

ROMS ON INTEGRATION:

ANALYSES

AND

RECOMMENDATIONS



ECMI Monograph #3

European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)

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ROMS ON INTEGRATION:

ANALYSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ROMANI EXPERT GROUPS FOR ROMANI INTEGRATION

EMPLOYMENT :: EDUCATION :: CIVIL RIGHTS :: HEALTH

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MEMBERS OF THE ROMANI EXPERT GROUPS FOR ROMANI INTEGRATION

INTRODUCTION

Project background

This volume contains the first research reports of the Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration. Established by the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) with the generous support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in fall 2004, the Expert Groups constitute a step beyond the first global assessment of the needs of Macedonia's Romani population, conducted by ECMI with Sida support from September to November 2003.

Drawing on extensive background research and consultations with local stakeholders, four core areas were distinguished for the purpose of the needs assessment:

- Education;
- Health;
- Civil rights; and
- Employment.

For each core area, attention was given not only to the situation of the Romani population in general, but also to the position of Romani women in particular.

The Expert Groups

While the needs assessment report¹ outlines a set of follow-on measures drawn from the proceedings of the focus groups, the most sustainable initiatives are those which involve local stakeholders at all stages of design and implementation. For this reason, ECMI set out to establish all-Romani Expert Groups in the four core areas covered by the needs assessment. Combining the individual Expert Group members' extensive knowledge of local Romani communities throughout the Republic of Macedonia with ECMI's expertise in project management, facilitation and practice-oriented research, the work of the Expert Groups represents an important step toward equipping Macedonia's Romani population with the resources needed for playing an effective role in a democratic society based on the rule of law as well as for participating successfully in a competitive labour market.

Conceived to undertake further research in the four core areas covered by the needs assessment as a prelude to the design and implementation of concrete policy measures to remedy Roms' comparative disadvantage, the Expert Groups have chosen specific research topics which address gaps in existing data. Insofar as the Expert Groups have chosen their own topics and conducted their own

1. Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roms, available online in English, Macedonian and International Romani at ECMI's Romani programme web site: <http://www.ecmirom.org>.

field research, the resulting research provides unique insight into issues to which Roms give priority within their own local communities. Thus, the reports in this volume provide reference material which we hope will prove useful not only for the Government of the Republic of Macedonia in implementing the Strategy for Roms in the Republic of Macedonia which the Expert Groups helped to revise and the action plans adopted in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, but also for other local, national, and international actors seeking to develop activities aimed at increasing Roms' level of integration into the society of Macedonia as a whole.

Acknowledgements

Consistent with ECMI's role as a facilitator, the parties most deserving of recognition for the contents this volume are the members of the four Expert Groups, who are profiled individually in a separate section of the volume. At the same time, some credit goes to the facilitators who have worked with the Expert Groups throughout the research process: Programme Manager, Gordana Rodić, M.A., Project Manager, Ibrahim Ibrahimi, Bs.C, and Project Assistant Sait Demir, Bs.C. Also indispensable has been the continual support of the administrative staff of ECMI's Skopje Regional Office, including Outreach Manager, Verica Grdanoska, Bs.C, Office Manager, Darko Gavrovski, Bs.C, and Head of Finance Jasmina Ristić.

Outside of ECMI, the work of the Expert Groups benefited from consultation with several external experts, and especially from the patience and dedication (as well as the considerable expertise) of Nikolina Kenig, M.A., and Prof. Iljo Trajkovski. At the same time, the research underlying the reports in this volume could not have been completed without the data and contacts provided by institutions too numerous to mention, with a particular debt of gratitude due the Romani NGOs throughout the country which gave generously of their organizational resources to allow the Expert Groups to complete their field research. Last but certainly not least, the members of local Romani communities and others who participated in the field research deserve thanks for their willingness to share their experiences.

Inquiries

The European Centre for Minority Issues invites interested readers to contact the Expert Groups through ECMI's Regional Office in Skopje. For additional information, please consult ECMI's Romani programme web site at www.ecmirom.org, or send an e-mail to info@ecmimacedonia.org.

Eben Friedman, Ph.D.
ECMI Regional Representative
Skopje, September 2005

**PARENTS AND TEACHERS ON THE
EDUCATION OF ROMANI
CHILDREN**



The basic idea of the survey was to obtain an insight into parents' and teachers' attitude about the education of Romani children in Macedonia. The empirical research checks on the proverbial negative stereotype that Romani parents are not interested in educating their children and that they do not encourage them to complete/continue their education. Romani parents who have children in school as well as teachers from various schools throughout the country took part in the research. The survey results show that the teachers have by and large attitudes opposite those of the parents.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human right. It allows children, young people and adults to think critically, to make choices in order to improve their own lives. Education breaks the closed circle of poverty and is the key to economic and social development.

According to the State Statistical Office, out of 7868 Romani children who started their education, less than 600 completed their primary education (State Bureau for Statistics, 2003). This disturbing fact is due to the poor economic and social background of the pupils, the low educational level of their parents, lack of motivation and the negative attitude towards school, as well as to their absence from the preschool institutions. Although each Macedonian citizen is obliged to complete primary education, the reality and the results show inconsistency with the legislation.

The educational policy of a country should ensure educational possibilities on various levels for everyone, and should enable individuals to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes which are in accordance with the needs of the society and the labor market. Therefore, education should be attainable for every Macedonian citizen, regardless of the age, sex, religious beliefs, ethnic origin, health as well as social and financial situation. Furthermore, the education and the training must be both efficient and effective so that they can offer enough general and professional competency.

Education must be characterized by dynamic and flexible structure that will ease the horizontal and the vertical mobility of the pupils, students and teaching staff, and it must function according to clearly set mechanisms that will enable its adaptability and readiness to meet the changing needs both of the individuals and the society in general. What is more, education must overcome the problems and eliminate the factors that cause educational abstinence and fewer users of the educational services.

Collecting high-quality data is the basis for creating an overall program that will meet the particular needs of the Romani population. The access to the statistical data about Romani people is often difficult (since there are no data at all, or the ones that are available are not relevant any more). Prior to creating the research instruments, the research team collected the latest data about the educational situation of the Romani population in Macedonia, which were later on used as a starting point for the discussion issues in the focus group, as well as for creating the questionnaires.

The research was accomplished in two separate phases: in the first phase, discussions with two focus groups comprised of Romani participants, heterogeneous in their socio-economic status, sex, education and age, were held. The findings from the focus groups largely contributed to formulating the questionnaires for the Romani parents and the teachers, which followed as the second phase.

FOCUS GROUPS

The aim of the focus groups was to identify the main problems in the education of Romani children, and to establish further initiatives based on the isolated reasons for the problems.

The focus groups were selected according to the following criterion: age, sex, education and employment. There were 20 participants in both focus groups, 13 male, 7 female at the average age of 37. The eldest participant was 44, whereas the youngest one was 10 years old. Romani was the mother tongue of all of the participants. As far as the education is concerned, most of them were with primary education, four with secondary education and two only were with higher education. The focus groups were organized in The Children's Educational Center Nadež (Hope) in Šuto Orizari and in The Romani Educational Center Sumnal – Topaana.

The participants were asked why such a small number of Romani pupils attend school, why so many Romani people do not even complete their primary education, why there are fewer Romani girls than boys who complete primary education, whether there is a need for additional lessons for the Romani children before they start school and whether the number of Romani children would increase if the lessons were taught in Romani language. Furthermore, the participants were encouraged to give ideas about the possible solutions for the motivation of Romani parents to send their children to school, and about providing conditions for all Romani people to complete the primary education, with a special emphasis on the girls from the Romani community.

Results From the Focus Group Discussions

The focus group participants listed several reasons for the small number of children who are included in the educational system, and some of the main factors which contribute to the low educational level of the Romani population are:

- **Family structure/environment:** Due to the insufficient educational awareness of the Romani population, the need for education is often neglected. As a result, many children lack their parents' support in educational development. The participants also mentioned the fact that the material taught at school, as well as the homework, is too complicated and complex even for the parents.
- **Living conditions:** Although primary education in the state schools in Macedonia is free, there are still additional expenses for the education (clothes, books, additional materials, and transport) which are rather high and are quite a burden for the poor Romani families. A participant in the focus group commented "It is not enough to tell them to go to school, because it is difficult to think with an empty stomach." Often, lack of space in the large families is a reason for having poor conditions to complete homework (write, revise, study etc.)
- **Language barriers.** Romani language is the mother tongue of 99% of the Romani people who live in Skopje¹. Romani children who attend primary school, and who have problems with the language of instruction, do not show good/satisfactory results. The legal procedure is that it takes parents' written agreement for a pupil to repeat the year. As a result, the children continue through the fifth grade regardless of their knowledge, which later on seriously affects their competency. The children who manage to finish primary school and who enroll in the secondary schools face language barriers and have difficulties learning the material, so they often either give up in the course of the first semester or repeat the year and give up later.
- **Discrimination/segregation of Romani pupils:** Romani children are not accepted in the educational environment; the other children refuse to sit with them or make friends, so they are bound to sit alone in the back row². Some teachers refuse to pay more attention to these children, so the quantity/quality of their knowledge compared to the other children is rather low. Also, these children are frequently discriminated in the assessment process.

1. According to the 2002 census, 23,036 people speak Romani language out of 23,202 Romani people who live in Skopje, whereas 38,528 people speak Romani language out of 53,879 Romani people who live in the Republic of Macedonia

2. This refers to schools with students from various ethnic origin

Recommendations for Increasing the Educational Level

The focus group discussions elicited the following recommendations for the improvement of the educational level of the Romani community: increasing the awareness about the importance of education, suitable language preparation of the Romani children, respecting the law for the primary education, improvement of the financial situation of the Romani families and overcoming the discrimination and stereotypes about the Romani children.

THE RESEARCH

The research focused on two groups of participants: (1) Romani parents, (2) teachers in the schools where Romani children learn.

Romani Parents

Participants

The Romani parents were questioned in a stratified proportional sample according to their percentage in the research area. The sample includes 300 individuals from 10 cities in the country (Graph 1). The Romani parents group comprised of 54% female and 41% male. As for the educational structure, the sample is heterogeneous, dominated by primary school graduates (over 70%), whereas a small number of them were with unfinished primary education and completed secondary education.

City	Number and percentage of participants
Skopje	
Topaana	59 (19,7)
Šuto Orizari	70 (23,3)
Bitola	24 (8,0)
Vinica	9 (3,0)
Gostivar	15 (5,0)
Kičevo	12 (4,0)
Kočani	9 (3,0)
Kumanovo	30 (10,0)
Prilep	30 (10,0)
Tetovo	21 (7,0)
Štip	21 (7,0)
Total	300 (100)

Table 1. Structure of the sample according to the living place

Instruments

The parents' questionnaire consists of questions concerning demographic data, the reasons for their children not to attend school, parents' participation in the education of the child, the quality of the teaching and suggestions for the improvement of the Romani children's education. The team created the questionnaire especially for the needs of this research.

The Research Process

Before the research, a pilot survey was carried out in Skopje. The pilot survey established the general usefulness of the instrument.

The research was conducted in the course of May 2005. The participants were read the questions together with the possible answers, and the responses were noted down. The participants were given additional explanations of the words they had problems understanding. Macedonian and Romani language were used, depending which was predominant in the area in question. Before being asked the questions, the participants were explained that the survey is anonymous and that the answers will be used solely for the purpose of this project³.

Teaching Staff

Participants

The teaching sample consisted of 58 individuals. They are all employed as teachers or professionals in the schools attended by Romani children. Each of the selected schools had a science teacher, a sociology teacher, 2-3 teachers from 1st-4th grade, a class teacher and a pedagogue who participated in the research. 61% of them were female, whereas 39% were male. The teachers expressed a high degree of interest in answering the questions seriously and thoroughly.

Instruments

The questionnaire for the primary school teachers consists of questions about the teachers' opinion regarding the reasons for pupils leaving school, parents' participation in the educational process, the quality of teaching and suggestions for improving the quality of the education as well as other information. The questionnaire was prepared by the research team.

The research process

The teachers answered the questionnaires independently, after they were given a short instruction and were guaranteed anonymity.

3. We have to mention some unusual behavior during the survey: in Štip and Kumanovo the pollsters were refused and were told that people do not trust NGOs, who have questioned them many times without any result. It is important to point out that interaction was easier thanks to the local Romani NGOs: Bairška svetlina-Bitola, Romani shukaripa-Prilep, Svetla idnina-Kočani, Združenie za pravata na Romite-Štip, Drom-Kumanovo, Sumnal and Nadež - Skopje.

Results – the poll with the parents

The results show that the average Romani family consists of 4, very frequently 5 and even 6 members. Most of the participating families have two or three children, and 6% only have more than 4 children. Most of the participants lived on welfare (58.3), fewer on salary (23.3%), small businesses (13%) and on pension (4.0%). The remaining families claimed to have no income of any kind at the moment.

The results of the parents' answers to the question about the conditions that influence the children to leave school are presented in Table 2.

	incorrect		partly correct		yes, correct		total	
	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%
No school in the neighbourhood	241	80.3	16	6.0	43	13.7	300	100
No money to buy the necessary school material	32	10.7	82	27.3	186	62.0	300	100
The living conditions	153	51.0	88	29.3	59	19.7	300	100
Romani tradition and culture	150	50.0	96	32.0	54	18.0	300	100
Parents have no education	182	60.7	71	23.7	47	15.7	300	100
Children are not interested	150	50.0	102	34.0	48	16.8	300	100
The child shows no success at school	148	49.3	99	33.0	53	17.7	300	100
Incorrect treatment on the part of the teachers	99	33.0	112	37.3	89	29.7	300	100

Table 2. Factors that influence the children to leave school – parents' perspective

The lack of money to get the necessary school material is the main reason for most of the participants (about 60%) to complete education. This was the leading positive answer among all the other reasons stated. More than half of the participants think that the environment does not have a significant influence on their children, half of them think that the Romani tradition and culture are not an obstacle to their children's education, whereas similar number of participants mention the fact that Romani children are not very successful at school. Almost 40% think that the main problem is the fact that the parents themselves are not educated. An alarming 67% of the parents find the teachers' behavior incorrect, which is a further reason to leave school. Least problematic is the lack of schools in the neighborhood.

The language of instruction is an important factor for the completion of education. Romani people most often live in a closed environment where the Romani language is spoken. The teaching in the schools is in Macedonian, so having in mind the fact that very few Romani children attend preschool preparation, many Roms face serious difficulties learning the subject matter. When asked whether they think that the language could be an obstacle and if it would be better for the Romani children to have lessons in Romani language, the results presented in Table 3 were obtained.

	individuals	%
Romani language	108	36.1
Macedonian language	88	29.3
Not important	97	32.3
I do not know	7	2.3
Total	300	100

Table 3. Would it be better for Romani children to attend lessons in Romani language?

The results show split opinions. Namely, the greatest number of people think that education in Romani language is needed, whereas a slightly lower percentage (32.2%) think that the language is not important in acquiring knowledge.

Parents' support to the pupils is an important element that makes pupils more motivated and helps them learn more easily. Constant monitoring of the children consisting in helping them to do homework, providing them conditions for learning, contacting the teachers and attending the parents' meetings, further contributes to better education. More than half of the parents (64.7%) answered that they talk to their children about the lessons at school. Most of the parents say that they sometimes help their children do homework, contact the teachers and are really concerned providing good conditions for learning. The attendance rate is

rather high. As many as 62% of the parents answered that they regularly attend the parents' meetings, unlike the number of parents who take part in the parents' councils. (Table 4)

	never		sometimes		always		total	
	indi-vidu-als	%	indi-vidu-als	%	indi-vidu-als	%	indi-vidu-als	%
I ask the child what they did at school	12	4.0	94	31.3	194	64.7	300	100
Help the child do the homework	68	22.7	139	46.3	93	31.0	300	100
Try to provide conditions for learning	31	10.3	63	21.0	206	68.7	300	100
Contact teachers	29	9.7	140	46.7	131	43.7	300	100
Attend parents' meetings	32	10.7	82	27.3	186	62.0	300	100
Take part in the parents' council	266	88.7	18	6.0	16	5.3	300	100

Table 4. Support that parents give their children in education

The following group of questions refers to what the participants think about the conditions in which their children are educated. Most of them think that the schools are partly in a good state, but mentioned that modern teaching aids are not used in the teaching process. As far as the discrimination and stereotypes about Romani children are concerned, more than 80% of the parents think that teachers treat Romani children differently from the other children in the school. Some of the parents (37.7%) agree that the teachers are engaged in the work with the children, and an equal percentage (37.7%) partly agree that the teachers are engaged in the work with the children, but they feel that the teachers' demands are too high. Identical shares of the parents agree (33.7%) and disagree (33.3%) with the objective assessment of the teachers. Nearly half of the parents think that the pupils of different ethnic groups accept Romani pupils and treat them correctly. A very small percentage of the parents agree that the lessons are easy and interesting.

	don't agree		partly agree		agree		no answer		total
	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%	%
The school building is in good shape	66	22.0	133	44.3	98	32.7	3	1.0	100
The teachers don't make difference between Romani children and the others	100	33.3	87	29.0	101	33.7	12	4.0	100
Using modern teaching aids	154	51.3	51	17.0	44	14.7	51	17.0	100
Peers treat Romani children correctly	56	18.7	96	32.0	139	46.3	9	3.0	100
Teachers asses objectively	80	26.7	94	31.3	118	39.3	8	2.7	100
Teachers demands are too high	72	24.0	125	41.7	90	30.0	13	4.3	100
Teachers work with the children	65	21,6	113	37.7	113	37.7	9	3.0	100
Lessons should be easier and more interesting	17	5.7	99	33.0	172	57.3	12	4.0	100

Table 5. Teaching process conditions – parents' perspective

The last question for the parents was: What would you suggest for the improvement of the education of Romani children? The parents had an opportunity to state their suggestions for the improvement of the education. It is significant that 41.7% of them emphasized the need for financial support, such as schoolbooks and other necessary materials, which puts emphasis on the parents' financial state.

