more common.

Culture

Article 48 of the Republic of North Macedonia Constitution sets out the fundamental values of cultural rights related to the preservation and promotion of the cultural identity of the communities living in the country. The promotion of culture can be perceived as an instrument for affirming the identity of the Roma community, but also as an instrument for promoting interethnic communication and integration of Roma in society.

For the social inclusion and integration of individuals and ethnic communities in society, it is indisputable that the level of knowledge of diversity, culture and traditions proportionally contributes to the prevention and reduction of prejudices and stereotypes towards cohabitants who are from other ethnic communities regardless of whether they are majority or minority. Culture should also be seen as a factor for further emancipation of the Roma community, and therefore it should be in line with the efforts made in the education system. The cultural dimension is inextricably linked with the use of the mother tongue, which finds its application in the field of education

The first grammar of the Romani language in Macedonia in the world was written in 1980 and published by the Roma author Shaip Jusuf and co-author Krume Kepeski. In 1992, the document "General principles for codification of the Romani language" was prepared in Skopje, in the content of which the codification of the Romani language as a subject in the Republic of Macedonia is emphasized. In 2009, Latif and Fatime Demir published a Roma-Macedonian and Macedonian-Roma dictionary, and the same authors, together with Rajko Djuric, published "Grammar of the Modern Romani Language". The author of the Roma-Macedonian and Macedonian-Roma dictionary and the "Grammar of the Romani language" is Dr. Trajko Petrovski who, in addition to works of linguistics, has published works of Roma ethnology such as "Roma folklore" and "Ethnic and cultural characteristics of Roma". There are also published works by several poets collected in poetry collections as a result of poetry and music evenings as the only manifestations in this field.

Contemporary art among the Roma population in North Macedonia began to develop after the 1940s. Forming the KUD "Phralipe" (Macedonian Brotherhood), the folklore activity developed and through it the art of the written word²⁸. Dramatic art began to develop impulsively with the formation of the Phralipe Theater. Inevitably, the greatest contribution to the development of Roma music art was left by Esma

²⁸Daniel Petrovski, Pure Mind and Imagination - Local Art, World Treasure, 2019.

Redzepova, whose works and music are among the top 50 in the world. Unfortunately, it must be acknowledged that the art of the Roma in Macedonia is still at a low level. This problem can be seen through the prism of lack of staff professional potential and insufficient promotion of artists. Institutionalization of Roma art is needed to become visible outside the local population. Statistically speaking, the staff readiness is minimal and some of the Roma artists are successfully paving their way in European countries.

The Roma community in Macedonia does not have its own cultural institutions such as museum, theatre or cultural center. The only organizers of cultural events are several non-governmental organizations whose statutes are dominated by culture as an activity and amateur folklore societies. They annually organise several events and festivals such as cultural weeks with multidisciplinary activities and folklore festivals, trumpet fest. The only organizers of cultural events are several non-governmental organizations whose statutes are dominated by culture as an activity and amateur folklore societies.

Challenges

- Insufficient representation of Roma employees in cultural institutions
- Insufficient financial resources for the affirmation of Roma culture
- Romani language is on the verge of extinction, due to lack of staff and lack of opportunities for learning in education
- Lack of cultural content related to Roma in the educational process
- Insufficient affirmation of days that mark the Roma culture and history
- Generalization in current research and lack of new, current research generalization of research in the field of language, history and culture has been made.
- Assistance is needed from the media to affirm and articulate the need to improve teaching in Romani language and enrich the Roma cultural treasury by supporting projects for printing books in Romani language and professional literature used in teaching Romani language.
- Special quotas are needed in higher education for deficient professions, especially in the pedagogical academy, in order to produce adequate staff for teaching Romani language.

Poverty

According to the data of the State Statistical Office, 456,600 people, ie 21.9% of the population live in difficult conditions. According to the type of household, the poverty rate is the highest (45.3%) in a household of two adults with three or more children. It is followed by a single parent with children (42.8%) and households with children (26.4%). The inactive and unemployed persons are among the most vulnerable categories and their poverty rate is the highest (33.9% and 33.2% respectively) and the lowest among the pensioners (2.2%).

The novelties in the law on social protection during 2019 supported about 30,000 households to get out of poverty. The legal changes introduced a minimum guaranteed income and increased the amount of social assistance by 300 %. This amendment actually introduced a family package that includes a guaranteed minimum income, child and education allowance and energy supplement.

Roma also face serious difficulties from a national perspective. Most of the Roma ethnic group are actively part of the informal (gray) economy. By collecting plastic, metal and selling them, it enables them to be part of the informal sector that provides Roma with material support for themselves and their families. Roma were cut off from their own main or sole source of income, which increased their material deficits and poverty.²⁹

According to research conducted by UNICEF and Finance Think³⁰ regarding the social and economic effects of COVID 19 on children in North Macedonia, it is concluded that every third Roma child is more dimensionally poor. The United Nations Joint Analysis of North Macedonia (2020) reveals that children living in poorer households, children living in large households, children living in rural areas, and Roma children are at greater risk of being left behind, faced with limited access to education and health.

Younger Roma children are more likely to suffer in almost all dimensions, of which safety, leisure and financial status stand out. Dietary differences are striking, with Roma children at higher risk of being left out of the system, with limited access to education and health. Roma children have an almost three times higher incidence of poverty compared to other members of ethnic communities. The incidence of poverty is 40% among Roma children, 12.9% among Albanians and 5.1% among Macedonians, while among children of other ethnicities it decreases to 13.3%.

²⁹Poverty Report 2020 North Macedonia.

Available at:https://www.eapn.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/EAPN-Poverty-Watch-2020_%D0%9C%D0%9A-4946.pdf

³⁰Institute for Economic Research and Policy, Finance Think ", UNICEF, First Study on Multidimensional Child Poverty in North Macedonia.

Available at:https://www.financethink.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Multidimensional-child-poverty-EN.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3dAdVW_Ca2L7jcgqFjkSKs-kO3o888O9pSP9s6x4fOZ

Roma children have a nine times higher incidence of poverty in education and more than four times higher incidence of poverty in the area of care and financial status.

Challenges

- Systematic and long-term measures for street children
- Establishment of a support system for the homeless at the local level
- High rates of children not enrolled in pre-school and primary education
- Development of a support system for the elderly at the local level

Discrimination and antigypsyism

Antigypsyism³¹ is a special form of racism directed at those socially stigmatized as "Gypsies" or equivalent pejorative terms that essentially assume that the Roma are an inferior and deviant group and that justify their domination and oppression. Regardless of the term used, there is widespread agreement among scholars, activists, and policymakers that antigypsyism is a form of racism. Mid-term evaluation³² of national strategies for Roma inclusion, found that a clearer focus was needed in the fight against antigypsyism and discrimination, which should complement the inclusion approach. Recognition of antigypsyism should lay the groundwork for transforming society's attitudes and values and subsequently improve the implementation of regulations and policies. The focus of antigypsyism aside from discrimination lies in its shifting attention exclusively from those individuals who experience discrimination to the "collective experience" of racism experienced by Roma.