A somewhat smaller percentage (31.7%) of the parents suggest that teachers should treat Romani children equally with the other pupils and should contact the parents.

Results – the poll with the teacher

Regular attendance at the lessons is the main condition for acquiring good education and learning. Over 50% of the teachers claim that Romani children attend the lessons sporadically. The teachers' answers about the reasons for the irregular attendance of the Romani children are presented in Table 6.

	not correct		partly correct		correct		no answer		total	
	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%
No school in the neighborhood	45	77.6	8	13.8	2	5.2	3	3.4	58	100
Lack of money for school material	8	13.8	36	62.1	13	22.4	1	1.7	58	100
Living conditions	11	19.0	30	51.7	15	25.9	2	3.4	58	100
Romani tradition and culture	11	19.0	30	51.7	15	25.9	2	3.4	58	100
Parents are not educated	11	19.0	22	37.9	23	39.7	2	3.4	58	100
Insufficient knowledge of Macedonian	43	74.1	6	10.3	7	12.1	2	3.4	58	100
Romani children are not successful at school	12	20.7	26	44.8	18	31.0	2	3.5	58	100

Some teachers do not treat Romani children correctly	43	74.1	6	10.3	7	12.1	2	3.5	58	100
Romani pupils are not accepted by the other pupils	42	72.4	11	19.0	2	3.5	3	5.1	58	100
The lessons do not motivate the pupils	34	58.6	15	25.9	6	10.3	3	5.2	58	100

Table 6. Reasons for the irregular attendance of the Romani children

The results show that 77.6% of the teachers think that the distance is not the reason for the bad attendance. The financial situation, previously mentioned several times by the parents, is, according to the teachers, just part of the explanation for the poor attendance of the Romani children. 51.7% of the teachers think that the environment is to an extent an important factor for the poor attendance, whereas 25.9% think it is a very important factor. It is important to mention that most of the teachers answered positively to the question about the influence of Romani tradition and culture. Half of the teachers think that the fact that the parents are not educated influences the children's motivation to complete education. It is also important to mention that only five teachers think that lack of education of the parents is not a serious obstacle for the pupils' education. Table 6 shows that 74.1% of the teachers think that Romani children are well in command of Macedonian language. The teachers think that the poor success at school demoralizes the pupils to continue their education. The figures in the table show that the teachers think they respect all pupils equally, regardless of their ethnic origin. As a result, 74.1% of the teachers answered negatively to the question about the incorrect treatment on the part of the teachers as a possible reason for irregular attendance or leaving the school.

Another striking fact is the very low percent of teachers (3.5%) who answered that Romani children are not accepted by the other pupils. This means that the teachers think Romani children are fully accepted by the other pupils without reserve or prejudice. Most of the teachers, 58.6%, disagree that the teaching and the lessons do not motivate Romani children and that the lessons fail to meet their needs.

Being asked whether Romani children would be more successful if teaching had been in the Romani language, the teachers think that it is mainly irrelevant, similar to their belief that Romani children have no particular difficulties in speaking Macedonian. (Table 7).

	individuals	%
Romani language	15	25.9
Macedonian	15	25.9
Not important	25	43.1
No answer	3	5.2
Total	58	100

Table 7. Would it be better for Romani children to attend lessons in Romani language?

Having a sense about cultures different from ours contributes to better interaction with the others who are “different” from us. Talking about education, such knowledge helps teachers adapt their teaching and understand the mentality that influences the children’s development. Most of the teachers answered that they are familiar with Romani culture and tradition, but their answers fall into the categories “scarcely” and “sufficiently”. The results are presented in Table 8.

	individuals	%
Not at all	1	1.7
A little	24	41.4
Enough	27	46.6
Completely	6	10.3
Total	58	100

Table 8. Are you familiar with Romani culture and tradition?

The teachers were asked about their experience in connection with the participation of Romani parents in the education of their children. The results are given in Table 9.

	never		sometimes		always		total	
	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%
Interested in what has been done at school	14	24.1	42	72.4	2	3.5	58	100
Help them do the homework	19	32.8	39	67.2	0	0	58	100
Try to provide learning conditions	11	19.0	44	75.8	3	5.2	58	100
Contact teachers	7	12.1	51	87.9	0	0	58	100
Attend parents' meetings	17	29.3	39	67.2	2	3.5	58	100
Take part in the parents' councils	20	34.5	29	50.0	9	15.5	58	100

Table 9. Participation (help) of the parents in the education of the Romani children.

Most of the teachers (72.4%) had the feeling that parents are just occasionally interested in what their children have been doing at school. Only two teachers stated that parents are always interested in their children's schoolwork. The responses to this question illustrate the fact that not a single teacher thinks that parents always help their children do the homework, and a third of them claim that parents never help them at all. A small number of the teachers (5.2%) think that the parents are doing their best to provide the children with learning conditions, whereas 19% think that parents do not provide learning conditions.

Parent-teacher communication is an important control mechanism to monitor the child's success. As many as 87.9% of the teachers said that the parents occasionally come to the school to contact the teachers. There was not a single positive answer that parents always come to school. The answers in Table 9 illustrate the fact that most of the parents sometimes attend parents' meetings (67.2%). The teachers claim that Romani parents sometimes take part in the parents' councils.

	disagree		partly agree		agree		no answer		total
	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals
The school building is not in good condition	6	10.3	18	31.0	34	58.7	0	0	58
Modern teaching aids are used	7	12,1	41	70.7	10	17,2	0	0	58
Teachers don't make difference between Romani children and the others	11	19.0	25	43.1	21	36.2	1	1.7	58
The other pupils do not treat Romani children correctly	3	5,2	14	24,1	40	69,0	1	1.7	58
Teachers lower the assessment criteria	8	13.8	27	46.5	23	39.7	0	0	58
The lessons are too complex	6	10,3	40	69,0	11	19,0	1	1.7	58
Extra lessons are necessary	3	5.2	23	39.7	31	53.4	1	1.7	58
The children are not interested in the lessons	8	13,8	21	36,2	29	50,0	0	0	58

Table 10. Conditions in which the education of Romani children is carried out.

Table 10 shows that large number of the teachers thinks that the building is in good condition. The remaining 70% disagree with this statement. Application of modern teaching aids makes teaching easier, as well as helps interact with the pupils. The teachers think that the situation with the teaching aids is acceptable – only eleven of them disagreed with this statement. The teachers have experienced discrimination of Romani children – only 12.0% completely disagree that teachers treat Romani children in a different way. The table shows that the teachers have the impression that the other children treat Romani pupils correctly. The results also show that most of the teachers have the feeling that the lessons are too complex, but on the other hand, Romani children lack interest in learning. However, only three of the teachers consider extra lessons necessary under these conditions.

When asked about suggestions to improve the education of Romani children, most of the teachers mentioned steps that should be taken by the parents and the pupils; i.e. regular attendance on the part of the children (27.6%) and cooperation among the parents, the teachers and the NGOs (15.2%). The remaining suggestions concern various activities such as: increasing parents' and children's awareness about the importance of education, additional education, free school material, reduction of discrimination, etc.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Analysis of the research results enabled us to formulate indicators that will be a foundation for further surveys, but which can also be incorporated in creating educational strategies or other educational activities. The interesting aspect of the research is the difference in opinion of the participating teachers and parents.

Therefore, when summing up the results we are bound to believe that the job is not done, but rather that new surveys must be carried out in order to explain these results or to go deeper in some problems. The research of the attitudes of Romani parents and the teachers who work with Romani pupils is just an attempt to define the problems and needs, and the results should be used later to create strategies for including the relevant factors that will help overcome the problems.

Romani parents think that the poor education of Romani children is a result of the financial situation the families are in. Having in mind the fact that 60% of the parents live on welfare, it is clear that the school expenses are a huge obstacle in providing better conditions for the education of the children. We will also mention that parents said that the living conditions are not an obstacle to the education, and we cannot claim that Romani tradition and culture makes the children leave school.

It is important to point out that the parents are generally aware of the need and the importance of education. It can be illustrated by the fact that parents are trying to motivate their children to continue the education by providing them better learning conditions, helping them with the homework and contacting the teachers.

On the other hand, the teachers' answers describe a different situation. Most of the answers are largely in opposition to the parents' answers. The teachers have the impression that Romani children are not interested in studying, that the poor success at school is the children's own responsibility and that the parents are not very interested in the progress their children make at school.

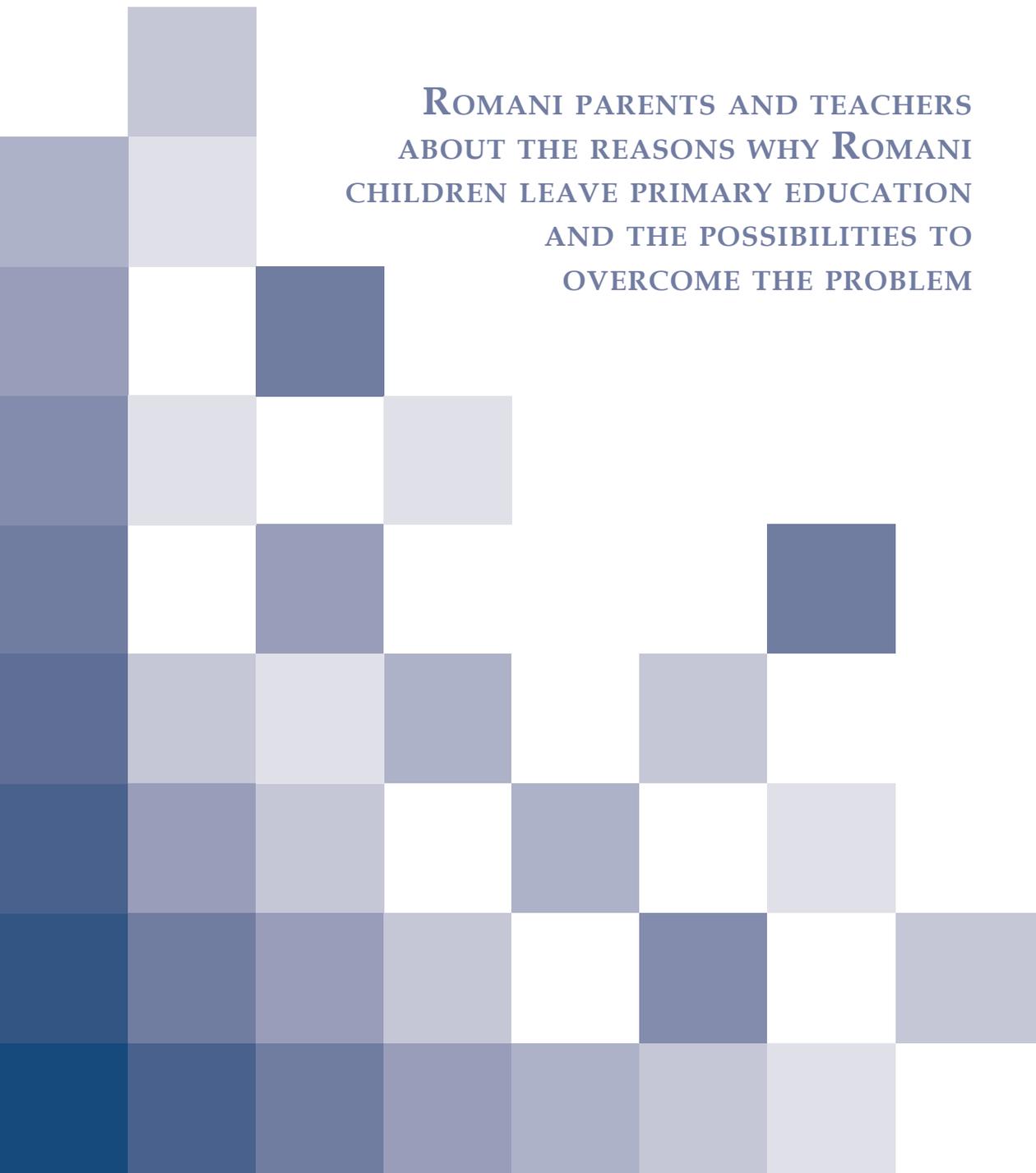
Having in mind both parents' and teachers' perspectives, we suggest the following steps to overcome the existing situation: free material and books, scholarships for Romani pupils, developing educational strategies and activities to include the families in the education of the children, preparing additional lessons for weaker pupils.

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WHY DO ROMANI CHILDREN LEAVE SCHOOL?

ROMANI PARENTS AND TEACHERS
ABOUT THE REASONS WHY ROMANI
CHILDREN LEAVE PRIMARY EDUCATION
AND THE POSSIBILITIES TO
OVERCOME THE PROBLEM



The purpose of this research is to survey the attitudes and the opinions of the parents and teachers about the reasons for which Romani children leave primary school education. The answers of the 278 Romani parents, together with the 58 teachers who teach in schools in Macedonia where Romani children study, lead to the conclusion that the problem of leaving school has come to an alarming point. The facts show a significant difference in Romani parents' and teachers' opinion about the education of Romani children. Both groups agree that Romani children face special difficulties in their education, but whereas Romani parents generally think that lack of money is the main reason for leaving school and point out the need for free books and financial help, the teaching staff think that the education of the parents and extra lessons are the priorities that most need attention.

INTRODUCTION

The Roms constitute the largest minority group in Europe¹ which lives on the margins of the society and belongs to the group of the poor people. Until the period when the Strategy for Roms in the Republic of Macedonia and the action plans of the Decade of Roma Inclusion were implemented, there were not any documents in Macedonia that referred to the improvement of the situation of the Romani people in Macedonia. Parts of these documents emphasized the problem of leaving school among Romani children.

Primary education is compulsory and free (act 44, Primary Education Law, 1995). However, many surveys, facts and experience prove the existence of the problem of Romani children leaving primary school.

The Bureau for Development and Improvement of the Education in the Community Members' Languages sees the reasons for leaving school in: the social and economic background of the pupils, the parents' low level of education, their lack of information, their lack of motivation and sometimes even negative attitude towards school and learning, insufficient knowledge of Macedonian at first school enrollment, life in poor and culturally depressed environment in the childhood. The Document of the Bureau for Development and Improvement of the Education in the Community Members' Languages, Information, Conclusions and Suggestions about the Education of Romani Children in the Republic of Macedonia, 2003, points out that the fifth grade is the period when most Romani children abandon school. The same statement is given in Ms. Pekovska's research (2003) which refers to pupils in the Republic of Macedonia leaving primary and secondary education, which was carried out in 862 primary schools out of 1020 in Macedonia, in the course of 2001 and 2002 (see Appendix, table 1 and 2).

1. It is estimated that 9-10 million Romani people live in Europe.

Similarly, the facts from The Strategy for Romani people in the Republic of Macedonia, prove that Romani children leave primary education. As an illustration, in 1998/99 7602 Romani children were enrolled in primary schools, but only 372 Romani children finished the school year. (see Appendix, table 3)

The purpose of this research is to find out the opinion of Romani parents and the teachers in the primary schools about the reasons for the situation. The parents and the teachers are the immediate factor influencing the children's education, and therefore we think that, in addition to the scientific analyses, the opinion of these two factors about the reasons for leaving primary school and their suggestions for overcoming the problem are important.

We expect this research paper will encourage other serious surveys of the problems and needs of the Romani population, and Romani children first of all, and that it will be a foundation for preparing suitable projects and programs – especially by the state institutions – that would lead to a long-term solution to this problem.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research paper includes Romani parents, teachers, professionals and principles from the primary schools that are in or close to the communities where Romani people live. The sample includes 278 Romani parents. The group consists of Romani parents whose children have left primary school, or parents whose children attend either primary or secondary school. The participants were selected by the “door-to-door” system, from 10 cities in the country (Table 1). Only one member in the family was questioned, the mother, father, or the tutor, depending who was willing to cooperate. Out of 278 individuals, 43.9% were male, and 56.1% were female.

The teachers group comprises of 58 employees in the schools from the same cities (Table 1). The structure of the teaching staff is heterogeneous, including first to fourth grade teachers, science and culture teachers, pedagogues and psychologists. In this sense, it was a suitable sample.

City	Parents	Teachers
Skopje	122	12
Prilep	33	7
Bitola	17	/
Kičevo	11	7
Tetovo	21	6
Gostivar	15	7
Vinica	8	5
Štip	13	5
Kumanovo	28	5
Kočani	10	4

Table 1. Number of Romani parents and teachers by cities

Questionnaires prepared by the team that carried out the research were used to ascertain the opinion of Romani parents and teachers about Romani children leaving school. Two kinds of questionnaires were used: one for the Romani parents, and the other one for the teaching staff in the schools².

The parents' questionnaire consisted of 32 structural questions concerning demographic data, parents' attitude towards their children's education and questions that reveal parents' opinion about the potentially responsible institutions and individuals. Finally, they were given questions about the necessary activities to solve the problem of leaving school.

The teacher's questions give an insight in the following areas on which the research is focused: overall view of the pupils' structure in the school, opinions about leaving school, cooperation with Romani parents, teachers' opinion about the poor success of the Romani children, information about schools' existing plans and activities to overcome the problem of Romani children leaving school.

2. A pilot survey of 16 parents and 12 teachers was carried out in order to check whether the questions were easily understood. The pilot resolved the dilemmas about the contents and the formulation of the questions that were used for the planned sample.