Antigypsyism encompasses a much wider range of discriminatory expressions and practices, including many indirect or covert manifestations. Antigypsyism is not just about what is said, but also about what is done and what is not done. An accurate understanding of the meaning of this phenomenon is key to a proper understanding of its impact. Regarding the manifestation of this phenomenon, an intersectional approach is needed from several areas, which include: discrimination, hate speech, police brutality, segregation in schools, segregation in housing, forced eviction, Holocaust recognition and cultural landmarks of Roma practitioners' employment and health.

The data from the Balkan Barometer regarding the attitude towards vulnerable groups, including the Roma, best reflect the acceptance of the Roma in Macedonian society. According to the survey, 23% of the population does not feel comfortable working with Roma; 25% of the population do not feel comfortable having their children go to school with Roma children, while 38% do not feel comfortable renting a Roma apartment/house.³³ Hate speech against Roma is present³⁴ in various forms in public discourse. Widespread hate speech has been observed since the beginning of the COVID19 pandemic, on social networks

³¹At EU level, there is a general acceptance of the term antigypsyism which in the Macedonian context translates as antigypsyism. Regarding the use of the term in the Macedonian society, there are different views and part of the professional public that understands the concept is of the opinion to use the same term primarily due to the fact that the use of the term reflects the social construction of the imposed term "gypsy" and covers all groups to which this type of racism is directed by society, while the rest of the professional public believes that this strengthens stereotypes and discrimination. The Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030 will use the term anti-Gypsy primarily due to the fact that the concept itself is aimed at defining, understanding and finding mechanisms to eradicate this phenomenon.

³²Mid-term evaluation of the EU framework for national strategies for Roma. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/mid-term-evaluation-eu-framework-nris_en

³³Balkan Barometer 2021 - Public Opinion. Available at: <https://www.rcc.int/pubs/122/balkan-barometer-2021--public-opinion>

³⁴Marija Sulejmanova, MA, Institute for Policy Research and Analysis - Romalítico, Hate Speech on Social Networks and Its Impact on the Roma Community, 2021. Available at: https://www.romalitico.org/images/2021/pdf/Govorot_na_omraza_na_socijalnite_mrezi_i_negovoto_vlijae_vrz_romskata_zaednica.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3IVaU-BGAVXKAf7

(comments on individual profiles, entertainment pages on social networks on TV stations and portals) and reactions from NGOs. From the point of view of social media, according to Romalítico's analysis, it is particularly worrying that some of the statements taken from social media can be characterized as fascist speech because they are directly related to the Holocaust and the historical past of the Roma as victims of the Nazi regime. On the other hand, the media and portals often use headlines that directly reveal the ethnicity of the persons that is a forbidden act in the media space.

In a US State Department report on human rights³⁵, the latest case of police brutality against Roma citizens in Bitola is noted. According to ERRC reports³⁶, in the period 2016-2020, there were several cases of police brutality, for which there are judgments by the European Court of Human Rights for inaction of judicial bodies, but also some are not processed due to lack of material evidence. According to the Ombudsman's statistics, in most of the cases of police brutality as victims are Roma, and out of the total number of cases in 2020 and 2021, ten victims are Roma.

Regarding the segregation in education in the past period, two forms can be noticed: disproportionate representation of Roma in special schools and separate schools and classes with a dominant number of Roma students. However, the new law on primary education incorporates an integrative education system which means that the special school will only function until 2021. From 2022 the special school will continue to function as support centers for integrating children in the regular school. An obvious example of segregated schools/classes is the primary school Gjorgji Sugarev in Bitola, where more than 80% of the enrolled students are Roma. In recent years it can be noticed that there is a reduced number of first grade students from other ethnic communities.

Regarding the situation with segregation in housing and forced eviction, according to the reports of the focus groups, it can be noticed that specific cardboard neighborhoods in the City of Skopje that were placed near the train station were removed. At the same time, in certain municipalities - Strumica locals have solutions for demolition of buildings where the community has lived for more than 30 years. In the municipality of Kocani, due to the reaction of the local population, the construction of typical houses was not allowed to accommodate the Roma population who have been living in an abandoned building in the old barracks for more than 15 years.

³⁵Human Rights Report for North Macedonia 2020. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NORTH-MACEDONIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

³⁶ERRC cases. Available at: http://www.errc.org/search?country=124&theme=&area=&keyword=&search_submit=&fbclid=IwAR0kIMXIsj416xuvJZ0uurEBDcfvsclBOXUgZUqrTyJ2Sym11Vva8--0hIE

Officially, August 2 is not recognized as the day of the Roma Holocaust during the Second World War in the Republic of North Macedonia, but the state participates in and supports the commemorative events of this day. The commitment to recognize the Roma Holocaust during World War II is only by the country's civil sector.

The above examples show the manifestation of antigypsyism through the prism of public policies and practices that occur in the daily lives of Roma. It is, therefore, crucial to consider the systemic or structural nature of antigypsyism. Hence, it is necessary to educate the society, understand the concept and define mechanisms that will prevent this phenomenon and contribute to an equal society.

Civil registration

According to official data from the 2002 census, 17,652 stateless persons were registered. Given that no census has been conducted before nineteen years, unfortunately, there is no accurate data on how many people are stateless at the moment. During 2018-2019, the Government launched a campaign for the registration of Roma persons without a birth certificate or citizenship. A total of 750 people were identified from the campaign, although civil society organizations claim that the number of unregistered people is much higher.

According to the Young Lawyers Association, a total of 554 people have been registered as stateless or at risk of becoming stateless, 284 people have unregulated citizenship, and 271 people have indefinite citizenship. Although there is a lack of data, the reasons for the occurrence of statelessness are due to the break-up of the former SFR Yugoslavia where many people did not declare their citizenship in the Republic of North Macedonia, including that this problem passed on to their children. An additional reason for statelessness is the non-registration of children in the birth register.

Obstacles to birth registration and unregulated civil status lie in the inability to collect all the necessary documents due to complex administration, discriminatory treatment, poverty and marginalization.

To solve this long-standing problem, the Parliament adopted a law on unregistered persons in the registry books during 2020. The purpose of this law is for the persons not registered in the birth register to be registered in a special birth register, to obtain an extract from the special birth register and an identification document to exercise the right to education, health care, social protection and employment with compulsory social insurance in accordance with the law, until additional entry in the birth register and obtaining the first birth certificate, in accordance with the law.

The purpose of the law was for these persons who were previously registered in the temporary register according to the call to be able to be entered in a special registry book and to be given a special ID card so that they could enjoy several rights, access to health services, employment, social protection and

education. The law stipulates that these persons can register in the regular registry within five years in order to obtain ID cards.

According to the European Commission's report on the country's progress for 2020 the implementation of the law is slow. According to our data so far, about 200 people are applying/registering in special records. Unfortunately, although the law on unregistered persons provided them with temporary personal documents, the institutions are not yet ready to fully implement this law. Namely, the persons who have already been given a social security number still cannot receive health care or exercise their right to social protection, although these persons have a decision for guaranteed minimum assistance. According to the information from the competent institutions, there is a systemic problem in the databases where these persons cannot be inserted due to the specific identification number they receive. Additionally as a problem of temporary personal documents, given their design and specific identification number, these persons are subject to stereotype and discrimination before various institutions because immediately administrative officials profile these persons as "other".