RESULTS

Results from the Romani parents' questionnaires

The results in the survey show that most of the parents have difficulties providing positive conditions for the children's education. 70.5% of all the parents are unemployed. Unemployment leads to a poor financial situation in the family which has significant negative effects on the possibility to receive suitable education. One third of the parents (33.1%) who took part in the research have at least one child, aged 7-14, who does not attend school. Poverty (lack of money) is the most frequent reason (56.52%) for leaving school according to their parents. Lack of motivation is the second most frequent reason to abandon school (Table 2).

	Individuals	%
Lack of money	52	56.52
The child doesn't like studying	19	20.65
Refugee stay	5	5.43
Child with special needs	5	5.43
Diseases	4	4.35
Juvenile marriages	3	3.26
School treatment	3	3.26
Illegal child	1	1.1
Total answers	92	100%

Table 2. Reasons for leaving school

Being asked whether they help their children with the school tasks, 66.6% of the parents said that they work with their children (Table 3).

	individuals	%
Yes	185	66.6
No	81	29.1
No answer	12	4.3
Total	278	100

Table 3. Do you help your children with the school tasks?

The parents who do not help their children explain their answer in terms of illiteracy, being too busy at work and not understanding the lessons (Table 4).

	Individuals	%
Illiteracy	36	48.65
Busy at work	25	33.78
The lessons are too complicated	10	13.52
The child dislikes studying	2	2.70
No need for help	1	1.35
Total answers	74	100

Table 4. Reasons for not helping the children with the school tasks

68.3% of the parents regularly attend the parents' meetings. The remaining 41.7% of the parents stated the following reasons for not attending the parents' meetings: they feel embarrassed and out of place in the school environment (50%), they are not informed (20%), and 30% do not have time or are ill.

Parents' predominant opinion is that they are responsible for their children's regular attendance at school. It is interesting to note that only 20.2% of the parents think that relevant legal institutions should be responsible for the children's regular attendance, 18.8% think the teachers are responsible, and 7.2% think schools should be responsible for that (Table 5).

	yes		no		No answer		Total	
	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%
The child itself	20	7.2	257	92.4	1	0.4	278	100
The parents	151	54.4	126	45.3	1	0.3	278	100
The teachers	52	18.8	225	80.9	1	0.3	278	100
The school	18	7.2	257	92.4	3	0.4	278	100
Relevant legal institutions	56	20.2	221	79.5	1	0.3	278	100

Table 5. Parents' attitude about the responsibility for the regular attendance

The parents were asked their opinion about the most frequent possible reasons to leave school. The results are presented in Table 6. Lack of money is the most frequent reason for the children to abandon school. Still, quite a large number of parents state the treatment of Romani children at school as a good reason, as well as parents' negative attitude towards schools, which is often an expression of the financial burden associated with school attendance (money for books, material etc.).

	often		seldom		never		no answer		total	
	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%	indi-viduals	%
Lack of money	220	79.2	50	18.0	4	1.4	4	1.4	278	100
Parents do not allow them	77	27.7	126	45.4	71	25.5	4	1.4	278	100
Bad treatment in the environment	77	27.7	126	45.4	71	25.5	4	1.4	278	100
The children are not interested	43	15.4	158	56.8	69	25.0	8	2.8	278	100
Parents think it's a "waste of time"	10	3.6	59	21.2	203	73.0	6	2.2	278	100

Table 6. Parents' opinion about the possible most frequent reasons to abandon school

Asked about the additional factors that impede the regular completion of primary education, the parents cited: substandard living conditions, discrimination, parents' unemployment, lack of motivation and juvenile marriages. 30% of the 103 parents who answered this question think that discrimination significantly influences the competition in primary education. 27% of them said that unemployment impedes the regular completion of primary education.

The parents think that free books are a necessity of greatest importance (Table 7). Financial support is also an important element (establishing scholarship programs). Romani parents think that extra Macedonian lessons are not necessary, although all the families speak Romani language in their homes³.

3. Of the 99.6% of respondents who answered this question, 63.3% speak Romani at home.

	yes		no		no answer		total	
	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%
Money	168	60.4	107	38.4	3	1.2	278	100
Books and clothes	195	70.1	79	28.4	4	1.5	278	100
Additional Macedonian lessons	34	12.2	241	86.6	3	1.2	278	100
Free snacks	54	19.4	221	79.4	3	1.2	278	100
Lectures on the importance of education	64	23.0	211	75.8	3	1.2	278	100

Table 7. Necessary help for the Romani children in the educational process

The results illustrate that a large percentage of Romani parents are not satisfied with the knowledge the children get at school (Table 8). Most of the parents are satisfied a little by the quality of the knowledge their children get at school.

	individuals	%
I am very satisfied	84	30.2
I am satisfied a little	137	49.3
I am not satisfied at all	33	11.9
I don't know	9	3.2
Did not answer	15	5.4
Total	278	100

Table 8. The degree of parents' satisfaction with the quality of knowledge

Romani parents think that the financial support is a priority to be taken care of by the state. More than half of the parents answered that financial support is what they most need (Table 9).

	yes		no		no answer		total	
	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%
To give parents money	149	53.6	126	45.3	3	1.1	278	100
To educate Romani parents	86	30.9	189	68.0	3	1.1	278	100
To punish Romani parents in accordance to the law	71	25.5	204	73.4	3	1.1	278	100
To build schools in Romani settlements	119	42.8	156	56.1	3	1.1	278	100

Table 9. Steps to be undertaken by the state in order to prevent leaving school

Asked whether the school could do anything to prevent leaving, most of the parents suggested providing free books (Table 10).

	yes		no		no answer		total	
	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%	indi- viduals	%
Motivate the children	84	30.2	192	69.1	2	0.7	278	100
Contact parents more often	59	21.2	217	78.1	2	0.7	278	100
Free books	169	60.8	107	38.5	2	0.7	278	100
Free food and clothes	115	41.4	161	57.9	2	0.7	278	100

Table 10. Steps schools should undertake in order to prevent leaving

Out of 91.7 % of the parents who answered the question whether any other actor other than the state should do anything in solving the educational problem, 63.3% agree that other actors should engage as well. They suggested parents (17.5%), Romani NGOs (12.9%), and the community (4.7%), together with the Romani population in general, the international community, schools, political parties, etc.

The participants also gave their own suggestions about the steps to be taken in order to improve the situation in the education of Romani children. More jobs for the Romani parents, material and financial support, better motivation of the children and building schools in Romani communities were the activities they mentioned for achieving the goal (Table 11).

	individuals	%
Build schools in Romani communities	11	7.3
Better motivation of the children	29	19.3
Not discriminate Romani children	3	2.0
Teach them about the importance of education	6	4.0
Support (material and financial)	32	21.3
Make pressure on the relevant educational institutions	3	2.0
Romani people should help themselves	1	0.7
Cooperation	4	2.7
Employment of the Romani parents	61	40.7
Total answers	150	100

Table 11. What should be done to improve the situation?

Finally, as many as 79.5% think that Romani children face special difficulties in the process of their education, problems other children do not experience.

The parents' attitude about the necessity to take certain steps in the Romani education should not be neglected. A great majority, 85.3%, responded positively to the question about the need to create special programs for the education of Romani children.

Results from the teachers' survey

Generally speaking, the teachers recognize the problem of Romani children abandoning primary education. 79.3% of the teachers think the problem is obvious, 10.3% disagree, whereas 10.4% gave no answer to this question. 51.7% of the schools in which the survey was conducted report that Romani children leave school. Contrary to this, 63.8% of the teachers think that Romani children attend school regularly, and 36.2% think it is not so. An even greater percentage of teachers (67.2%) think that Romani children have a feeble interest in learning. According to 94.8% of the teachers, Romani children have no problems understanding

Macedonian, the language of instruction. Merely 5.2% think that children have problems understanding Macedonian. More than half of the teachers think that Romani children experience problems in the course of their education that other children do not have (53.2%), whereas the remaining teachers surveyed disagree with this.

The most frequent reasons for the irregular attendance of the Romani children (Table 12), according to the teachers' opinion are: lack of money (32.8%), lack of interest on the part of the children themselves (32.8%) and lack of parental support in the educational process (27.6%).

	individuals	%
No money in the family	19	32.8
Lack of parental support	16	27.6
Children's lack of interest in learning	19	32.8
Learning is waste of time	1	1.7
Others	3	5.1
Total	58	100

Table 12. Reasons for the irregular attendance of the Romani children

The teachers think that the main reason for the poor success of the Romani children is the fact that they cannot get help in completing homework. As many as 75.9% of the teachers agree with this view. 6.9% of them think that the insufficient knowledge of the language is the reason, and the remaining 17.2% listed other reasons.

Asked whether they cooperate enough with the parents, 39.7% the teachers reported that they do not cooperate enough, 25.9% said that they have a good cooperation, 19% characterized it as very good, and only 1.7% marked it as excellent (Table 13).

	individuals	%
Excellent	1	1.7
Very good	11	19.0
Good	15	25.9
Enough	6	10.3
Not enough	23	39.7
No answer	2	3.4
Total	58	100

Table 13. Marks for the cooperation with the parents

The teachers say that Romani parents occasionally attend the parents' meetings, and that some do not attend them at all. Only 13.8% of the teachers answered that Romani parents attend the parents' meetings regularly (Table 14).

	individuals	%
Yes, regularly	8	13.8
Sometimes	33	56.9
Never	16	27.6
No answer	1	1.7
Total	58	100

Table 14. Parents' attendance at the meetings

The teachers think that the parents of Romani children are very little interested in their children's' education. More than half of the teachers (51.7%) think that the parents are very little interested, whereas 37.9% think they are partly interested in their children's' education (Table 15).

	individuals	%
Very interested	1	1.7
Partly interested	22	38.0
Interested very little	30	51.7
Not at all interested	4	6.9
No answer	1	1.7
Total	58	100

Table 15. Teachers' opinion about the interest parents show in their children's' education

Asked about the most important factor for leaving school, the teachers responded that it mainly depends on the parent's opinion (Table 16).

	individuals	%
Parents	48	82.8
School	2	3.4
Legal institutions	2	3.4
Others	4	6.9
No answer	2	3.4
Total	58	100

Table 16. Subjects/factors that influence Romani children to leave school

The teachers were asked about the possible reasons that might cause the problem of leaving school. Unlike Romani parents, 53.4% of the teachers think that lack of money is not a reason for leaving school, and 6.9% of them only think that the bad treatment of Romani children by the community might be the reason for leaving school. However, 34.5% of the teachers answered positively that parents' negative attitude could be the possible reason for leaving school. Also, 62.1% said that the children's interest could be the reason for leaving school.

The teachers suggested the following alternative for solving the problem: unlike the parents who thought that lack of money was the reason for the problems in education, 84.5% of the teachers think that money support is not most important for staying in school. 60.3% of the teachers said that free books and clothes would be of help. Only 5.2% of them thought that the solution might be organizing extra Macedonian lessons. 69% of them thought that lectures on the importance of education might help.

A great majority of the teachers (89.7%) agree that certain measures for overcoming the problem of Romani children leaving school should be undertaken.

The teachers' opinion about the steps the state should take in order to include all Romani children in the process of education are presented in Table 17.

	individuals	%
Give money	6	10.3
Educate the parents	39	67.3
Implement Primary Education Law	13	22.4
Total answers	58	100

Table 17. Steps the state should take to include all Romani children in the process of education

Of the 32 teachers who responded that other actors should address the problem of Romani children leaving education, 32.8% cited the Ministry for Education, state and local government as actors competent to undertake some kind of activities.

	individuals	%
Ministry for Education, state and local government	19	59.4
International community	1	3.2
Teachers	2	6.2
NGO	4	12.5
Parents	6	18.7
Total	32	100

Table 18. Who else should help solve the problem

Teachers' opinion about the steps the state should take to improve the situation in the education of Romani children are given in Table 19. Most of the teachers (65.5%) think that the relevant institutions should provide extra lessons for Romani children.

	individuals	%
Extra lessons	38	65.5
Give parents money to motivate them	5	8.6
Teach in Romani language	3	5.3
Educate the teachers in Romani tradition	6	10.3
Educate the parents	1	1.7
No answer	5	8.6
Total	58	100

Table 19. Steps state should take to improve the situation

The teachers were asked about the schools' part in the prevention of leaving school. 79.3% of the schools where the survey was conducted have already been implementing certain activities for overcoming the problem, so many of the teachers did not offer additional ideas about the role of the schools. Most of them (65.5%) agree that the school should provide extra lessons, and they also education teachers in Romani tradition, support to parents, etc.

Being asked whether anyone else, apart from the state and the school, should help overcome the problem, half of them said other actors should also address the problem,. Most of the teachers who gave ideas about the possible steps these factors should take, suggested the education of the parents about the importance of education.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents whose children have left school cite the bad financial situation as the most frequent reason for this course of action. Lack of money is the main source of the problems faced by Romani children in education.

Uneducated parents are also an important negative factor in the generally negative picture of the education of Roms in Macedonia. Parents usually help their children do the homework, and when they do not do that, it is because the parent is either illiterate or does not understand the teaching material.

In addition to lack of money, other reasons for leaving school are: substandard living conditions, unemployment, discrimination, lack of interest with the children, juvenile marriages.

Parents think that the state is most competent for solving the educational problems of Romani people. They think Romani parents should be given jobs, which will reduce the poverty in the Romani families which is the main obstacle for the regular education of their children.

Children's motivation, helping with books and other school material, and scholarships are also necessary in order to reduce the number of Romani children who leave school. Beyond the state, other competent actors that can help in solving the problem are the Romani NGOs and the community at large.

The responses of the teachers who took part in the survey clearly documents the existence of the problem of children leaving school. As many as 79.3% of the teachers answered positively to this question. The teachers assess the cooperation with parents as insufficient. They think that the parents of the Romani children only sometimes, or never, attend the parents' meetings. On top of everything, the teachers think that Romani children are not interested in learning and are left alone without any help and support by their parents. The most important factor that influences the education of the Romani children, according to the teachers, are the parents, who the teachers think are not interested in the education of their children.

Free books and clothes, more extra lessons for the children, lectures about the importance of education and educating Romani parents, are the steps that the teachers think should be taken in order to reduce leaving school.

Both parents and teachers agree there is a need for special activities for Romani children, who they think experience special problems that other children do not have.

Still, it is a fact that there is a gap between these two groups about the reasons for and ways of solving the problem. There is an impressive difference in the teachers' and parents' attitude about the lack of money as a factor that has a negative influence in the education of Romani children. On one hand, parents claim that lack of money is the most important reason for leaving school, while on the other hand the teachers deny the need for financial support as the most important help in decreasing the number of Romani children who leave school and emphasize the cooperation with the parents and additional education of both children and parents.

Both parents and teachers agree that the state is most competent in implementing measures that would improve the financial status of the families, and for organizing plans and steps in the process of education that would include more children in the school and would improve attendance and the performance of Romani children at various levels of education.

The Program for Educational Development should define activities in the schools which have pupils whose mother tongue is not Macedonian and who have to study in this language, should make teachers aware of the needs of the bilingual children, and should introduce a section about the history of the Romani people in the history textbooks, in the framework of the importance of the recommendations for the Strategy for Roms in the Republic of Macedonia.

Civil organizations, donors and the other organizations and institutions should create and support programs that would tend to help solving the educational problems of Romani children.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. The number of pupils in the primary schools in the Republic of Macedonia who have abandoned school in 2001/2001, with an emphasis on the Romani population (first to fourth grade)

Nationality	Abandoning primary school							
	First grade		Second grade		Third grade		Fourth grade	
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f
Macedonians	50	50	51	71	82	24	62	25
Roms	35	23	22	29	/	23	/	27

Source: Petkovska (2003)

Table 2. The number of pupils in the primary schools in the Republic of Macedonia who have abandoned school in 2001/2001, with an emphasis on the Romani population (fifth to eighth grade)

Nationality	Abandoning primary school							
	Fifth grade		Sixth grade		Seventh grade		Eighth grade	
	m	f	m	f	m	f	m	f
Macedonians	93	47	33	25	72	25	103	12
Roms	161	93	49	17	25	33	7	6

Source: Petkovska (2003)

Table 3. Romani students enrolled and those who graduated from primary school

School year	Enrolled	Graduated
1998/1999	7602	372
1999/2000	7757	400
2000/2001	7970	518
2001/2002	7868	598
2002/2003	7993	627

Source: the Bureau for Development and Improvement of the Education in the Community Members' Languages (2003)

ROMANI STUDENTS' OPINION ABOUT THEIR TREATMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION



“It’s not wrong to be different than the others, it’s wrong when the others treat you differently”

INTRODUCTION

The Expert Group on Civil Rights carried out a survey entitled “Roms in higher education: Discrimination or affirmation” The aim of the research was to get an insight into Romani students’ opinion about their current status in higher education and the way they are treated.

Today we live in a society where the population experiences various modern achievements, cultures, traditions and belongs to various ethnic communities. It often happens that mutual stereotypes or prejudices appear among the members of various ethnic groups. The negative stereotypes and prejudices about a certain group inevitably lead to discriminatory treatment of its individual members or the whole group.

In speaking about discrimination, we must also mention that international law is very precise about the promotion and protection of human rights. The basic principle of providing human rights is the principle of non-discrimination for any reason. This principle is the fundamental element in many international conventions about human rights and freedoms.

National legal documents and the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia are in accordance with international law. Article 9 from the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia defines the equality of all citizens, Article 44 grants the equality in the education, and Article 54 (paragraph 3) prohibits discriminatory limitations on rights and freedoms on the basis of sex, race, skin color, language, religious beliefs, national or social origin, or financial or social position.

Provisions for equality, or non-discrimination, are present in several laws, and discrimination is subject to Articles 134 and 137 of the Penal Code.

Despite the wide variety of ratified international declarations in this field, as well as the constitutional acts that identify the principles of equality and non-discrimination, the Republic of Macedonia has failed to provide a suitable legal frame – formulated as a separate law – for equal practice of the basic rights and freedoms, nor has it established a suitable and simple mechanism for protection against and sanctioning of discrimination in all its various possible manifestations.

However, in spite of all these constitutional and legal regulations, a part of the population in the country has the feeling that discrimination exists in institutions of higher education. The feeling of discrimination leads to a loss of self-confidence, which discourages the student and may result in a loss of motivation at the very beginning of the studies, abandonment of studies, or later graduation. Roms are one of the groups that experiences these feelings of discrimination and lack of self-confidence.

This survey tries to discover the perceptions of Romani students about their treatment in institutions of higher education by professors, non-Romani colleagues, and the entire higher education administration, while trying to contribute to the improvement of the treatment of Romani students in the process of higher education.

Article 6, 6.3, of the Ohrid Framework Agreement reads:

“The principle of positive discrimination will be applied in the enrolment in State universities of candidates belonging to communities not in the majority in the population of Macedonia until the enrolment reflects equitably the composition of the population of Macedonia.” It is absolutely logical that, according to the regulation quoted from Ohrid Framework Agreement, the Romani population, which constitutes 2.66% of the total population of Macedonia, should be represented by 2.66% Romani students at the university. The real situation runs contrary to this regulation, since Romani students at the university are represented with 0.23% of the total student body, with an index of 0.08.

This is confirmed in the published competition for admitting students at the State Institutions of Higher Education in the Republic of Macedonia, where the government of the Republic of Macedonia decides (no. 19-2096/2) in the heading “Additional admittance stated by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia” (page 11, line 1) which reads: “In the school year 2005/06, in order to provide rightful and suitable presence of the students who belong to the communities which are not majorities in Macedonia, the State Institutions of Higher Education will additionally admit students who are members of these communities and whose number does not exceed 10% of the entire number of students admitted in 1 year at the university level (in the state quota and students who have to pay part of the fees). This percentage will count for the members of all of the communities to the level the respective community is present in the entire population number in the Republic of Macedonia.”

At the “St. Cyril and Methodius” University in Skopje and the “St. Clement of Ohrid” University in Bitola, which have adopted curricula used also in the state university in Tetovo, members of the Albanian community will be admitted only in the regular student quota (Call for application for first year students at the faculties at St. Cyril and Methodius University in 2005/06; Call for application for first year students at the faculties at St. Clement of Ohrid University in 2005/06).

Nationality	Number of students			%	Index
	regular	part time	total		
Macedonians	27.099	5.754	32.853	89.04	1,35
Albanians	1.974	312	2.286	6,2	0,25
Turks	378	89	467	1.26	0,33
Serbs	422	43	465	1.26	0,70
Vlachs	234	33	267	0.72	0,86
Romani	83	4	87	0.23	0,08
Others	403	69	472	1.27	/
Total	30.593	6.304	36.897	100.00	/

Table 1. Number of students by nationality admitted at the state universities in the state quotas, in the 2001-2002 academic year

The Chart shows that ethnic Macedonians have 5.4 times higher rate of access to the universities than do ethnic Albanians, and 16.87 times higher rate of access than Roms. Roms have 8.75 times lower rate of access to the universities than do ethnic Albanians, 3.12 times lower approach than Vlachs, 4.12 times lower approach than ethnic Turks, 8.7 times lower approach than ethnic Serbs. This leads us to a conclusion that Roms are the least represented both at the universities and in comparison to the other minorities.

In relation to the low number of Romani students, we must point out that the lowest number of students at the university, in comparison to the other nationalities, is not only due to the feeling of discrimination of the Romani students, but is also a result of other factors. Here, we will mention only some of them: the poor financial situation of Romani families, incomplete primary and secondary education, low educational level of the parents, lack of studying conditions and the traditions of discouraging girls from going to school and allowing juvenile marriages. More specific data about the social and economic reasons that influence the education of Roms can be found in: Study project "Vulnerability of Roma children in the dispersed Roma communities in Skopje" – Divna Lakinska-Popovska, September, 2000.

However, this is just the current reality that we hope will soon change: The stereotypes about Roms will be overcome, new mechanisms for protection of the abused national quotas will be found, the number of Romani students in higher education will increase and they will be treated equally to the others, in spite of the fact that Roms are different from the others.

RESEARCH REASONS AND GOALS

In order to define the problems Romani students face in higher education, as well as to find out their opinion about various aspects of their treatment in higher education, the civil rights group, created and supported by ECMI, decided to carry out a research in the area of higher education in addition to the various other surveys.

It was important for our research team to discover Romani students' attitude about the treatment they receive, compared to other, non-Romani students in higher education in the Republic of Macedonia.

It was crucial to learn more about the cooperation between Romani students, on one hand, and the professors and the other staff in the institutions of higher education, on the other, as well as about the relationship between Romani and non-Romani students.

We wanted to see to what extent Romani students see discrimination both inside and outside the institutions, whether they use the protection mechanisms and realize their human rights.

The need to discover whether discrimination exists at other levels of education (primary and secondary) motivated us to conduct this and similar surveys.

METHOD

Participants

Almost all Romani students at the universities in the Republic of Macedonia, 85% of all Romani students, took part in the research. Romaversitas programme (Foundation Open Society Institute) helped us gain information about Romani students and establish contact with the entire target group.

The sample structure, compared to the relevant variables is presented in Table 2.

No.	C&MU	SEU	TU	SCOU	MM	Total
First year	31	6	2	9	1	49
Second year	30	1		3		34
Third year	27	4		2		33
Fourth year	10					10
Final year students	11			1		12
Total:	109	11	2	15	1	138

Table 2. Sample structure according to the universities and the year of studies

C&MU – St. Cyril and Methodius University;
SEU – Southeastern European University;
TU - Tetovo University;
SCOU – St. Clement of Ohrid University;
MM – Private University – MM.

The questionnaires were anonymously filled in by the participants, who, prior to filling in the questionnaire, were given detailed explanations how to do it, were told the research goals, were granted anonymity and a possibility to have an insight in the results after the research was completed.

Data collecting instruments

The questionnaire prepared by the Expert Group on Civil Rights for the survey of the Romani students' attitude about their treatment in institutions of higher education in the Republic of Macedonia consists of 24 questions, 4 of which refer to the demographic data, 6 to relations between Roms and non-Roms, 5 about professors' treatment of Romani students, 8 to various kinds of discrimination in higher education and 1 to discrimination at other levels of education.

The survey took place in the office of Romaversitas, and at the universities where most of the Romani students were studying.

The process of research

The research took place in May-June 2005. The students filled in the questionnaires themselves, and there were at least two pollsters present in case additional explanation was needed. The questions were formulated in Macedonian, and none of the students commented on this; it was only important for them to understand the questions and to contribute to the survey.

In the end, the students were asked to comment on the questionnaire, to express their own opinion, to offer suggestions for further improvement in higher education, and finally to ask questions of the pollsters.

RESULTS

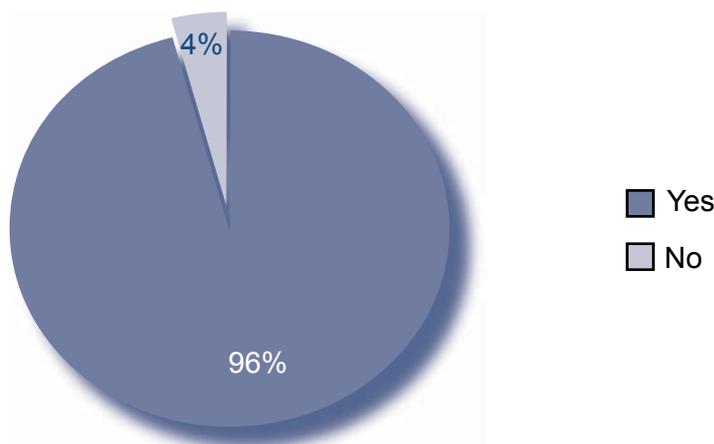
Acceptance of Romani students by peers

This topic was covered by six questions. The answers are graphically presented, to make it easier to follow. Analysis of the responses shows that Romani students are well accepted by their non-Romani colleagues and that they have a normal peer relationship.

The first question in this group was whether the students get on well with non-Romani students. It can be concluded that Romani students have intense friendly relationships with their non-Romani colleagues. Graph 1 shows that 96% of the

participants get on well with their non-Romani colleagues, whereas 4% only do not make friends with non-Romani colleagues, getting on well only with their Romani colleagues.

Do you get on well with your non-Romani colleagues?

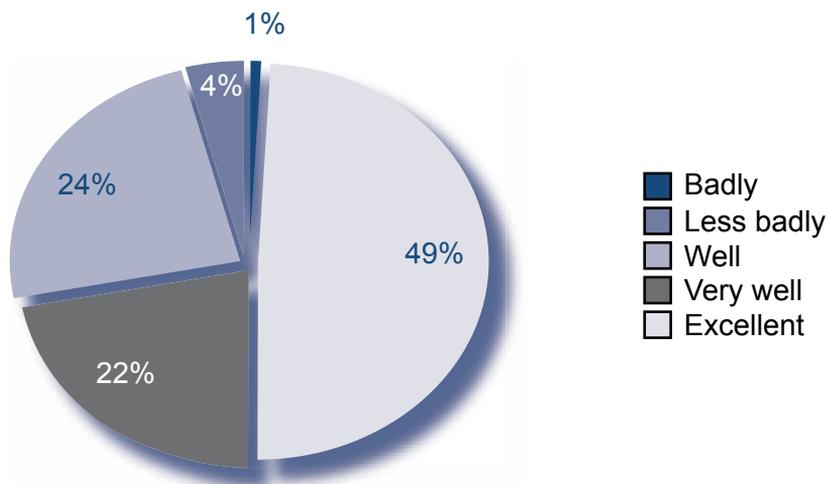


Graph 1. Romani and non-Romani students getting on well

The results show that a large proportion of Romani students get on well with their non-Romani colleagues. This is a clear sign that the Romani students show interest in making friends with the students from other nationalities that study at the institutions of higher education in the Republic of Macedonia.

The next question was a step further in discovering the quality of the relationship between the Romani students and their colleagues of other nationalities. The participants were asked whether their non-Romani peers accept them. The data in Graph 2 illustrate a high level of acceptance of the Romani students by their non-Romani colleagues. 49% think that they are excellently accepted, 22% think they are very well accepted, 24% that they are well accepted, 4% that they are slightly badly accepted and 1% think that they are very badly accepted by their non-Romani colleagues. It is interesting to mention that the percentage of the participants who said that they are more or less badly accepted basically coincides with the percentage of those students who answered in the previous question that they do not get along well with their non-Romani colleagues.

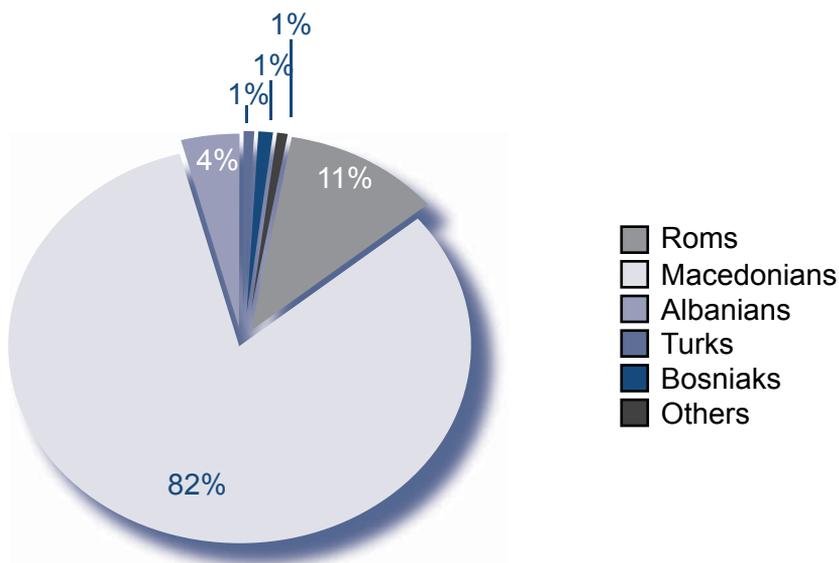
How well are you accepted by the colleagues from other nationalities?



Graph 2. Romani students' acceptance by their non-Romani colleagues

Romani students most often make friends with Macedonians (82%), among themselves (11%), with Albanians (4%) and the least with Turks, Bosniaks and Vlachs (1%), as is presented in Graph 3.

The nationality of the colleagues you get well along with:



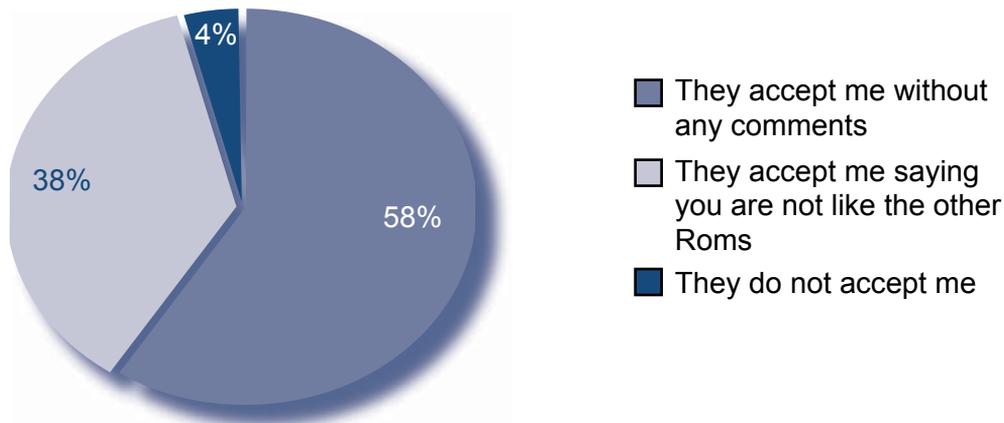
Graph 3. Nationality of the colleagues with whom they get on well in the largest number

The percentage of Romani students who get along well with their Romani colleagues suggests the need for further research. The fact that Romani students get along well mostly with their Macedonian colleagues, and not with the colleagues of other nationalities, may be due not so much to better acceptance or willingness to make friends, but to the fact that Macedonians are represented in the highest number at the institutions of higher learning in the Republic of Macedonia.

It is interesting to point out that the Romani students get on best with their Macedonian colleagues at St. Cyril and Methodius University and St. Clement of Ohrid University, where most of the students are Macedonians, and they get on best with Albanians at the Southeastern European University and Tetovo University in Tetovo, where most of the students are Albanians.

We get similar results to the last question, how the students react when they find out that their colleague is a Rom (Graph 4). Most of the Romani participants (58%) said that they were accepted without any comments, 38% reported they were accepted with the comment that they are not like other Roms, and 4% were not accepted at all. Here, too, the percentage of non-accepted Romani students coincides with the responses to similar questions discussed previously.

How do your colleagues react when they find out you are Romani?



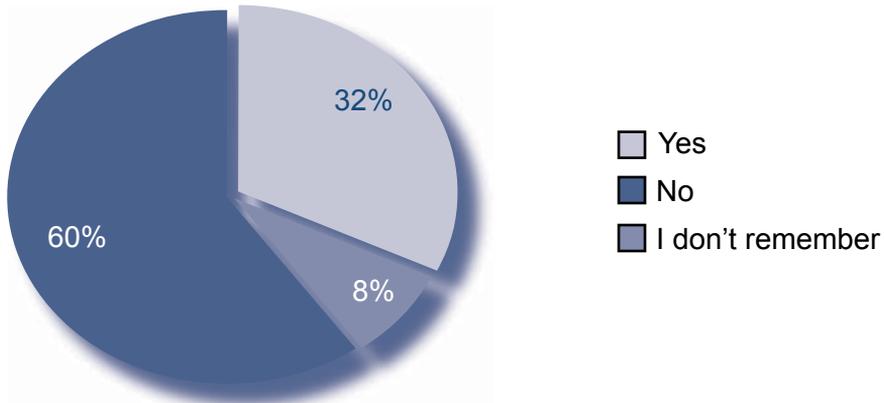
Graph 4. How Romani students are accepted by their non-Romani peers

The results illustrate that non-Romani students are aware that their colleagues are Roms, but they still accept their Romani colleagues without any particular reasons. However, the number of non-Romani students who believe in Romani stereotypes, without being familiar with the elements of their tradition and cultural values, is not small. They accept their Romani colleagues, with some astonishment and reserve, as if they do not believe that their colleagues are really Roms.

Romani treatment by professors

This category consists of five questions, which ask the students to assess the professors' treatment of them. In Graph 5, we have presented the responses to one of these questions.

Has any professor asked you about your nationality during an exam?