STRATEGY FOR INCLUSION OF ROMA 2022-2030

Vision

Promotion and development of the socio-economic, legal position, cultural and linguistic rights of the Roma in the Republic of North Macedonia by ensuring adequate and equitable access to public goods and services, where the Roma community participates equally in building an inclusive society based on elimination against all forms of discrimination, anti-Roma sentiment and poverty.

Starting from the vision, the national strategic framework for Roma presented in this strategy provides guidelines for addressing the challenges faced by Roma in social inclusion and in the realization of human rights.

Hence, the general objectives are:

- to reduce and eliminate the socio-economic gap between the Roma and the rest of the non-Roma population in the Macedonian society,
- to reduce poverty and unemployment among the Roma population,
- to conduct an effective fight against discrimination and antigypsyism by promoting equality and ensuring the full participation of Roma in society.

Principles and values

The Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022 - 2030 as a national policy for Roma inclusion is based on the following principles:

- **Focus on fairness:** In particular, the fight against discrimination and antigypsyism should be a key and cross-cutting goal in every policy area, complementing the inclusion approach. This common focus should ensure that Roma have effective access to economic and social justice and equal opportunities.
- **Promoting participation through strengthening, cooperation, and trust:** Significant Roma participation must be ensured at all stages of policymaking. Roma political, economic and cultural engagement should be promoted with a sense of belonging as full members of society. Capacity building and building of Roma, civil society and public authorities, as well as building cooperation and trust between stakeholders and between Roma and non-Roma communities must be ensured.
- **Reflecting the diversity among Roma:** The Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022 - 2030 should cover all Roma in the territory and reflect the needs of different groups through an intersectional approach. The process should consider how aspects of identity can be combined to exacerbate discrimination against

certain groups. Quantitative and/or qualitative goals should be set within the process to provide indicators of age, gender, sexual orientation, mobility and other personal characteristics.

- **A combination of mainstream and explicit but not exclusive targeting of Roma:** Roma national strategic frameworks should combine mainstream and explicit but not exclusive targeting, ensuring that mainstream services are inclusive and provide additional targeted support to promote effective equal Roma access to rights and services. They should serve as planning tools for the use of national and EU funds for Roma-focused action and inclusive mainstream reform.

- **Improve the process of goal setting, data collection, monitoring and reporting:** Working towards achieving quantitative and/or qualitative national targets can make real progress towards Roma equality, inclusion and participation. Data should be collected regularly to serve in the reporting and monitoring process, improve transparency and accountability, and promote policy transfer and learning.

STRATEGIC GOALS

The Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030 sets eight goals in line with the EU Strategic Framework and the Poznan Declaration. Two of these goals are horizontal, in the areas of poverty and anti-gypsyism, while the other six are sectoral goals in the areas of education, employment, housing, health, culture and civil registration. The National Strategic Framework for Roma should provide support for decision-making, including decisions related to each of the strategic sectors/areas for Roma integration, allocation of funds and the creation of a framework that will improve the situation of the Roma population.

Strategic goal 1: Increasing the employment of Roma in the Republic of North Macedonia

Success indicators: By 2030, the employment rate to reach at least 28%

The strategic goal in employment is directly aimed at increasing the employment rate for Roma, whereby the employment rate is defined as the participation of Roma employees in the working-age population aged 15 and over. According to the data from the social mapping, the baseline employment rate for Roma is 23% according to the social mapping, and by 2030 it is projected to reach 28%.

Within the strategic goal, five specific objectives have been defined, some of the goals are aimed at direct employment support, and some are aimed at increasing skills and qualifications in order to improve the employment of the Roma community.

Specific goals	Performance indicators
SO 1: Increasing the employment of Roma in public and state administration	By 2030, at least 2.6% to be employed in state and public administration (target additional in which institutions)
SO 2: Increasing the coverage of Roma of active employment measures and services	At least 5% coverage of Roma in the programs for active employment measures on an annual basis
SO 3 Creating an enabling environment for formalization and stimulation of entrepreneurship in the Roma community	By 2030, supported at least 1,000 entrepreneurs to start new businesses and formalize existing ones
SO 4 Improving the digital skills of young Roma	By 2030, 30% of Roma to acquire information and communication technology (ICT) skills,
SO 5: Reducing the rate of young Roma who are not part of education, employment or training	By 2030, the rate of young Roma who are not part of education, employment, or training to be reduced by at least 50%

Strategic goal 2: Ensure permanent, dignified and non-segregated housing for Roma

Success indicators: By 2030, 80% of Roma live in urban areas and have access to basic communal infrastructure

In the area of housing, the strategic goal is aimed at improving housing conditions and infrastructure in the settlements where the Roma population lives. According to the data from the social mapping, about 20 Roma settlements were identified as are not urbanized and do not have basic infrastructure, while about 28% of the settlements where Roma live are not legalized. By 2030, it is envisaged that 80% of the identified settlements will be urbanized and have basic infrastructure, while all eligible dwellings that satisfy technical criteria to be legalized.

Within the strategic goal, five specific objectives are defined, some of the goals are aimed at urbanization and legalization, while the remaining goals are aimed at improving the basic infrastructure of the population and provision of social housing for vulnerable Roma population.

Specific goals	Performance indicators
SO 1 Urbanization of Roma settlements	By 2030, 95% of the settlements where Roma live have DUP
SO 2 Legalization of illegal dwelling, wherever is possible	By 2030, 100% legalization of homes that meet the technical and legal criteria for legalization
SO 3 Provide permanent, decent, affordable and desegregated housing for Roma currently living in informal settlements that cannot be legalized for justified reasons.	By 2030, to provide housing for 15% of the Roma population who do not have the opportunity to legalize and are at risk 10% of social houses are allocated to Roma
SO 4 Supporting project for communal infrastructure	By 2030, 95% of Roma housing will have water, electricity and utilities
SO 5 Reduction of exposure to pollution and contamination in Roma settlements	Reduction of air pollution by 40% in Roma settlements.

Strategic goal 3: Increasing the coverage of Roma children and students, improving the success in all spheres of education in the Republic of North Macedonia

Success indicators: Increasing access to all levels of education by 2030

In the field of education, the strategic goal is to increase the access to all levels of education and improve the quality of Roma students. According to the data from the State Statistical Office, the share of Roma in preschool education is 2.54%, with the drop out in primary education being 6%, while in secondary education, the drop out is 4%. By 2030, the goal is to increase the participation of Roma in pre-school education to 8% while the drop out in primary and secondary education to reach 2%, and 1%, respectively. Within the strategic goal, four specific goals have been defined, aiming to increase access to education at all levels of education.

Specific goals	Performance indicators
SO 1 Increasing the coverage of Roma children in preschool education	By 2030, 8% of Roma children are enrolled in preschool education
SO 2 Reducing the dropout rate in primary and secondary education	The drop-out rate * of primary education should not exceed 1% per year The drop-out rate * from secondary education should not exceed 2% per year
SO 3 Increasing the number of students in higher education	Increase of 50% in the number of Roma students by year
SO 4 Involvement of persons who have dropped out of education in the educational process	Created program for people who have dropped out of school/street children, children returning from abroad, people older than 18 years Increasing the literacy rate of the Roma community, by 2030, 30% of those who have left education

Strategic goal 4: Increasing the expected lifetime of the Roma community

Success indicators: By 2030, an average increase of 5 years for the expected life of the Roma community

In the area of health, the strategic goal is aimed at improving the health status of the Roma community, and the focus is on increasing the life expectancy by five years. According to UNDP data, there is a 10-year gap in life expectancy between Roma and non-Roma.

Within this goal, four specific goals are envisaged: child health, health insurance, and improving the scope and availability of services in the areas where the Roma community lives.

Specific goals	Performance indicators
SO 1 Reduction of infant mortality	By 2030, the infant mortality rate should be at the national average
SO 2 Full coverage of Roma in health insurance	By 2030, 100% of Roma are covered by health insurance
SO 3 Increased coverage of Romani women with prenatal and postnatal care services	By 2030, 70% of women will have a family gynecologist and access to prenatal and postnatal care
SO 4 Increased coverage and availability of preventive services for the Roma community	Reduced mortality rate from risky diseases (cardiovascular diseases, malignant diseases)

Strategic goal 5: Development, nurturing and promotion of Roma culture, language and tradition.

Success indicators: By 2030, established institutions for developing the Roma identity

The strategic goal in the field of culture is to create institutions that will develop, nurture, and promote Roma culture, language and tradition equipped with staff and building professional artists. The initial situation in the field of culture is that no institution takes care of the promotion of culture, and on average, about 0.1-0.2% of the total budget are allocated for supporting project on Roma. Within this goal, four specific goals are envisaged related to the creation of an institution for cultural promotion, staff development and increased allocation for projects to support the development of Roma culture.

Specific goals	Performance indicators
SO 1 Creating institutions for development, nurturing and promotion of Roma culture, language and tradition	Created a national and local institution with adequate human and technological resources to develop Roma culture
SO 2 Creation and training of professional cultural artists from the Roma community	By 2030, 1.Encouraged and developed Roma amateurism; 2. Provided quality staff in cultural and artistic activities (At least 5-10 year scholarships - theatre, fine arts, ethnologists, literary workers, film and drama and music, archaeologists) 3. Creating conditions for employment of 30-50 people

SO 3 Increased support for projects related to the development, nurturing and promotion of Roma culture	Development of a program to support projects related to the development, nurturing and promotion of Roma culture in the amount of initial 2 million denars to a tendency to grow to 15 million denars
SO 4 Better promotion and acquaintance of others with Roma culture and reduction of stereotypes, discrimination Hate speech, negative perceptions and anti-Roma narratives in society.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Textbooks that better represent Roma and Roma culture in educational content 2. Cultural products with a more complex representation of the Roma community/identity and culture 3. Better acceptance and recognition of Roma cultural workers and artists

Strategic goal 6: Ensuring material security and reducing the social exclusion of the Roma community

Success indicators: By 2030, reduce poverty for Roma by 50%

In the area of poverty, the strategic goal is aimed at providing material security to vulnerable groups within the Roma community - the homeless, street children, women. According to UNDP data, the difference in the poverty risk rate among the general population and Roma is 16.8%, while among children, the gap is 19.6%. Within this goal, two specific goals are envisaged, which are related to the general population of Roma and Romani children.

Specific goals	Performance indicators
SP 1 Reducing the poverty gap between Roma and the general population by at least half by 2030	Poverty risk rate to be reduced by 50% by 2030
SP 2 Reduce the poverty gap between Roma children and other children by at least half by 2030	Poverty risk rate to be reduced by 50% by 2030

Strategic goal 7: By 2030, all Roma have civil registration on the territory of the Republic of Northern Macedonia.

Success indicators: 0% of stateless persons by 2030

The strategic goal in the area of civil registration is for all identified persons without documents to acquire civil status who will be able to enjoy all rights and freedoms in accordance with the law. By 2020, about 700 people who do not have a first birth certificate, while data on the number of Roma who do not have citizenship do not exist. Within this goal, two specific goals are envisaged: the identification of persons who do not have civil status and the improvement of the legislation for a systemic solution for persons who have not regulated their civil status.

Specific goals	Performance indicators
WC 1 Assessment of the number of Roma at risk of statelessness	All persons who are stateless and without a birth certificate have been identified
SP 2 Improvement of the legislation	Amendments to the Law on Registry, the Law on Identity Card

Strategic goal 8: Eliminating the forms of manifestation of antigypsyism and reduce discrimination against Roma

Success indicators: By 2030, reducing the percentage of Roma who have faced some form of discrimination

One of the goals given special importance in the new strategic framework of the EU is the antigypsyism. The National Strategic Framework should envisage preventing and combating antigypsyism as a dependent/horizontal priority in all sectoral policies, with a general indicator of a reduction in the percentage of Roma facing discrimination and recognition of the concept of antigypsyism in the general public. Within this goal, four specific objectives are envisaged: creating an institutional framework for recognizing antigypsyism, sensitization of the institutions, and creating mechanisms for protection against institutional discrimination.

Specific goals	Performance indicators
SP 1: Recognition of the concept of anti-Gypsyism in public policies and domestic legislation	Recognition of antigypsyism as a crime in the penal code until 2030

SP 2: Improving the institutional and political framework	Established strategy and measures for elimination of antigypsyism
SP3: Supporting Victims of Discrimination and Access to Justice	Providing free legal aid in the processing of discrimination cases
WP 4 Dismantling and preventing institutional discrimination experienced by Roma	Reduced number of cases of forced eviction, segregation and police brutality

MEASURES TO ACOMPLISH THE STRATEGIC GOALS

In order to achieve the strategic goals, set of measures are designed to contribute to the realization of the strategic goals and the specific goals in each of the areas:

Employment

SO 1 Increasing the employment of Roma in public and state administration

Within this specific goal, measures are envisaged that are aimed at increasing the representation of Roma in the public administration, namely - creating a program to facilitate access to employment in the administration, which should provide support in the part of taking the administrative state examination and gaining work experience, improving the existing methodology for employment planning in the public sector, especially in the area of accelerating the employment of ethnic communities that are less than 20%, in order to achieve the level of equitable representation of communities. The last measure includes intensified monitoring and involvement of the Ombudsman institution in monitoring all processes in the field of employment of persons from ethnic communities that are less than 20% in order to reduce the abuses in declaring ethnicity.

Measure 1: Preparatory program for facilitating access for employment of Roma in state and public administration

Measure 2: Improving the Methodology for planning employment in the public sector

Measure 3: Intensified monitoring of Roma employment in public and state administration

SO 2 Increasing the coverage of Roma in the active employment measures and services

Within this specific goal, measures are envisaged that aim to increase the Roma community's employability in terms of increasing skills and additional qualifications, as well as direct employment support and support in access to finance through the announced Matching Fund. These measures are directly related to the Operational Plan for Employment and they aim to increase the number of Roma beneficiaries in the programs of the operational plan. Additionally, measures are envisaged in order to improve the current legislation in employment - amendments to the law and bylaws on labor records in order for persons not to be erased from the registries.