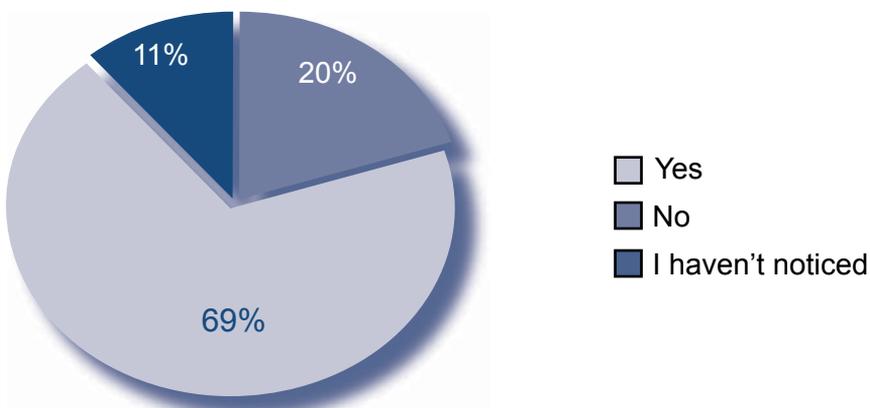


Graph 5. Exams and nationality

Most of the participants (60%) say they have not been asked about their nationality during an exam, while a third (32%) report they have been asked about their nationality. This fact may indicate unequal, even discriminatory treatment of the students by the professors because of their nationality. Still, a deeper analysis is necessary in order to find out the real value of this data. Therefore, it could be very helpful to be aware of the presence of the negative image about Roms in higher education. One of the indicators is the widely accepted negative image of Roms, captured in the phrase: "Gypsy business."

We asked our participants whether anyone has ever mentioned phrases that proverbially express negative prejudices about Roms, like: "Gypsy", or "Gypsy business", in their presence at university. The answers are presented in Graph 6.

Has anyone ever mentioned "Gypsy business" in front of you?



Graph 6. Presence of negative prejudices towards Roms

The obtained results show that there are negative prejudices against Roms in higher education. The percentage of participants who reported that someone had characterized some activity with the pejorative expression “Gypsy business” is very high (69%). The presence of these negative prejudices towards Romani nationality results in a feeling of discrimination among Roms and an awareness that they are truly discriminated against. Romani students’ feeling of discrimination is even more strongly expressed in the answers to the possible kinds of discrimination in higher education.

Kinds of discrimination in higher education

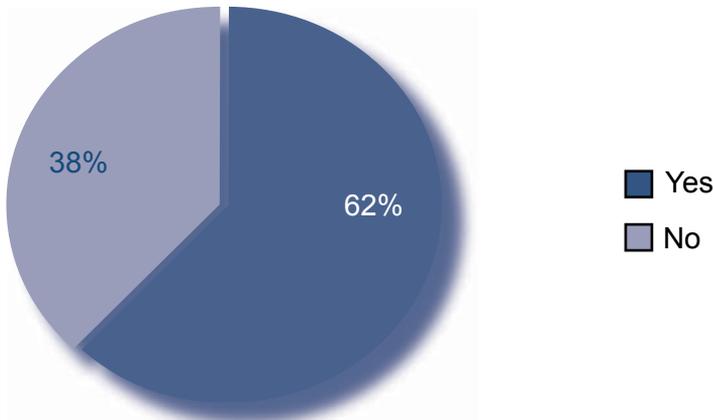
This category consisted of eight questions aimed at discovering the Romani students’ opinion about their experiences with discriminatory treatment in higher education. The opinions greatly depend on the participants’ personal feeling of discrimination. Therefore, we formulated a general question about their feeling of discrimination. The results are presented in Table 3.

	individuals	%
Abuse of an individual	5	3.6
Unequal treatment of a group of people/individual	124	89.9
Wrong (distorted) picture about a group of people	8	5.8
Others	1	0.7
Total	138	100

Table 3. How do you understand the term “discrimination”?

The results show that most of the Romani students understand the term “discrimination” correctly. It implies that their assessment and opinion about the ways of discrimination of Romani students in higher education are reliable. Being asked whether they have personally experienced discrimination at university, slightly less than two thirds answered negatively, whereas somewhat more than one third said that they had personally experienced discrimination at the faculties where they study.

Have you ever felt discriminated against personally at university?

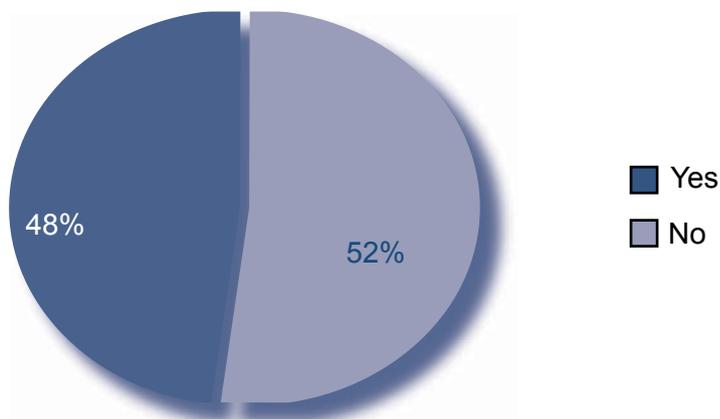


Graph 7. Personal experience with discrimination.

The fact that 38% of the participants said they have experienced discrimination in higher education is another confirmation of the existence of discrimination against Romani students.

The feeling of discrimination is not built only on personal experience. Ethnicity awakens strong feelings of solidarity. It is therefore interesting to note that Romani students often notice not only the discrimination which they experience personally, but also discrimination against other Romani students. The data in Graph 8 illustrate that a larger share of respondents (48%) have noticed discrimination against other Romani students than have themselves experienced discrimination in higher education (38%, per Graph 7).

Do you know Romani students colleagues who have been discriminated against?



Graph 8. Experience with discrimination against Romani students

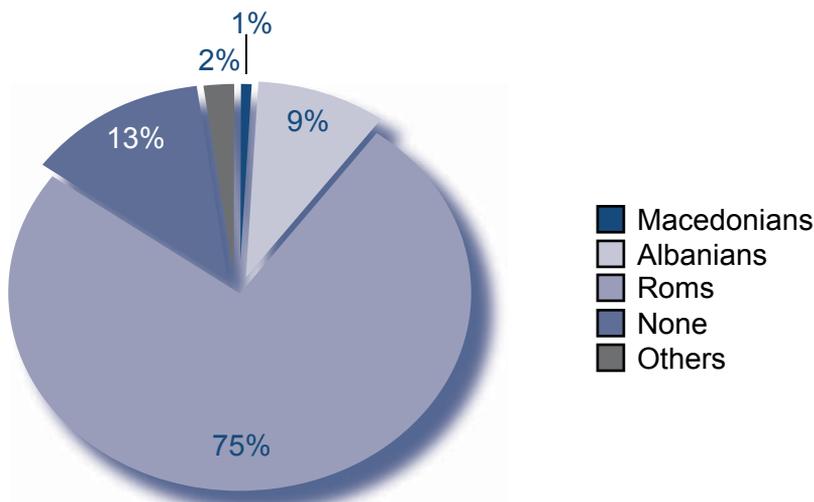
The most frequent source of discrimination against Romani students in higher education are professors (33.3%), followed closely by non-Romani colleagues (30.5%). A high percentage of respondents reported that Romani students are also discriminated against by the administration for students' issues (20.8%) and by other university administration (11.1%).

If you have ever felt discrimination, who discriminated against you?		
Professors	24	33.3
Non-Romani colleagues	22	30.6
Administration for students' issues	15	20.8
University administration	8	11.1
Others	3	4.2
Total	72	100

Table 4. Who discriminates against Romani students?

The Romani students' feeling of discrimination can also be confirmed comparatively. Namely, the participants think that the Romani ethnic community members are the most discriminated group compared to the members of the other ethnic communities (Graph 9).

Which ethnic community do you think suffers the greatest discrimination?



Graph 9. Comparative discrimination

The answers to this question reveal an even stronger feeling of discrimination. Namely, the results indicate that Roms are not only the most discriminated, but also that they suffer a much higher degree of general discrimination than the one that is

directly reflected. Only 13% of the participants answered that no ethnic community is discriminated against in higher education in the Republic of Macedonia. This is a truly alarming finding and deserves further elaboration and detailed research and analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

- Romani students at university generally get on well with their non-Romani colleagues, particularly with ethnic Macedonians;
- Romani students are well accepted, but a great deal of the Romani students, 38% of the participants, are accepted by their non-Romani colleagues with an explanation that they are not like the other Roms. This proves that non-Romani students still have prejudices and stereotypes about Romani students;
- Romani students have been asked their nationality during an exam, which to them is a sign of discrimination;
- Since 69% of the participants have heard others mentioning “Gypsy business” in their company, we can conclude that although the non-Romani colleagues accept their Romani colleagues, they still have prejudices and stereotypes about them, which constitutes a basis for discriminatory behavior towards Romani students;
- The research leads to a conclusion that Romani students in higher education have the feeling of being discriminated against and that they think that Roms are the most discriminated ethnic community in the Republic of Macedonia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In future, programs for overcoming and breaking the negative prejudices and stereotypes non-Romani students have about their Romani colleagues should be developed;
- Develop mechanisms to protect Romani students from discrimination by their professors in university examinations;
- Create a protective mechanism and apply the national quota for enrollment of Romani students at university in the Republic of Macedonia;
- Further scientific studies of the perception of discrimination, its manifestations and sources.

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**HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS OF THE
ROMANI POPULATION IN THE
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Macedonia is a civil, independent, free, democratic and social state, whose sovereignty derives from the citizens and belongs to its citizens.

The 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia is a liberal and democratic constitution based on human and civil liberty and rights. Two moments illustrate impressively the importance of human freedom and rights for the constitutional structure of the Republic of Macedonia and its political system. Firstly, the basic freedom and rights are constitutional and are the fundamental value of the constitutional system in Macedonia. Secondly, human freedom and rights are in the center of the Constitution of the Republic, therefore they are in the center of the political, economic and general social system in the country. This is confirmed by the fact that the human rights and freedoms are regulated in the second part of the Constitution, right after the basic ordinances in the first part. The rights and the freedoms regulations are prior to the organization of the state and local government, the international relations and the defense of the Republic. As a result, they're the foundation and inspiration of the entire social life in the Republic of Macedonia.

The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia classifies the rights and freedoms in five categories: personal or civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms.

The personal rights and freedoms are the essence of the civil and all the other freedoms and rights. The absence of discrimination for any reason: sex, race, skin color, nationality, social origin, political or religious beliefs, financial or social status, are the key constitutional principles in granting rights and freedoms. This principle grants the following rights and freedoms: the right to life, integrity of one's person, the right to freedom, presumed innocence, the right to defense, the right of appeal, freedom of movement and dwelling, integrity of the home, secrecy of the letters and other social communication, freedom of religious beliefs and the right to citizenship.

The political rights and freedoms ensure the democratic character of the state and local government, and the citizens' participation in achieving the rights and freedoms. The Constitution grants the following rights and freedoms: the right to equality, freedom of thought and personal beliefs, freedom of speech and public appearance, freedom of the press and the other media, the freedom to gather in the public, freedom association, voting rights, the right to trial and appeal, rights for foreigners, the right to defend the country. The citizens should be aware of the constitutional and the legal regulations about rights and freedoms, because it is a condition for realizing their rights and freedoms.

In order to respect the generally accepted classifications, as well as to meet the analytical needs of our research, we emphasize several economic, social and

cultural rights. The Constitution establishes the following economic rights: the right to ownership, the right to strike, and the right to join trade unions. The Constitution grants the following social rights: the right to social stability, social insurance, the right to assistance and special protection, the right to health protection, the right to decide about having children freely and the right to healthy environment. The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia establishes the following cultural freedoms and rights: the right to education, the right to scientific and artistic expression, and the freedom to express one's national identity.

Since all these rights and freedoms are very important in the life of the Macedonians, the Constitution also establishes certain guarantees for basic rights and freedoms. One of the key guarantees is that the citizens are familiar with their rights and freedoms. Act 50 of the Constitution states that the Macedonian citizen has the right to be familiar with the human rights and freedoms. Knowing the rights and the freedoms is a prerequisite for the citizens' active contribution in accomplishing, promoting and protecting the constitutional rights and freedoms.

Our research should contribute to this. The research surveys whether the members of the Romani community are informed about their rights and freedoms being citizens of the Republic of Macedonia. It researches to what extent Roms are informed about the more relevant constitutional rights and freedoms. Thus, the research continues and goes deeper into the intentions of the Strategy for Roms in the Republic of Macedonia (Strategy), adopted by the Macedonian Government in 2005. The Strategy states: "there are cases of direct and indirect discrimination of Roms in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which further prevents Roms from integrating fully in the respective societies. It reflects various aspects of their life, such as state services, which are not equally available to Roms for various reasons, lack of information about one's rights or ignorance of the steps to be taken in order to accomplish the granted rights or services."

So, in spite of the fact that the constitutional and legal regulations grant a decent level of rights meeting the standards of a modern state, in reality, the implementation of the existing laws does not function ideally. It is thought that besides the legally positive status and protection of the rights of Roms, the state is not adequate in the realization of the rights and in dealing with the emergency cases that appear in real life. As for the cases of direct discrimination, it is evident that, due to the sensitive nature of the problem, the cases are difficult to prove legally, even when they are obvious. Therefore, the insight in the awareness of Roms about the legal accomplishment of their rights and freedoms is of great scientific and social value.

One has the impression that the list of human rights granted by the system in the Republic of Macedonia is not available to the public, or is available only to highly educated people, which further causes certain consequences in the realization of the rights, which they are not familiar with anyway. (page 79 from the Strategy for Roms in the Republic of Macedonia)

RESEARCH RELEVANCE AND GOALS

The need to research human rights awareness is apparent in the recommendations of the Strategy for Roms in the Republic of Macedonia, in the part about human rights protection and discrimination issues, as well as in the fact that there has not thus far been a single national survey about the awareness of Roms of their basic freedoms and rights.

Thus, the research aims at collecting experiential data about the level of awareness of the Romani community of the constitutional and legal regulations of some more significant personal, political, social, economic and cultural rights of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia.

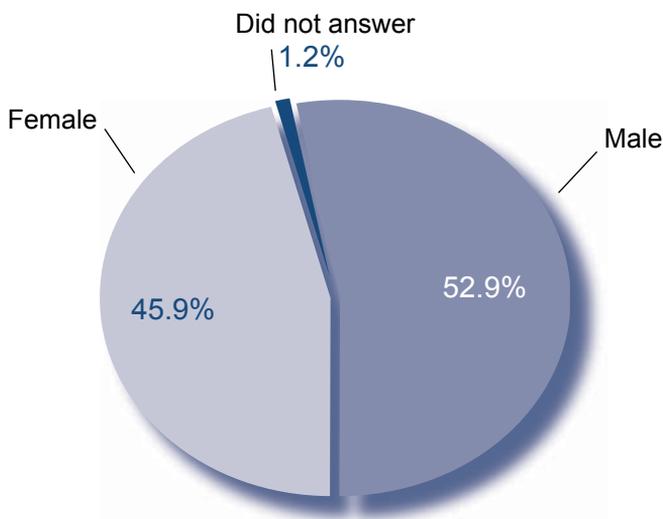
The research task is not intended only for academic purposes. The research is carried out in order to collect results that would give further directions for Romani activities and the state institutions, and which would be a solid basis for implementing the action plans and to an easier integration in the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

METHOD

Bearing in mind the members of the research team and their various research experiences, as well as following the guidelines of the entire European Centre for Minority Issues project, the research uses the method of questionnaire survey. The research uses a suitable sample of ethnic Roms, aged above 18. The cities where the Romani population is above 3% were taken into consideration. 670 ethnic Romani individuals were interviewed, at random choice in every town (Table 1, Graph 1).

City	number of respondents	%
Skopje	287	43
Bitola	54	8
Vinica	20	3
Gostivar	34	5
Kičevo	27	4
Kočani	20	3
Kumanovo	67	10
Prilep	67	10
Tetovo	47	7
Štip	47	7
Total	670	100

Table 1. Sample structure according to city



Graph 1. Sample structure according to sex

Data Collecting Instruments

A questionnaire created for a target group characterized by a rather low level of education was applied to measure the degree of awareness of fundamental rights and freedoms. The questions from everyday life were written in simple language. The questionnaire consisted of 29 questions, grouped in 6 categories. The first category has five questions about the social and the demographic characteristics of the individuals, whereas the second one contains two general questions about the awareness of reaching legal adulthood and registering a newborn baby. The third category consists of five questions about the awareness of the right to education and how to realize it. The fourth one has three questions about the awareness of some social rights. The fifth category consists of seven questions about the awareness of some of the most important personal rights and civil liberties. Finally, the sixth category consists of seven questions about the awareness of the human rights and the extent to which the citizens are familiar with them.

Research Method

The survey took place in May-June 2005. Trained pollsters administered the questionnaire in 10 cities in the Republic of Macedonia where Romani communities dwell. The field approach was based upon the mutual coordination among the research team members (with a questionnaire previously prepared in accordance with the research problem) and with the ECMI managers who agreed that each team should keep a plan of the teamwork.

The pollsters read the subjects each question, together with the range of possible answers and marked down the answers. The participants were given additional explanations of the less familiar words, in accordance to a previously set procedure. The entire procedure of filling in the questionnaire was carried out in Romani language in the environments where the participants were in a good command of that language. Thus, in addition to achieving the fundamental task, the research also activated its participants.

Bearing in mind the previous experience of some of the participants, the pollsters did not have to read the questions when administering the questionnaire. Instead, the participant would decide individually for one of the offered alternatives, depending on his/her knowledge and beliefs, without being read the questions by the pollster. So, certain problems such as group discussions, group answers were solved and the participants were able to think about the answers for themselves and to give realistic replies about their awareness of the human rights in Macedonia.