Measure 1: Increased activation of the Roma community

Measure 2: Exemption from social security contributions for employment of certain categories of unemployed - Roma who are long-term unemployed, women or young Roma

Measure 3: Introduce a special incentive for employment of people who are more difficult to employ

Measure 4: Promotion of the Law on Labor Records

Measure 5: Support access to finance for Roma entrepreneurs

SO 3 Creating an enabling environment for formalization and stimulation of entrepreneurship in the Roma community

This specific goal aims to create an environment to support and facilitate the transition from the informal to the formal sector. The measures envisaged within this specific objective are aimed at improving the legislation in the area of amendments to the law on registering companies aiming at lowering the requirements for initial capital; creation of a new law on social entrepreneurship, as well as support in the area of tax policy and new measures for the development of social enterprises. Additionally, within this goal, a program for formalization of informal work is envisaged, as well as piloting a system of vouchers following the example of Western European countries to provide incentives for certain sectors in order for people to move to the formal sector.

Measure 1: Facilitating registration and bylaws for registration of company

Measure 2: Program for formalization of informal work

Measure 3: Improving legislation for social entrepreneurship and law on employment

Measure 4: Piloting a system of vouchers for unregistered activity

SO 4 Improving the digital skills of young Roma

This specific goal stems from the new digitalization agenda as well as the needs of the labor market for people with digital skills. The envisaged measures refer primarily to providing internet access in Roma settlements and targeted measures for additional courses, training, internships for learning new programs, and developing digital skills.

Measure 1: Internet access in Roma settlements

Measure 2: Targeted measures for young Roma to improve their digital skills

SO 5 Increasing the qualifications of young Roma who are not part of education, employment or training

This measure is directly aimed at young Roma who are not involved in the educational process, who are not employed and do not attend any training with the main goal of improving their qualifications in the labor market. In this regard, the measures should primarily focus on supporting people to complete their education, targeted labour internships and incentives for employment of young Roma.

Measure 1: Creating a program for the inclusion of persons in the educational process

Measure 2: Targeted internships and first work experience of young Roma who are in NEET

Measure 3: Tax incentives for the employment of young Roma * NEET

Housing

SO 1 Urbanization of Roma settlements

One of the main goals in the field of housing is the urbanization of Roma settlements within the local self-government unit. All processes related to asphaltting of the street, water supply and sewerage network are connected to the urbanization process. In this part, two specific goals are planned, which refer to the mapping of the situation in the area of legalization and support in the process of urbanization of these settlements.

Measure 1: Mapping the housing situation - illegal homes

Measure 2: Adoption and amendment of urban plans for inclusion of settlements where Roma live in the General and detailed urban plans

SO 2 Legalize illegally constructed dwellings, wherever possible

As part of the support in housing and infrastructure, as a specific goal is the legalization of illegally constructed dwellings and the measures refer to the improvement of the regulation in the part of housing - a new law for legalization of illegally constructed dwellings and a legal framework for social housing. At the same time, having in mind that a large number of citizens failed to legalize their homes due to lack of financial resources, it is necessary to provide financial support to vulnerable categories of citizens to cover the costs associated with legalization.

Measure 1: Law on legalization of illegally constructed buildings

Measure 2: Law on Social Housing

Measure 3: Financial support to vulnerable groups for legalization of their homes

SO 3 Providing permanent, decent, affordable and desegregated housing for Roma currently living in informal settlements that cannot be legalized for justified reasons

This goal is primarily aimed at the category of citizens whose residences cannot be legalized due to non-compliance with technical requirements or are at risk, citizens who do not have a residence, and socially vulnerable category who live in extremely poor conditions. Within this goal, measures such as the construction of social housing, construction of typical houses and renovation/expansion of capacities for collective housing are envisaged.

Measure 1: Introducing 10% quota for the allocation of social housing

Measure 2: Construction of typical houses for people

Measure 3: Renovation of the facilities for collective housing of the homeless

SO 4 Improvement of the communal infrastructure in the Roma neighborhoods

Given that in most of the settlements where Roma live, there is no basic infrastructure, this specific goal is related to the support from the central government to the local self-government units to provide basic infrastructure to provide access to asphalt roads and access to water and sewerage, network, construction of retaining walls, etc. Within this goal, three measures are envisaged- Improving the existing methodology for allocation of funds in order to ensure transparency and criteria in the allocation of funds to local self-government units, providing financial support for the development of communal infrastructure, as well as technical support to LSGUs for development of infrastructure projects.

Measure 1: Improving the methodology for allocation of funds

Measure 2: Financial support for the improvement of the communal infrastructure - through capital grants and loans

Measure 3: Grants for equalization and provision of technical support to LSGUs for project development

SO 5 Reduction of exposure to pollution and contamination in Roma settlements

In the field of environment, two measures are envisaged that are related to reducing the exposure to pollution and contamination in Roma settlements, namely - setting up stations for measuring pollution and a program to provide alternative sources of heating for households in Roma settlements.

Measure 1: Installation of measuring stations in Roma settlements

Measure 2: Subsidized program for photovoltaic systems and air conditioners

Education

SO 1 Increasing the coverage of Roma children in preschool education

In the framework of increasing the coverage of Roma children in preschool education, the measures are aimed at parents, financial support in terms of covering the costs of kindergarten, as well as the introduction of incentives for socially vulnerable categories of citizens. In addition, in order to provide support to children from an early age and to cover the category of street children, it is necessary to build regional centers for early childhood development, as well as to increase human resources in terms of providing staff (caregivers and educators) from the Roma community.

Measure 1: Raising awareness of the need for early childhood development

Measure 2: Expand the number of Roma children who are exempt from participation

Measure 3: Child allowance for Roma children at social risk in preschool education

Measure 4: Centers for early childhood development in Roma settlements

Measure 5: Employment of caregivers and Roma educators

SO 2 Reducing the dropout rate in primary and secondary education

In the part of reducing the dropout rate in primary and secondary education, a series of measures are envisaged, which include improvement of the legislation, utilization of the existing measures, and additional staff and means for support of students (returnees from abroad, students who have difficulties in overcoming material, students who are at social risk).

- Measure 1: Legal solution that promotes a differential approach in primary education
- Measure 2: Educated mediators in primary education
- Measure 3: Optimization of the school network to the municipalities (block grants) in schools where Roma students study
- Measure 4: Scholarships for Roma students in secondary education
- Measure 5: Utilization of the measure for enrollment of Roma students with 10% less points in secondary education
- Measure 6: Provide free meals for Roma students from I-IV grade
- Measure 7: Utilization of the measure free transportation and free textbooks / electronic devices
- Measure 8: Pedagogical assistants in primary and secondary education

SO 3 Increasing the number of students in higher education

One of the goals is to increase the number of students in higher education where a series of measures are envisaged that include improvement of legislation, targeted financial support to areas of importance to Roma (pedagogical, philological, drama, medical faculty). In addition, there are measures aimed at monitoring the existing quotas for enrollment in higher education.

- Measure 1: Utilization of quotas for enrollment in higher education
- Measure 2: Scholarships for Roma students in higher education
- Measure 3: Acquisition of free higher education for Roma women over 35 years of age

SO 4 Involvement of persons who have dropped out of education in the educational process

The interest in completing primary and secondary education of those who have left education is particularly high, and with the support of EU funds in the field of education, a large number of Roma under the age of 39 managed to complete their education. In addition, the educational structure of people applying to the ESA remains unchanged for several years, whereby around 95% of Roma are without education or with primary education, which further impose barriers in the access to active employment measures. Hence, the measures are aimed at creating an educational program for the inclusion of people who have left education and providing financial support for completion of primary and secondary education.

- Measure 1: Development of an education program for inclusion of street children, returnees and children aged 7-14
- Measure 2: Provide financial support for completing education

Health

SO 1 Reduction of infant mortality and increased coverage of Romani women with prenatal and postnatal care services

One of the goals is to reduce infant mortality and increase coverage of Romani women with prenatal and postnatal care services, where the measures envisaged are aimed at caring for pregnant women, access to the right to abortion, as well as counseling with an aim to increase the capacity of Romani women for reproductive health care.

Measure 1: Increase visits by patronage nurses among pregnant and Romani women

Measure 2: Equal access to the right to abortion for the Roma community and poverty reduction through family planning

Measure 3: Counseling centers for the promotion of the reproductive and sexual health of Roma women at social risk

SO 2 Improving the accessibility of the Roma community to primary health care

In terms of accessibility to primary health care, the envisaged measures are aimed at providing health insurance to undocumented persons, as well as creating a special program or targeted measures aimed at health care of vulnerable groups and equal access to emergency medical care.

Measure 1: Amend the law on health insurance to include undocumented persons in the health system

Measure 2: Program for exercising the right to health care of vulnerable groups in preventive, primary, secondary and tertiary care

Measure 3: Promoting the health of the Roma community by enabling equal access to health services of emergency medical care

SO 3 Increased coverage and availability of preventive services for the Roma community

In terms of increasing the scope and availability of preventive services, it primarily refers to measures related to the provision of infrastructure and human resources in health centers that are close to the Roma population. Additionally, measures are envisaged for developing the competencies of the health workers in the part of understanding the cultural competencies of the health workers. It also envisages a measure aimed at people treated for opiate addiction to support them and access preventive services.

Measure 1: Improving access to health care of the Roma population through employment of concessionaires in the health centers where the Roma population lives and there is a shortage of family doctors and gynecologists.

Measure 2: Improving the cultural and structural competencies of health professionals to work with Roma patients

Measure 3: Opening of a decentralized program for treatment of opiate addiction in the municipality of Suto Orizari

Culture

SO 1 Creating institutions for development, nurturing and promotion of Roma culture, language and tradition

In the framework of the promotion of Roma culture, three measures are envisaged that are aimed at creating an institution with adequate human resources that should establish a plan and program for work and additionally network all cultural actors.

Measure 1: Creation of a national and local institution with adequate human and technological resources that contribute to the development of Roma culture

Measure 2: Preparation of a work plan of the institution

Measure 3: Networking of cultural artists

SO 2 Creation and training of professional cultural artists from the Roma community

One of the goals in the field of culture is the development of capacities and promotion of young actors, as well as support of festivals and works of art. Additionally, in order to develop greater acceptance of Roma in society and reduce stereotypes and prejudices against the community, it is necessary to promote cooperation with other national and local institutions from different ethnic communities.

Measure 1: Training program for young actors and amateurs, drama-theatre festival, organization of art exhibitions

Measure 2: Memorandum of Cooperation with national and local institutions

SO 3 Increased support for projects related to the development, nurturing and promotion of Roma culture

Given that Roma culture has been institutionally neglected, it is necessary to stimulate high school students to enroll in the faculties of drama and philology, as well as to open a department of Romani language at the Faculty of Philology that will support working staff focusing on the development and nurturing of the Roma language and creativity.

Measure 1: Development of staff that will nurture the Roma culture, tradition, language by providing scholarships by profile

Measure 3: Opening a department of Romani language

Measure 3: Memorandum of Understanding with relevant faculties and relevant educational and cultural institutions

Measure 4: Increased number of books by Roma authors and publications related to Roma culture

SO 4 Better promotion and acquaintance of others with Roma culture and reduction of stereotypes and discrimination, hate speech, negative perceptions and anti-Roma narratives in society.

This specific goal is aimed at introducing the other ethnic communities to the Roma culture, and it is of particular importance to organize events for important dates of the Roma history. Additionally, additional measures that will be organized together with other ethnic communities to promote the concept of a society are envisaged.

Measure 1: Events and supporting days of Roma culture

Measure 2: Identification of activities related to the strategy for one society

Anti-Gypsyism

SO 1 Recognition of the concept of antigypsyism in public policies and domestic legislation

Antigypsyism as one of the new areas in the EU strategic framework, needs to be targeted at the institutional level in order to initially institutional to get acquainted with the concept, to provide education to employees of key institutions and additionally to include the concept of antigypsyism in legislation. This approach is initially aimed at raising awareness among the general public and establishing mechanisms for institutional protection.

Measure 1: Operationalization of the term antigypsyism at all levels of public institutions;

Measure 2: Educate civil servants, teachers, the judiciary, social workers and other civil servants to identify antigypsyism in order to effectively prevent and combat it.

Measure 3: Change the legislation for recognizing antigypsyism as a crime

SO 2 Improving the institutional and political framework

As part of the improvement of the institutional and political framework for antigypsyism, it is planned to establish working groups composed of institutions and civil society that will give input in the creation of policies and laws, which also collect data on various human rights violations that have been committed with anti-Roma motives.

Measure 1: Establishment of expert working groups on antigypsyism that give suggestions and recommendations to policy makers;

Measure 2: Encourage and support national human rights institutions, equality bodies and the ombudsman in collecting data and reporting on anti-Roma cases;

Measure 3: Collect disintegrated data on hate speech and hate crimes committed with anti-Roma motives, including cross-sectoral data, to enable trend analysis.

SO 3 Supporting Victims of Discrimination and Access to Justice

In the area of support to victims of discrimination, measures are provided to support and assist citizens who have faced institutional discrimination. In cases where institutions are involved, it is necessary to provide a safe place for victims who will not be affected in the court process as well as to follow the cases in the court process where Roma are involved.

Measure 1: Provide support and assistance in filing complaints about hate crimes, hate speech, , discrimination and access to justice;

Measure 2: Establish and / or support programs and / or initiatives to support victims of anti-Roma crimes, hate speech, and discrimination

Measure 3: Follow-up of cases in the judicial system where Roma complain on ethnic or racial grounds;

SO 4 Dismantling and preventing systemic / institutional / structural discrimination experienced by Roma

Given that antigypsyism is set on a horizontal basis and has various manifestations such as desegregation, forced eviction and police brutality, the measures need to focus on compliance with existing regulations, as well as providing free support and protection of basic human rights.

Measure 1: Providing alternative accommodation in cases of forced eviction of Roma

Measure 2: Respecting the principle of regionalization and establishing a system of penalties for parents who enroll their children in school contrary to the principle of regionalization

Measure 3: Providing legal assistance to victims who have reported police brutality

Civil registration

SO 1 Assessment of the number of Roma at risk of statelessness

Within the first specific goal in the area of civil registration, it is necessary to make an assessment of the number of Roma who do not have any documents and the number of Roma who do not have citizenship. Hence, the measures are aimed at identifying, mapping and developing the competencies of the people working in the Registry Office.