RESULTS

The research results are in accordance with the previous expectations. This particularly refers to the results about whether the participants are informed and aware of their rights and freedoms as Macedonian citizens. The results illustrate the previous assumption that they are not informed and aware of this issue. In addition, the reasons for the ignorance of rights and freedoms are not surprising. The research revealed that the main reason is the low educational level, which is further connected with the exclusion of this group of people from the educational system. It is interesting to point out that the research shows that Romani population, by means of the research sample, expresses a highly positive attitude towards human rights and freedoms, and is therefore really interested in increasing the awareness about the rights and freedoms, especially in domestic and international institutions.

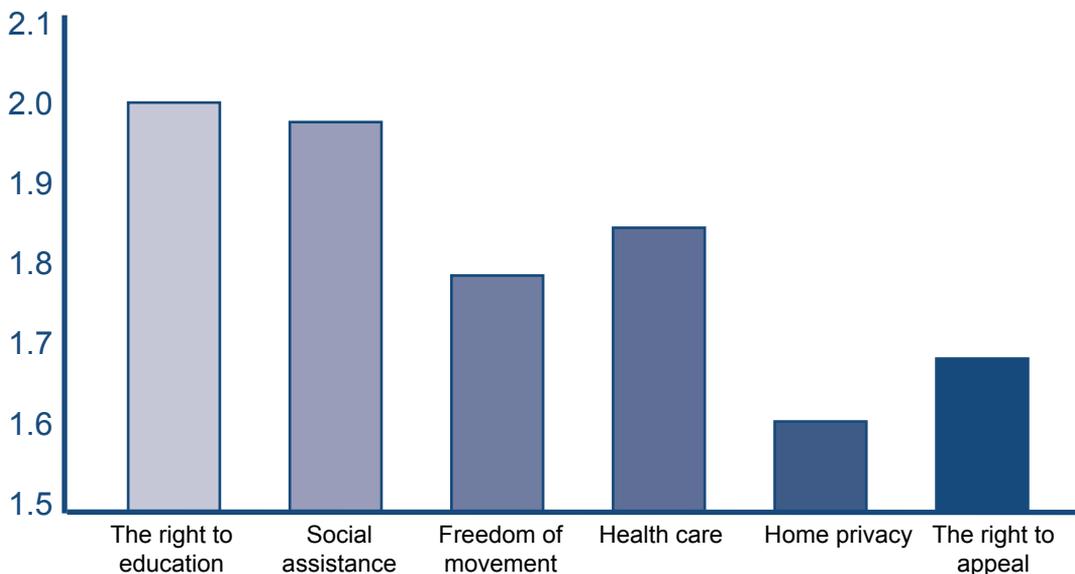
The results of the three aspects of human rights awareness (the degree of awareness, the reasons for the present situation of ignorance and the need to get acquainted with rights and the freedoms) are presented in three separate, yet connected stories.

Awareness about rights and freedoms

Generally speaking, the research shows the participants are at a very low level of awareness about civil rights and freedoms. Such a fact forces us to speak about a level of ignorance, rather than a level of awareness about civil rights and freedoms.

The high degree of ignorance is typical for all of the various civil rights: personal, political, social and economic. Still, one must notice that the degree of ignorance

is the lowest with respect to the rights to education and social protection, and the highest with regard to personal rights (ex. The right to appeal or have a safe home, see Graph 2).



Graph 2. Degree of rights awareness

With regard to this result it is necessary to set certain limits that should be additionally checked with more complex surveys. The need to limit the results particularly refers to the much higher awareness about the right to education and social protection. Based on the field experience, the researchers believe that, besides the fact that most of the participants said that they are aware about the right to education and social protection, the actual situation in the field suggests quite the opposite. One can suppose that, when answering the question, the participants had in mind the issue of social problems, rather than the awareness about the rights, i.e. they often face this kind of problems, so as a result they think they are familiar with these rights. The low level of awareness about the rights and the freedoms is also typical for the right to primary education in equal conditions (Table2).

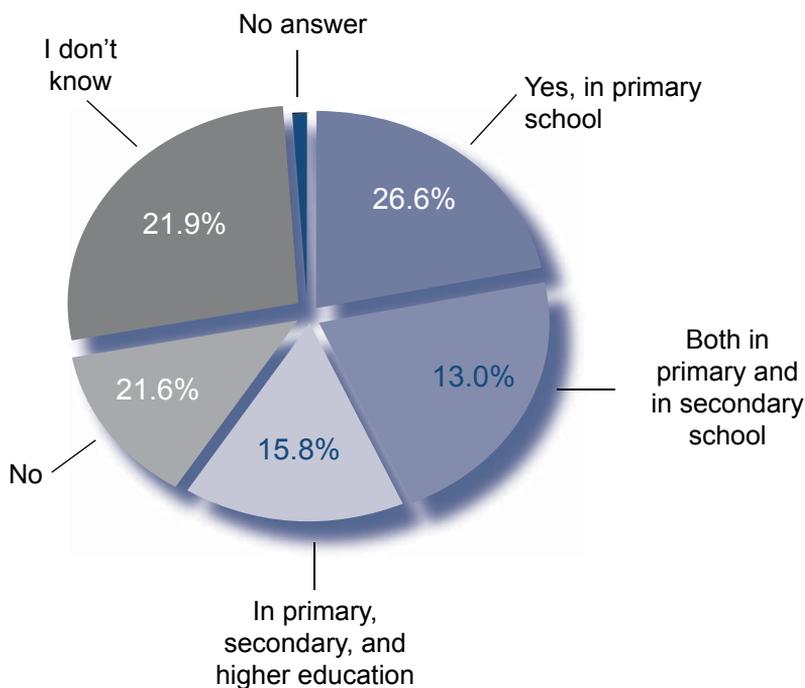
Is primary education accessible to everyone in equal conditions?		
	individuals	%
Yes	394	59.2
No	179	26.9
I don't know	92	13.9
Total	665	100

Table 2. Accessibility of primary education

The table indicates that more than a quarter of the participants (26.9%) have the wrong impression about the accessibility of education in equal conditions. Here we can add the rather high percentage of participants, (13.2%), who do not know that primary education is accessible to everyone in equal conditions.

Additional evidence of ignorance of the right to education are the responses to the question as to whether Roms have the right to be educated in their mother tongue, with 37.4% of the participants answering incorrectly (Graph 3).

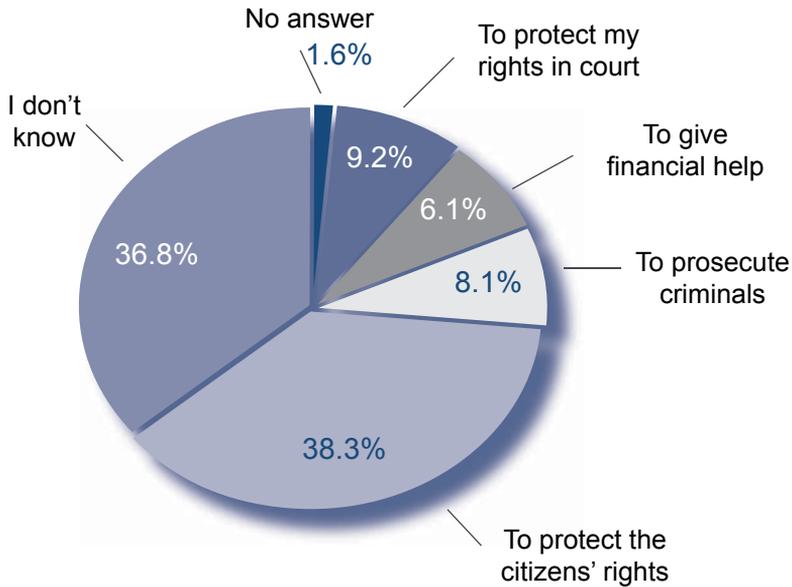
Do Roms have the right to be educated in their mother tongue?



Graph 3. The right to receive education in one's mother tongue

What is more, besides the fact that Roms are not aware of their rights, they do not know where to apply in cases when the institutions do not respect the law. When asked: "What is the role of the Ombudsman?" 60.2% of the participants said they didn't know, which directly implies ignorance of the possibilities for protection (Graph 4).

What is the role of the Ombudsman?



Graph 4. The role of the ombudsman

The chart results show that Roms have a low level of awareness of rights and freedoms, both with respect to the constitutional and legal regulations and with respect to realizing and protecting their rights. This is further confirmed by the participants' experience in accomplishing their rights and freedoms. The data reveal that a significant number of the participants (a third) have never taken steps to protect their rights because they do not trust the relevant institutions.

Have you ever taken steps in order to realize a right of yours?		
	individuals	%
Yes	82	12.2
No, I haven't had the need	346	51.6
No, because I don't trust the institutions	222	33.2
Others	4	0.6
No answer	16	2.4
Total	670	100

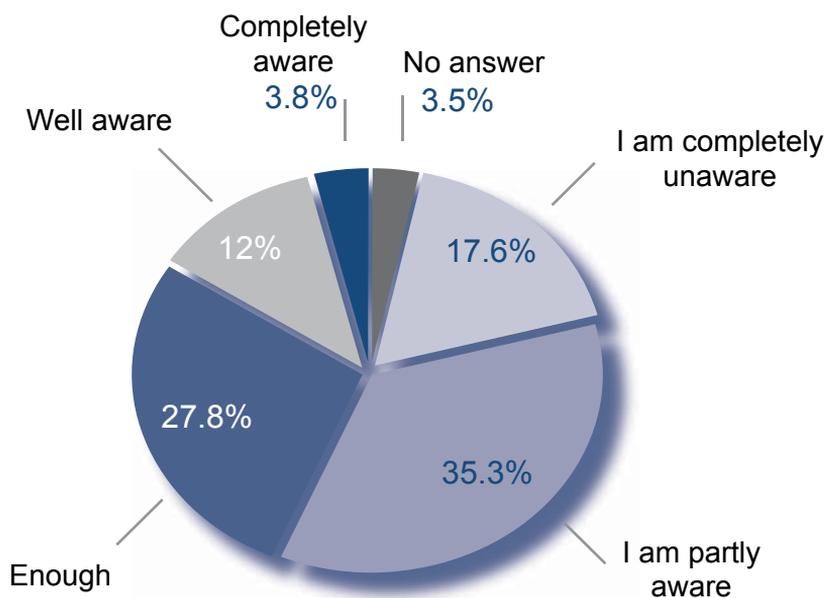
Table 3. Steps in accomplishing one's rights

It turned out that a great deal of the participants, 83.9%, have never consulted anyone to realize some right. 39% of them, 568 people, say they have not done so because they don't trust the relevant institutions.

This result is compatible with the previously presented data about the high level of ignorance about rights and freedoms. The cumulative influence of the current factor definitely accounts for a greater part of the negative situation in the field of Roms' enjoyment of rights and liberties.

However, the research also proved participants' high awareness of their ignorance about the rights and freedoms (Graph 5 and Table 4). The total percentage of the participants who think they are well or completely aware about their rights (16.41%) is several times lower than the percentage of the participants who think they are completely or partly ignorant of their rights (54.75%). In addition, the percentage of women who said they are partly or completely ignorant of their rights (54.46%) is considerably higher than the percentage of men who gave the same answer (45.25%). The difference between the two sexes is very obvious with regards to the positive answers. 73.01% of the total answers who said they are well or completely aware about their rights are men, whereas two and a half times less (29.95%) are women.

How aware are you about human rights?



Graph 5. Awareness about human rights

As we can see, the answers that Roms gave to this question completely depict the situation in the field, i.e. the results confirm the thesis that Roms are ignorant of their basic human freedoms and rights.

How aware are you about human rights ?							
		Completely ignorant	Very little	Enough	Well aware	Completely aware	Total
Sex	Male	42 25.29%	120 50.42%	113 60.1%	58 71.6%	17 65.38%	350
	Female	77 64.8%	118 49.58%	75 39.89%	23 28.39%	9 34.62%	
Total		119 18.25%	239 36.6%	188 28.8%	81 12.42%	26 3.93%	652

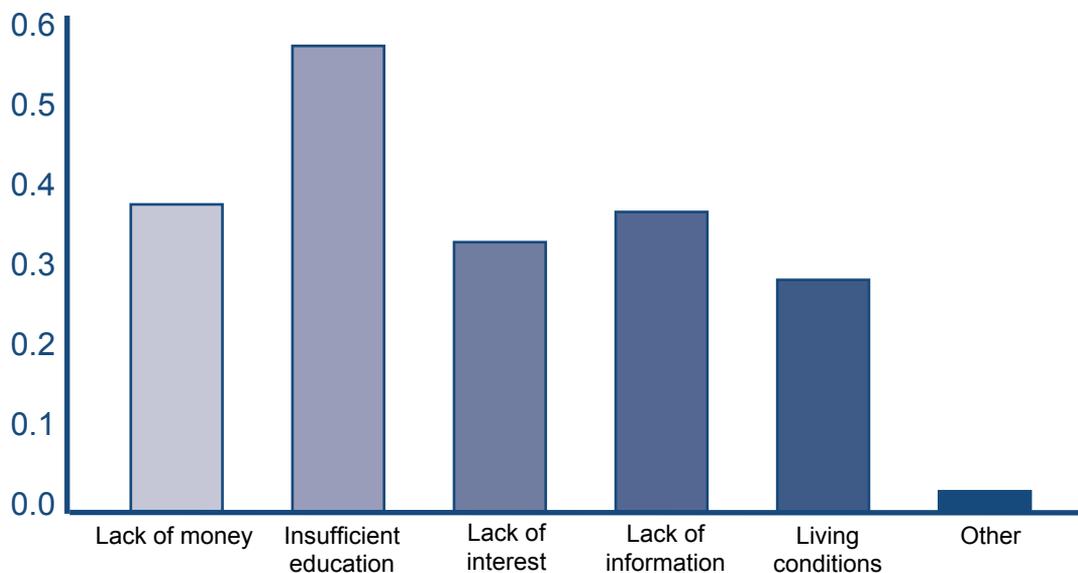
Table 4. Your assessment of the awareness of human rights

The chart represents awareness of human rights according to sex, and we can conclude that women are more unaware of their rights. The low level of emancipation of Romani women might be the reason for their greater ignorance about human rights. Analysis of the reasons for ignorance of rights, elaborated below, also leads to this conclusion.

Reasons for ignorance of the rights and freedoms

As we already mentioned in the introduction, the state is obliged to inform its citizens about their rights and freedoms. But it is also a right of the citizens themselves to be informed. Therefore, it is obvious that the reasons for the poor and insufficient awareness of Romani population about rights and freedoms lie on both levels – in the state’s failure to inform its citizens and in the citizens’ failure to inform themselves individually or through civic organizations.

Bearing this in mind, the participants were given a possibility to choose among five supposed reasons (Graph 6), in order to assess the importance of some of the most relevant reasons for the observed lack of awareness.



Graph 6. Reasons for ignorance of human rights

The research shows that the participants mention insufficient education as the most important reason for ignorance of human rights. This factor directly influences the possibility to access and comprehend the rights granted in the Constitution and the legal regulations of the Republic of Macedonia.

The next important factors for the ignorance of human rights are lack of money and information. This additionally reinforces the thesis that Roms would like to be aware of their rights, but they are not well informed about them, so in future, the state should take more serious steps in order to inform its citizens. The analysis of the participants' attitudes about the need for information, i.e. human rights education, further leads to a similar conclusion.

The need to educate people about human rights

The fact that Roms are not well aware of their rights and freedoms is followed by a positive attitude towards human rights education. This is also confirmed by the responses to two mutually connected questions, presented in Graph 7 and Graph 8.

Do you think you need human rights education?

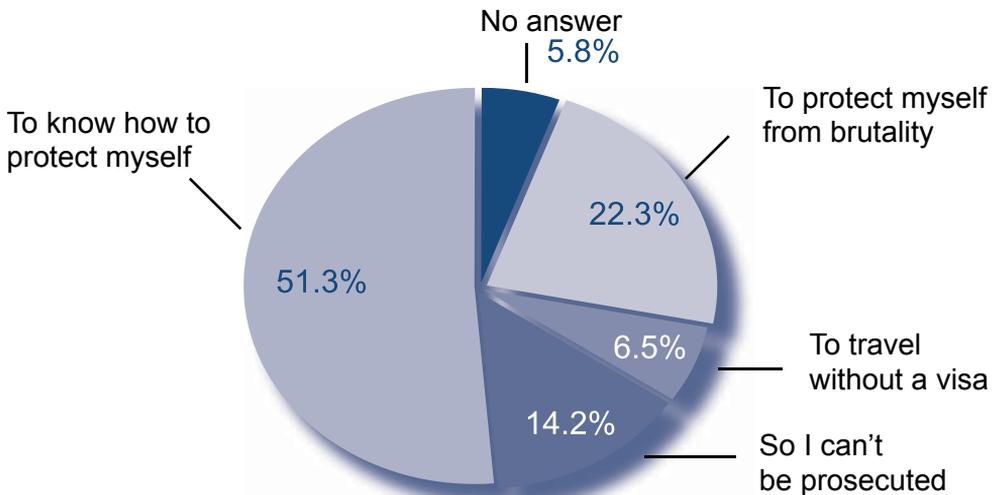


Graph 7. Human rights education

Here, we can see the need for education of the target group. Roms have a great need to be educated and acquainted with the human rights and ways and conditions to protect themselves at moments when their rights are violated.

In order to make a deeper analysis for the need of human rights education, we formulated the next question that was to discover the participants' attitudes about how the awareness of human rights and freedoms can positively influence the improvement of Romani community. The answers illustrate a high level of awareness about the importance of rights and freedoms – how to ensure and protect human dignity (Graph 8).

Why do you need to be aware of your human rights?



Graph 8. Importance of human rights awareness

Half of the participants said they need to be aware of human rights so that they can protect themselves, whereas the other half has split opinion, as can be seen in the Graph.