Measure 1: Comprehensive and accurate identification of the number of Roma at risk of statelessness through the conducted census

Measure 2: Public call for persons in need of registration of their civil status

Measure 3: Trained staff and employment of Roma in the Registry Office

SO 2 Improving the institutional and political framework

In order to ensure full inclusion of persons who have not resolved the civil status and to provide a systematic approach to resolving the status, it is necessary to improve the legislation that implies changes in the bylaws for additional registration, amendments to the law on ID card, housing law. At the same time, the recommendations of the UNHCR and the roadmap prepared by the Regional Cooperation Council should be followed in order to ensure citizenship of the people who have lived in the Republic of Northern Macedonia for more than 10 years.

Measure 1: Simplified procedure for additional registration of birth by example and a bylaw that will regulate the procedure for additional registration of birth

Measure 2: Amending the Law on Out-of-Court Procedure in order to normalize the procedure for determining the time and place of birth of the child

Measure 3: Amending the Law on Free Legal Aid in order to expand the scope of free legal aid and to include persons who are registered and have an ID card in accordance with the Law on Unregistered Persons,

Measure 4: Amending the law on ID card and the law on residence

Measure 5: Establish procedures for establishing statelessness in accordance with UNHCR guidelines

Poverty

SO 1 Reduce the poverty gap between Roma and the general population by at least half by 2030

In the area of poverty reduction, people who are homeless are targeted and the responsibility is transferred at the local level. The role of the municipalities is to map people at social risk and to create social services at the local level.

Measure 1: Temporary collective housing for the homeless

Measure 2: Development of new social and combined services at local level

SO 2 Reduce the poverty gap between Roma children and other children by at least half by 2030

Within the child poverty, street children are singled out as a special target group, and the measures are aimed at establishing shelters for street children, as well as ensuring basic material security.

Measure 1: Establishment of shelter centers for street children

Measure 2: Introduction of educational supplement for children from socially vulnerable groups who are in preschool education

Measure 3: Obtaining meal for students at schools

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation play a central role in creating evidence-based public policies. Therefore, the information obtained from the monitoring and evaluation and the analysis of the situation and the determination of the problems are necessary input information for creating a new, i.e., improving the existing public policy.

To establish a system for measuring the achievement of strategic goals, it is necessary to establish a system for monitoring and evaluation.

Graph 2: Monitoring and evaluation system



- **Establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system**

The mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma 2022-2030 should provide a framework for continuous assessment of the progress of defined activities, outputs and expected results (monitoring), as well as periodic review of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of activities in accordance to the goals and objectives (evaluation). The activities for monitoring the implementation and measures of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022 - 2030, should be organized and implemented through the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, primarily due to the availability of human resources within the Roma Strategy Unit, but also due to the competence for managing the National Coordination Body for the implementation of the Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020. In addition, within the MLSP, clear competencies should be established regarding data collection, responsible persons, and the frequency of submitting reports on the implementation of certain measures and activities. The establishment of a monitoring system should be distributed according to the hierarchical arrangement of institutions in the implementation of the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma 2022-2030.

This arrangement defines the responsibilities of the line ministries, the process of reporting and systematizing the received data. The monitoring process refers to the monitoring of process indicators and should answer the questions - whether the activity was implemented, how many persons participated / were involved by gender, whether the resources were sufficient to implement the activities, and whether the level of achieved results corresponds to the level of implemented activities. The monitoring conducted in this way should inform annually on the operational level what changes should be made in order to achieve the qualitatively and quantitatively envisaged goals.

The evaluation of the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma 2022-2030 should be conducted by an independent entity in order to ensure independence, transparency and impartiality of the results and recommendations. The evaluation mechanism should ensure that lessons learned are covered and incorporated into continuous adjustment and improvement of mainstream inclusion efforts. The scope of monitoring and evaluation framework should be determined according to the resources available for these activities. From the aspect of credibility of the process and the conclusions from the meeting of ministers in the Republic of Albania, the State Statistical Office with the support of IPA III should conduct research for the implementation of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030 in a time frame of 3 years, at it is recommended that during 2025 a revision of the strategy to be made by including the lessons learned that will emerge from the evaluation and the new context.

- Defining indicators and identifying a data source

The Fundamental Rights Agency, with a working group composed of relevant representatives from member state governments, has developed a portfolio of indicators to monitor the impact of Roma inclusion policies. For the countries of the Western Balkans, it is recommended in addition to the use of the set of portfolio of indicators developed by FRA to use also the indicators coming from the Poznan Declaration. In addition, the Fundamental Rights Agency defines two sets of indicators - primary and secondary indicators that countries according to their data collection capacities and systems should decide which indicators to include in the monitoring and evaluation.

	Area	Indicator	Define the indicator	Data source
1.1	Education	Percentage of Roma children involved in preschool education at ages 3–6	Number of Roma children aged 3–6 years / total number of children aged 3–6	State Bureau of Statistics
1.2	Education	Percentage of Roma students who are of school age attending education,	Number of Roma children at school age/ total number of children at school age	State Bureau of Statistics
1.3	Education	Percentage of Roma children who left education (primary, secondary education)	Number of Roma children who are at school age at the beginning of the year by department / Number of Roma children who are at school age at the end of the year by department	State Bureau of Statistics
1.4	Education	Percentage of Roma who left education early	Number of Roma aged 18–24 without education/ Number of Roma aged 18–24	Regional Research, AVRSM
1.4	Education	Percentage of Roma who have felt discriminated for being Roma in the past 12 months, when they have been in contact with school authorities (as a parent/guardian or student) in the past 12 months, respondents, 16+ (%)	Number of Roma aged 16+ who felt discriminated against/ number of Roma aged 16+	Regional research
1.5	Education	Percentage of Roma children aged 6–15 attending school where more than 60% are Roma	Number of Roma aged 6–15 in a particular class/ number of Roma in a particular class Number of Roma aged 6–15 in a particular school/ total number of Roma in school	Regional research
1.6	Education	Percentage of Roma enrolled in higher education	Number of Roma students in first year/ total number of enrolled students	State Bureau of Statistics
1.7	Education	Percentage of Roma who complete higher education	Number of Roma students in first year/ total number of graduates	State Bureau of Statistics

1.8	Education	Prevalence of bullying/harassment motivated by hatred of Roma children while at school in the past 12 months, from all respondents who are parents/guardians of school-age children, respondents, 16+ (%)	Number of harassments reported by all respondents/ total number of Roma	Regional research
2.1	Employment	Employment rate	Participation of employees in the working population aged 15 years and older (declared to be working "paid work" (including full-time, part-time, ad hoc jobs, self-employment and part-time work or work in the past four weeks), household members	Regional research
2.2	Employment	Representation of Roma in public and state administration	Number of Roma employees in public and state administration / total number of employees in public and state administration	Ministry of Information Society
2.3	Employment	Percentage of young people, 16–24 years of age who are in the category "neither in employment, education or training", household members (%)	Number of Roma young people 16-24 who declared they were not employed, did not attend education, training/ number of Roma young people at 16-24	Regional research
2.4	Employment	Percentage of Roma who felt discriminated against for being Roma in the past 12 months, in the job-seeking process, respondents, 16+ (%)	Number of Roma 16+ who felt discriminated against /total number of Roma 16+	Regional research
2.5	Employment	Percentage of Roma who felt discriminated against for being Roma in the past 12 months, respondents, 16+ (%)	Number of Roma employed 16+ who felt discriminated against /total number of Roma 16+	Regional research
2.6	Employment	Percentage of Roma who have not worked in the last 4 weeks and are looking for work, respondents, 16–74 (%)	Number of Roma who have not worked in the last 4 weeks at the age of 16–74 / total number of Roma aged 16–74	Regional research