CONCLUSIONS

The research results lead to the following conclusions:

- The Romani community in the Republic of Macedonia is little aware of human rights;
- Roms seldom refer to the state institutions in order to realize or protect their rights;
- Roms do not trust the state institutions to realize their rights;
- The low educational level of the participants is a very important factor for the rather low awareness about rights and freedoms;
- The participants are aware that they are not familiar with rights and freedoms and their protection;
- We can say that there is a need for education of Roms in the Republic of Macedonia about human rights – 2/3 of the participants feel the need for such an education.

The research results confirm the previous information in Strategy for Roms in the Republic of Macedonia that the awareness of human rights granted by the system is insufficient or available only to those who are better educated. This fact causes consequences in the practical application of the rights. In the course of the research, it turned out that there has not been a previous national research about the awareness of basic freedoms and rights of the Romani community in the Republic of Macedonia, which further confirms the need to carry out a survey about the ignorance of the Romani community in Macedonia about basic freedoms and rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research results and the participants' need, we would recommend development of programs and activities to increase the degree of awareness of human rights and freedoms. Such programs can be implemented either in the educational system or outside it. The programs should include information for achieving and protecting the rights of Roms.

Some additional surveys should be undertaken in order to develop the recommended programs:

1. Survey about the mistrust Roms express in state institutions for realizing their rights;
2. What form of human rights education is most acceptable for the Romani community in Macedonia;
3. How ghettoisation influences awareness of human rights;

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ROMS AND THEIR MOTIVATION FOR EMPLOYMENT



INTRODUCTION

The 1990s will be remembered in history for the societal changes in the socialist countries. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, all of the countries from Southeastern Europe transformed into democratic pluralist societies. The Republic of Macedonia, as a part of the Yugoslav Federation, was also a part of this process. The transformation was not only political, but also social and economic. The transformation caused changes in the system that were to enable greater participation of the population and better living standard. The public capital was transformed into private, and the state economy transformed into a market economy. The transition of the state capital in the Republic of Macedonia went on under the influence of the current politics, and the events in the region, the war in the former Yugoslav republics, and the Greek blockade above all.

There have been several government changes in the Republic of Macedonia since its independence. The key events in the democratic existence of the Republic of Macedonia are: the new Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the decentralization of the local government.

During the independence period, the economy was characterized by a high inflation rate along with the other negative characteristics in the economic system in the developmental, macroeconomic and social areas. The macroeconomic policy had been restrictive for too long, leading from inflation to stability, and from artificial stability to deflation. The government was focused on improving ethnic relations, especially in the period before the 2001 conflict, slowing the economic development of the country.

Ever since independence there have been negative tendencies in the economic development and the employment prospects (based on data from UNDP, 2004; USAID 2004; Bureau for Statistics, 2004). The following table illustrates the unemployment rate in 2000-2003 (Bureau for Statistics).

2000	2001	2002	2003
257 000	263 000	263 000	312 000

The total gross national product in 2004 was 5.4 billion dollars, placing the Republic of Macedonia in the last place in the region of the Western Balkans. On the other hand, the GNP per capita is higher compared to the other countries in the region at 2,257 dollars. The poverty index has increased from 9% in 1994 to 29.6% in 2004 (State Bureau for Statistics).

Unemployment has become a significant problem that influences the state stability. About the social status of the population in Macedonia, Jakimovski (2003; page 13) says: "the high unemployment rate shows that there is a huge group of people

who are denied of their participation at the labor market. Unemployment structure shows that participation has been denied to relatively young and not well-educated people. So, unemployment is among the most important sources for social exclusion. Unemployed are denied equal access to production. This source of social exclusion is not the same in all parts of Macedonia, since the unemployment degree is regionally defined.” According to a USAID report from 2004, there has been an increase in the unemployment rate on the labor market every year.

The Employment Agency of the Republic of Macedonia claims reported on 20 April 2005 a total of 385,388 registered unemployed people, which is about 39% of the entire able-bodied people in the Republic of Macedonia.

The government has been implementing measures for creating conditions for a market economy and for improving the conditions for private business. The measures were mainly adopted in the field of legislative and legal documents, whereas there was an absence of needs analyses of certain economic segments. Businessmen report that they have not been consulted in this part, and only a small part of them have this privilege. Media have started commenting openly on the creation of a “business oligarchy”, which is a part of the political system and influences the politics of the Republic of Macedonia.

The Republic of Macedonia implemented an Employment Support Law, known as “Branko’s Law”, twice without improving the employment situation in the country. At the moment, a new law for employment is in procedure. The rights of the unemployed are stated in The Law for Employment and Insurance in Case of Unemployment, but this is unsuccessful insofar as it does not promote new jobs. The Republic of Macedonia registers the unemployed in the local Employment Agencies, which have thus far played only a passive role. Since January 2005, their competencies in mediating employments, retraining and special trainings of the unemployed have increased.

In the census of 2002, the Romani population is 53,879 people or 2.66% of the total population. The Employment Agency has registered 16,740 unemployed Roms, which is 71.3% of the able-bodied Romani population. Having in mind that many Roms do not register in the Employment Agency for various reasons (lack of documentation, irregular application, ignorance) one can guess that the figure is much higher. A good support to this is the fact that 2.66% of the total population spends 10% to 20% of the national welfare fund (Janevski, 2004). In June 2004, 7,468 Romani families subscribed for welfare (Bakeva, 2004). A typical Romani family usually has three generations living together, often in substandard conditions. According to UNDP surveys in 2004, Romani families live in average of 12 square meters, whereas non-Romani families dwell in twice the space. The substandard circumstances make it more difficult to achieve social development, especially because of the negative influence over the children in the educational process which later generates numerous employment problems.

The 2004 report of the Employment Agency has the following statistics about the unemployed Romani people, according to their education or qualifications: 15,130 unqualified, 392 semi-qualified, 811 qualified, no highly qualified, 402 people are with secondary education, 9 with high school education, 20 with university education, and no one with masters or doctoral degree. The entire number of recorded unemployed Roms at that moment was 16,764.

The generally bad economic situation in the country and the large number of unemployed Romani people impose the following questions:

- Are Roms motivated to work?
- What motivates Roms to work?

The answer to these two questions will either confirm or deny the widespread stereotype that Romani people don't like work, which is the basis of long-standing prejudice about the Romani population in general.

The problem of unemployed Roms has not been considered as a special problem of the community by the relevant institutions. Not a single survey or analysis about the needs of the Romani community has been conducted. On the other hand, the international factor expresses a great interest in the problems and the needs of the Romani community. The programs that have treated the Romani community's problems so far, have indicated the unemployment of Romani people indirectly by working on projects for the human rights or education. Although both the state and the European Commission passed the Country Strategy Paper in 2002, which later produced Multiyear Indicative Plan and the National Plan for Action, they have not even touched on the segment of unemployment of the Romani population as a whole.

In the past two years UNDP, The Council of Europe and The European Centre for Minority Issues have undertaken a number of researches to define the needs of the Romani community. The research conducted by the Council of Europe refers to the approach in the employment of Romani people. The report mentions several ways in which Romani people in Macedonia manage to provide some kind of an income for their families. The jobs mentioned are the traditional crafts such as blacksmith, rope-maker and musician, then their ability to create the jobs themselves like trading or selling things in the streets. Romani people do the worst jobs that are the least paid in the labor market. In March 2004, a survey for The Romani Economic Forum about the social and economic problems and the potentials of the Romani people was conducted (Romani Economic Forum, 2004). The main conclusions were that Romani people live mainly on welfare, whereas the greatest number of the unemployed work as stall sellers, or offer other kind of services.

Research on the problem of unemployment among Roms to date has just discussed the general issues. The reasons for unemployment were located both inside and outside the Romani community, but without offering particular analyses of the problem. Therefore, our team decided to research the particular motives for employment of unemployed Roms.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research was carried out in three phases and covers three groups of participants: (1) employed and unemployed Roms who took part in the focus group discussions about employment problems and possible solutions, (2) unemployed Roms and (3) the employees from the Employment Agency, who were given questionnaires for the needs of the research.

The focus group participants were selected so that they meet the heterogeneity criterion in respect to educational level, age and sex. Focus groups were held in 5 cities in the Republic of Macedonia : Skopje, Bitola, Kumanovo, Prilep and Tetovo. The sample of unemployed Roms consists of 382 participants (67% men and 33% women) from Skopje, Bitola, Vinica, Kočani, Gostivar, Kičevo, Kumanovo, Prilep, Tetovo, Štip (Table 1). The participants from the previously selected cities were chosen by the “door-to-door” system, to meet the most important criterion: to be unemployed during the research period. The sample is heterogeneous with respect to the participants’ level of education. 17.8% have no education, 50.8% have accomplished primary education, 12% are with 3-year secondary education, 13.4% with 4-year secondary education, 1.3% with college education, 3.9% with university education.

City	individuals	%
Skopje	148	38.7
Kičevo	13	3.4
Kumanovo	31	8.1
Štip	35	9.2
Bitola	32	8.3
Prilep	47	12.4
Tetovo	39	10.2
Gostivar	18	4.7
Vinica	10	2.6
Kočani	9	2.4
Total	382	100

Table 1. Sample structure according to locality

The employees in the Employment Agency sample consists of 41 suitably selected individuals in several cities in the Republic of Macedonia (Skopje, Kumanovo, Bitola, Prilep, and Tetovo).

The questionnaires for the unemployed Roms and for the Employment Agencies were prepared by the Expert Group on Employment upon defining the research problem.

The Research Process

The entire process was conducted and carried out by, with, and for Roms and for the first time expresses a Romani point of view, along with a certain expert opinion of the problem. The process began with a workshop for defining the research priorities. The workshops helped identify the research problem, and to design the two questionnaires – one for the unemployed Roms and the other for the Employment Agency, as well as the focus groups questions. Based on the experience of the pilot research, the final improvement and corrections were done prior to field research.

The research took place in the course of May 2005. Previously trained pollsters administered the questionnaire directly to the participants. Reading the questions and the given alternatives, and noting down the answers was done mostly by the pollsters. When needed, the participants were given additional explanations of the less familiar words, in accordance to a previously agreed procedure. In the places where Romani language was predominant, the entire procedure was conducted in Romani. The participants were guaranteed anonymity.

The respondents employed in the Employment Agency filled out the questionnaire individually and were also granted anonymity of their individual answers.

The focus group participants were asked for their agreement to record the discussions (to allow better analysis of their responses) and to take photos for the files.

RESULTS

Unemployed Roms research results

Most of the participants are at the age when they are in the peak of their physical and mental capability: 54% between 26 and 45, 33% up to 25, and 13% above 45. As many as 43.7% live in families¹ whose total monthly income does not exceed 3000 denars, whereas 35.3% have a monthly income of 6000 denars (Table 2). More than half of the participants (56%) said that welfare is their main source of income.

1. The research of the Expert Group on Health indicates that Romani families consist on the average of 4-5 members

	individuals	%
From 1000-3000 den	167	43.7
From 300-6000 den	135	35.3
above 6000 den	75	19.7
No answer	5	1.3
Total	382	100

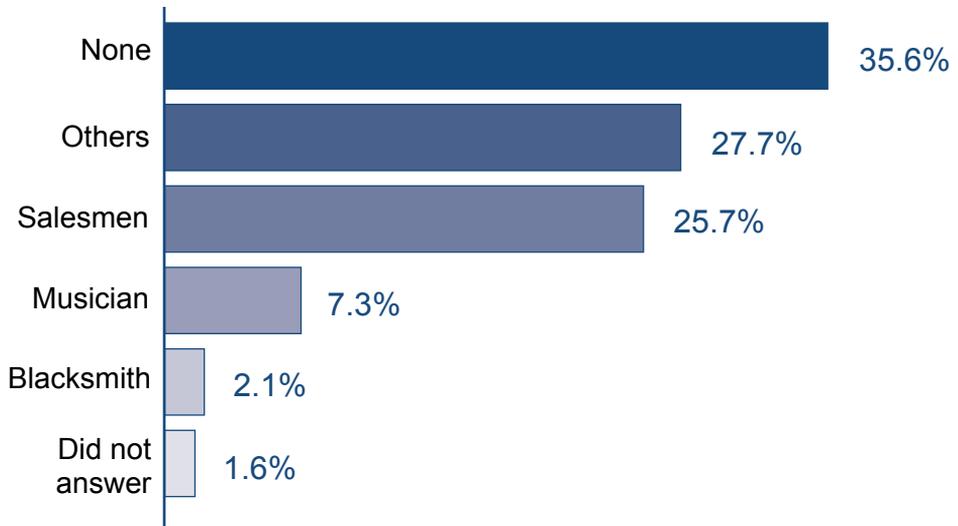
Table 2. Average family monthly income

Most of the participants were not unemployed just during the research period. 70.7% of them said that they have never had an opportunity at all to get a job, when asked if they had ever worked somewhere. Most of the ones who said they used to have a job, reported that they had been employed in a private company (Table 3).

	individuals	%
Haven't worked anywhere	270	70.7
Public company	43	11.3
Private company	69	18.0
Total	382	100

Table 3. Where have you worked so far?

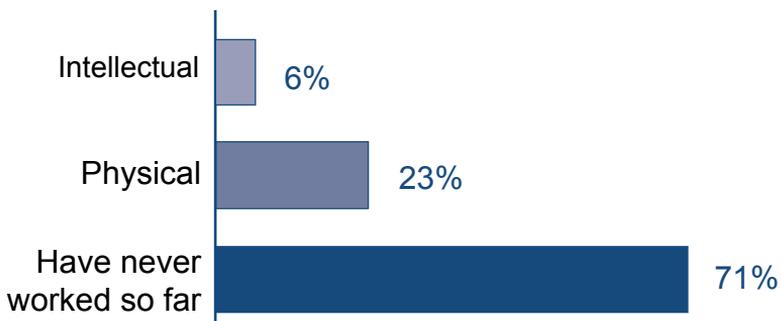
One of the aims of our research was to discover the existing professions Romani people have acquired both by means of formal or informal education. Most of the people who have completed 3-year secondary education are in these professions: salesmen (16.3%), textile workers (14.3%), metal workers (12.3%), whereas the remaining 57.1% belong to various other kinds of jobs. The ones who have accomplished 4-year secondary education are mostly electrical, economy or medical technicians.



Graph 1. What crafts are you good at?

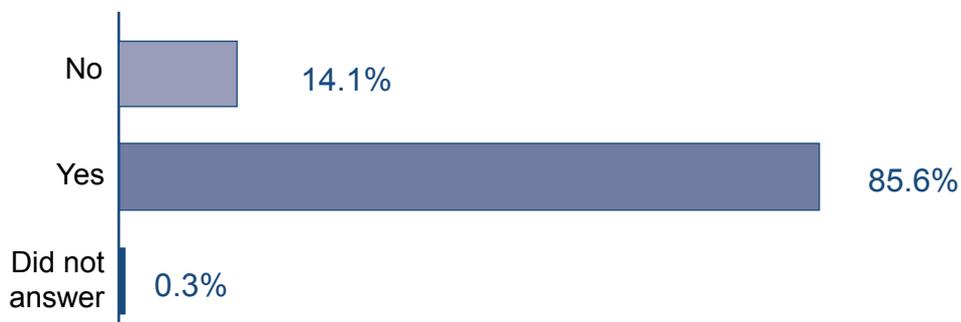
When asked what crafts they can perform, 35.6% said that they cannot perform any craft. Most of the participants said that they are skilled in the trade business (Graph 1).

Graph two presents the percentage of people who have never had a job so far (71%), and the percentage of people who have had jobs, and whether they were intellectual or physical jobs.



Graph 2. What kind of jobs have you had so far?

Graph 3 shows the percentage of people who claim that they regularly register with the Employment Agency.



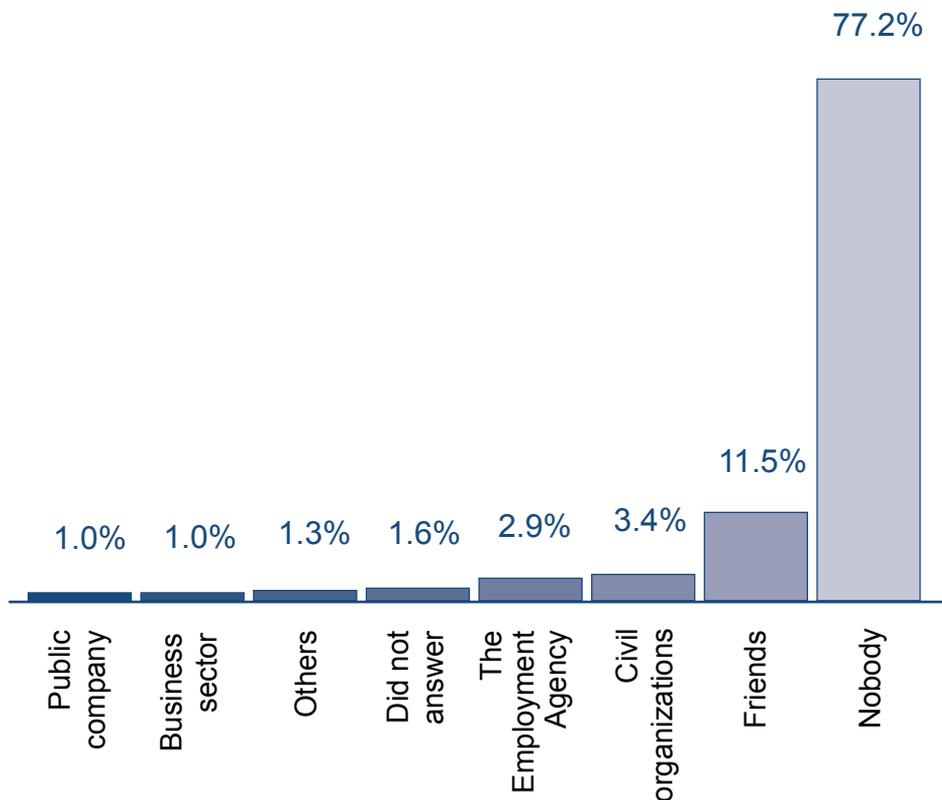
Graph 3. Do you regularly register with the Employment Agency?