2.7	Employment	Percentage of Roma involved in active employment measures	Number of Roma who are active job seekers involved in some measure/ total number of beneficiaries from the active employment measures	AVRSM
2.8	Employment	Percentage of Roma who received support for opening a business	Number of Roma who are active job seekers who have received a grant or loan from an AVRSM or other institution / total number of users that were receive grant/ loan	AVRSM
3.1	Healthcare	Percentage of Roma who rate their health generally as "Very good" or "good", respondents, 16+ (%)	Number of Roma who rate their health generally as "Very good" or "good", respondents, 16+ (%) / total number of Roma respondents 16+	Regional research
3.2	Healthcare	Percentage of Roma with health insurance, respondents, 16+ (%)	Number of Roma with health insurance, respondents, 16+ (%) / total Roma respondents 16+	Regional research
3.3	Healthcare	Increase in life expectancy in the Roma community	The expected (medium) duration of life at birth shows how many years an average person would live, provided that the mortality of the population during the entire life span of that person remains at the level of the period for which this indicator is calculated	Regional research
3.4	Healthcare	Percentage of Roma who felt discriminated for being Roma in the past 12 months, in the process of seeking health care, respondents, 16+ (%)	Number of Roma employed 16+ who felt discriminated against / total number of Roma 16+	Regional research
3.5	Healthcare	Percentage of Roma living in households with the above problems in their household: Pollution, dirt or other environmental problems in the area where they live such as smoke, dust, unpleasant smell or polluted water, household members, (%)	Number of households facing an environmental problem / total number of households	Regional research

4.1	Housing	Percentage of people living in households without access to water, household members (%)	Number of households that do not have access to water /total number of households	Regional research
4.2	Housing	Percentage of urbanized settlements	A settlement involved in the DUP and has a paved road, water and sewerage network. Number of settlements that do not have a DUP/ total number of settlements	Regional research
4.3	Housing	Percentage of people living in households who have neither a toilet, no shower, no bathroom in the habitat	Number of households, no toilet, no shower, no bathroom in the habitat /total number of households	Regional research
4.4	Housing	Percentage of people who felt discriminated against for being Roma for the past 5 years, when they sought residence, respondents, 16+ (%)	Number of persons who felt discriminated against in the process of seeking residence / total number of respondents	Regional research
4.5	Housing	Percentage of Roma living in a household that does not have a minimum number of rooms according to Eurostat's definition of overcrowding	Number of persons living in a household where there are no minimum number of rooms/ total number of respondents	Regional research
4.6	Housing	Percentage of Roma living in too dark apartment, roof leaking, no shower, no indoor toilet, a habitat that is considered too dark	Number of households that have a problem – too dark apartment, roof leaking, lack of spa/ / total number of households	Regional research
4.7	Housing	Percentage of Roma receiving social housing	Number of Roma who received social housing/ total number of allocated apartments	Regional research
5.1	Poverty	Percentage of Roma children 0-17 living in a household where a household person has gone hungry in the past month because there is not enough money for food (%)	Number of households went hungry because they did not have enough money for food/ total number of households	Regional research

5.2	Poverty	Percentage of Roma material deprivation – percentage of Roma who cannot afford: pay the bills for rent, mortgage or utilities; have warming; to allow meat or protein; allow themselves to rest; tv; washing machine; car; phone.	Number of households who have declared themselves unable to afford the procurement of some services/ goods/ total number of households	Regional research
5.3	Poverty	Percentage of Roma who do not have a transaction account	Number of Roma who do not have a transaction account/ total number of Roma respondents	Regional research
5.4	Poverty	Percentage of Roma who are beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum income	Number of Rocky users of guaranteed minimum income/ total number of users	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
6.1	Discrimination	Percentage of Roma who felt discriminated for being Roma in any area covered by the survey in the past 12 months, respondents, 16+ (%)	Number of Roma discriminated / total number of respondents	Regional research
6.2	Discrimination	Percentage of Roma who experienced hate-motivated harassment because they were Roma, respondents, 16+	Number of Roma who experienced hate-motivated harassment respondents, 16+/ total number of respondents	Regional research
6.3	Discrimination	The percentage of Roma who have been physically attacked for being Roma (of all respondents) in the past 12 months,	Number of Roma who were physically attacked/ total number of respondents 16+	Regional research
6.4	Discrimination	A percentage of Roma who have been stopped by police in the past 12 months and think they have been stopped because they are Roma, respondents, 16+ (%)	Number of Roma stopped by police / total number of respondents 16+	Regional research

6.5	Discrimination	Percentage of general population who do not feel comfortable with Roma neighbors	Number of citizens who do not feel comfortable with Roma neighbors / total number of respondents	Balkan Barometer
6.6	Discrimination	Percentage of people who think it is acceptable not to hire Roma because of concerns about how customers might react (fundamental rights poll)	Number of companies that would not employ Roma / total number of respondents	Balkan Barometer
7.1	Knowledge of human rights	Percentage of Roma who heard of at least one human rights institution, respondents, 16+ (%)	Number of Roma who heard about human rights institution/ total number of respondents	Regional research
7.2	Knowledge of human rights	Percentage of Roma aware of discrimination protection law, respondents, 16+ (%)	Number of Roma who heard about the law on protection against discrimination/ total number of respondents	Regional research
7.3	Knowledge of human rights	Percentage of Roma who trust the police and/or the judicial system, respondents, 16+ (%)	Number of Roma who trust the police and/or the judicial system / total number of respondents	Regional research
7.4	Knowledge of human rights	Percentage of Roma who married 18 years ago	Number of Roma who married before 18-year/ total number of respondents	Regional research
8.1	Culture	Percentage of allocation of funds for promotion of Roma culture	Number of Roma projects supported/ total number of project expressed in MKD	Ministry of Culture

- **Reporting mechanism**

The establishment of a monitoring system should be distributed according to the hierarchical arrangement of institutions in the implementation of the Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030. According to the institutional set-up, the Government of RSM annually submits reports to the Regional Cooperation Council on the implementation of public policies, through the National Contact Point in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. They prepare the Annual Report on the implementation of the Strategy for Roma, and yearly they informed the government on the implementation of the activities coming from this strategy. On a quarterly basis, the line ministries responsible for the implementation of activities in specific areas report to the National Coordination Body on the implementation of activities – mainstream and targeted measures towards Roma.

According to the role and responsibilities of the line ministries, the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is in the area of employment and poverty reduction through the implementation of the operational plan for employment, preschool education and the social protection system, the Ministry of Education is responsible in the area of implementation of education policies and the youth guarantee scheme, while the Ministry of Transport and Communications for housing policies and transfers to the municipalities for the implementation of infrastructural projects, the Ministry of Health for creating special programs for health care and setting up health infrastructure and resources. A new aspect in terms of strategic goals is the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture in promoting Roma culture and setting up institutions at the central level to nurture Roma culture, while the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice in the areas of civil registration and anti-Gypsyism. The units of local self-government are responsible in the part of reporting on implementation of infrastructural projects related to the implementation of the strategy.