Table 4 presents in the length of time for which respondents have been registered with the Employment Agency. Most of them (38.2%) have been registered for more than 6 years.

	individuals	%
1-2 ago	50	13.1
3-4 ago	36	9.4
5-6 ago	45	11.8
More than 6 years ago	146	38.2
More than 6 years ago	65	17.0
Did not answer	40	10.5
Total	382	100

Table 4. How long have you been registered with the Employment Agency?

The analysis shows that 38.2% of the ones who regularly register with the Employment Agency have been waiting for employment for more than 6 years.



Graph 4. Have you been offered a job by someone?

Graph 4 shows the results with regard to possible job offers. Most of the participants (77.2%) have not been offered a job, whereas a small number of them have been offered a job by friends, Employment Agency, civil organizations, public companies or the business sector.

The following charts (no. 5, 6 and 7) show the findings regarding the participants' opinion whether they think it possible to find a job through an advertisement, with the help of friends or in an NGO.

	individuals	%
No	239	62.6
Yes	143	37.4
Total	382	100

Table 5. Do you think you can get a job through an advertisement?

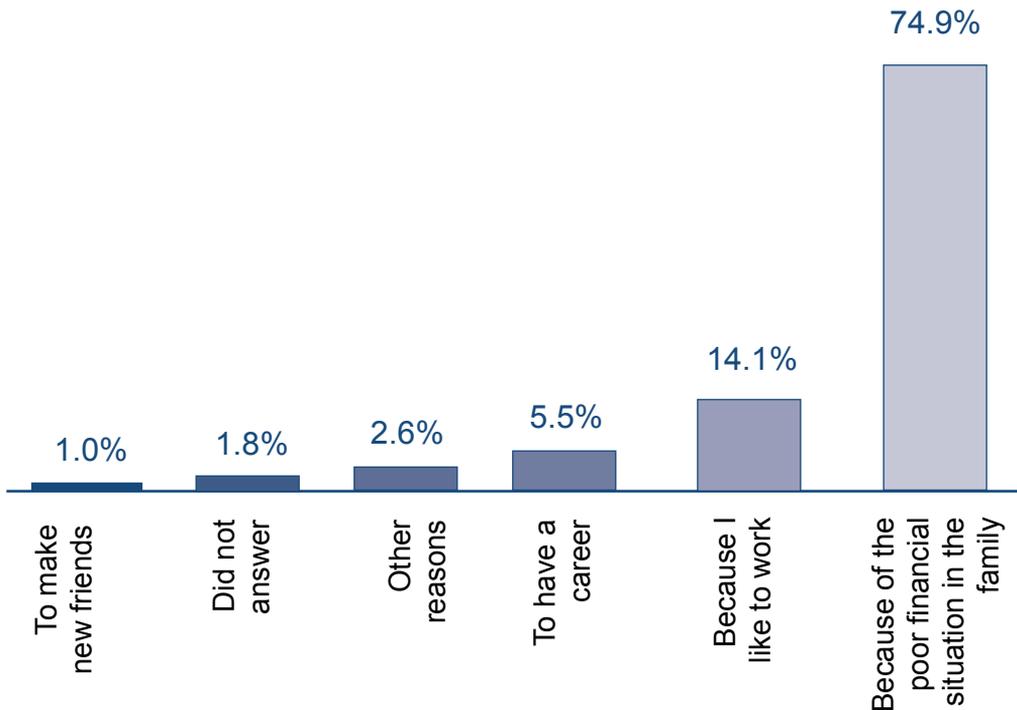
	individuals	%
No	278	72.8
Yes	104	27.2
Total	382	100

Table 6. Do you think your friends or relatives can help you get a job?

	individuals	%
No	344	90.1
Yes	38	9.9
Total	382	100

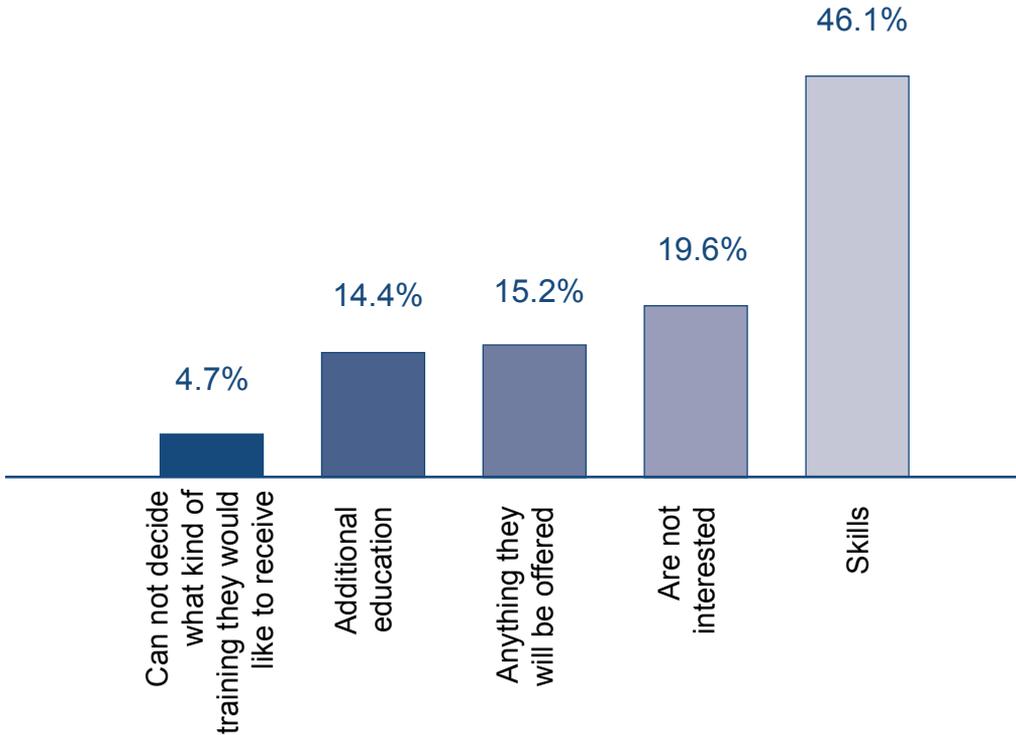
Table 7. Do you think you can get a job in an NGO?

It is interesting to point out that most of the participants have little faith that any of the offered options can have a positive effect on solving their employment problem. However, most of them (37.4%) still believe that it is possible to get a job by applying to an open competition, which is contrary to the prevailing stereotype in the country that one can only get a job with the help of friends or relatives.



Graph 5. What is your motivation to get a job?

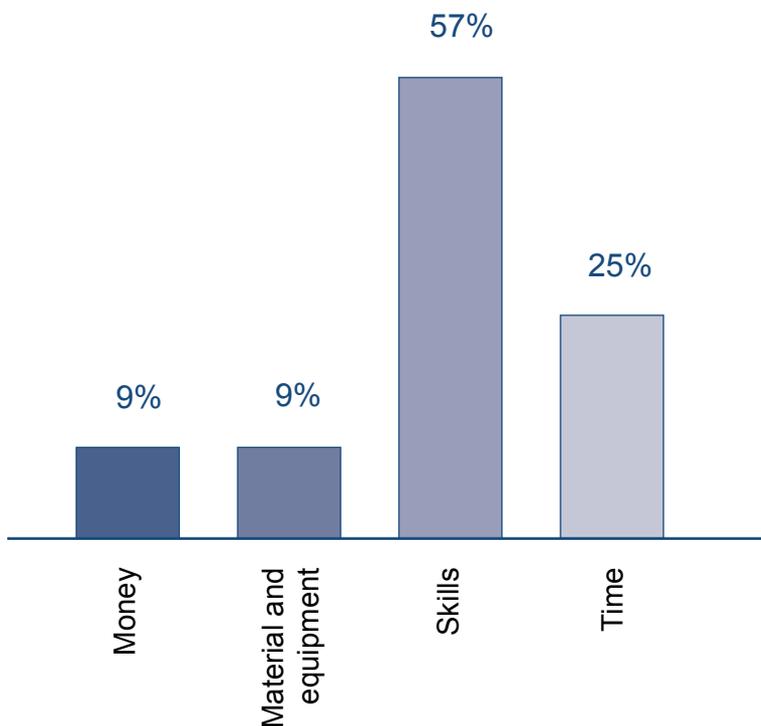
Asked about the reasons for which they want to find a job (Graph 5), respondents most frequently cited their poor financial situation (74.9%), but a high percentage of them also mentioned the wish to work (14.1%).



Graph 6. What kind of training would you like to receive?

Graph 6 shows the figures about the need to organize and conduct additional training for their more successful employment. Being asked about the kind of training they might need, almost half of the participants (46%) think that it would be best if they were taught various skills. 15% would accept any training, whereas 20% are not interested in being trained.

Most of the participants (62%) answered that they would invest their skills to get a job, and the least they would invest to get a job were: time (26%), material/equipment (9%) and money (9%). (Graph 7)



Graph 7. What would you invest to get a job?

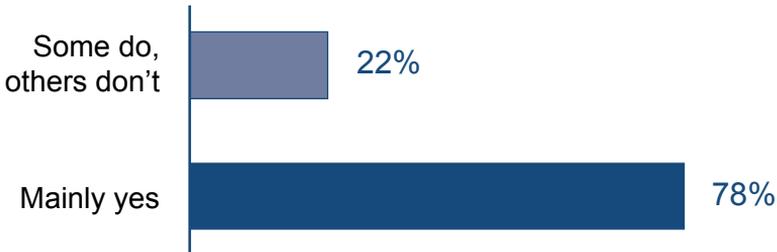
56.0% of those surveyed answered positively to the question whether they would like to start own business. 35.9% of the positive answers said that they would like to work as salesmen (Table 7). The answers to this question largely correspond with the answers about the skills and knowledge they have.

	individuals	%
Did not answer	168	44.0
Salesman	137	35.9
Blacksmith/locksmith	3	0.8
Hairdresser	8	2.1
Waiter/caterer	7	1.8
Others	59	15.4
Total	382	100

Table 7. What kind of business would you like to start?

Results of the research in the Employment Agency

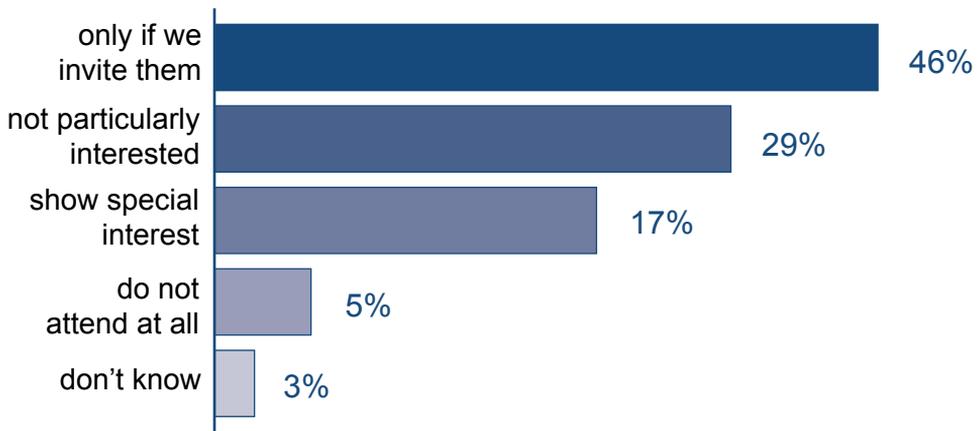
Asked whether Roms regularly register with the Employment Agency, 78% of Employment Agency representatives surveyed responded that Roms generally do so, and 22% said that some do whereas others don't (Graph 8).



Graph 8. Do Romani people apply in the Agency?

As for the educational level of the Roms seeking employment, we received the following answers: 44% think that most of the people who are seeking a job have no education, 44% think that people with primary education are those who most seek jobs, and only 10% think that the job-seekers are people with secondary school education. The remaining 2% say they are not confident to provide information on this question.

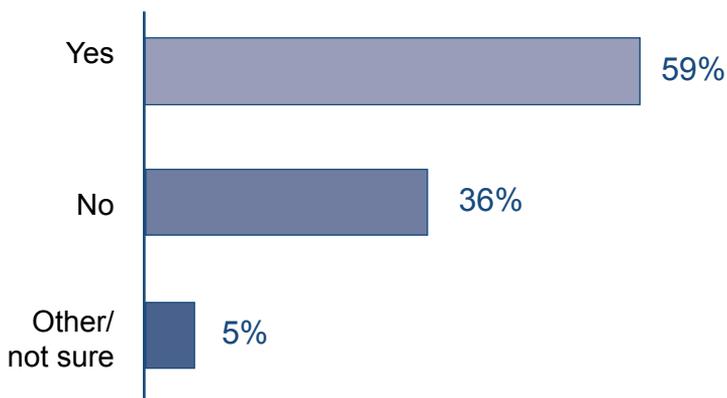
Asked whether Roms take part in the trainings the Agency conducts or organizes, we attained the following results: 5% said that Romani people never attend these trainings, 3% said they don't know, 29% said that Romani people come but lack particular interest. 46% of them said that Romani people come only when they are invited, whereas 17% think that they express a special interest in attending these trainings (Graph 9)



Graph 9. Do Roms participate in occupational training?

The main reason Roms can not get a job when applying in response to an advertisement, according to the respondents employed in the Employment Agencies, is their insufficient education (61%). 22% say it depends on the employer, 12% say it is because Roms are not well informed, and the remaining 5% have stated various other reasons.

More than half of the employed in the Employment Agency think that the positive discrimination in favor of unemployed Roms would improve the situation, 36% think that the situation will not improve, and 5% have different opinion or are not sure (Graph 10).



Graph 10. Do you think positive discrimination will improve the situation?

Asked whether Employment Agencies need help in locating jobs for unemployed Roms, 41% responded that they need help, 49% said they do not need help and they can make it on their own, whereas 10% were not sure. Asked what kind of help would be most suitable, the ones who answered positively said: 61% could not define the answer at the moment, 12% that Roms need information, 3% that they need help in additional training, and 24% stated something else not relevant in the context.

Results from the focus group research

54 Roms varying in education, sex and age took part in the work of the focus groups conducted in Skopje, Bitola, Prilep, Kumanovo and Tetovo.

Asked about the reasons for unemployment among Roms in the Republic of Macedonia, focus group participants cited : misunderstandings among themselves, employers' discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices about Roms,

lack of organization among Roms, inconsistent implementation of the Framework Agreement, Roms' absence from the places where these problems are resolved, lack of educated staff, political influence, lack of information and the generally bad financial situation.

Being asked what Roms can offer the labour market, the participants answered that at the moment the unemployed Romani people can work as manual laborers in the fields, woodcutters, musicians, salesmen, tailors, carpenters, building workers and cleaners. They pointed out that there is a small number of people with university and secondary school education.

Also discussed was what motivates Roms to look for a job. Most of the participants think that the motivation lies in the financial subsistence first of all, then a better life and providing funds for the family, but they also pointed out that some of them care for their career and look for a job because they want to prove themselves in the community.

Asked about the factors that influence the employment of members of the Romani community, focus group participants responded that Romani people must turn to themselves and open firms that will contribute to employing Roms. Civil organizations, state institutions, local government, and Romani political parties are also important. Furthermore, the local and global events gradually impose as important factors: The Decade of Roma Inclusion and Strategy for Roms in the Republic of Macedonia. The conclusion is that changes can be accomplished with the help of organized actions, access to information, more occupational training, opening small and medium-size enterprises and diminishing the illegal economy.

DISCUSSION

The research data and information show that various participants selected rather similar answers. Thus, the research results are similar regarding time waiting for a job, the educational level of the unemployed, the age, and the regular application in the local Employment Agencies.

Our aim was to discover whether the Romani population in Macedonia is interested in and actively seeking employment, opposite the prejudice that Roms do not like to work. Since earning is the basic motivation of every individual, the research had as a goal to reveal the specific needs of the Romani community with regard to employment, i.e., whether Romani attitudes and behavior are suitable to address the problem of unemployment.

Of the 382 participants, 378 reported that they would like to get a job, and 75% of them would do it to provide for the survival of their families. It is very clear that Roms in Macedonia need jobs, since they want to be independent and equal citizens in the system. However, the Romani community remains the one with the most serious problems with unemployment.

We think that this situation can be explained as a consequence of several factors, both internal and external.

Internal factors

The large number of answers about the bad financial situation of the Romani families is truly worrying. All the discussions about the motivation to get a job are reduced to the survival of the family. In this context, the priority is put on the community rather than the individual, which is not unusual if we are familiar with the tradition and the culture in the region. There are younger individuals who are determined to pursue a personal career, with this view typical for the ones who are better educated.

The world experience proves that poor people have difficulties in practicing democracy, as they are burdened with everyday problems. In his publication of the papers presented at conference held in Skopje in 2000, Jakimovski illustrates this with a quotation from Lipset: “the lower social circles are indifferent, rigid, and conservative about the political issues, they are a subject to the influence of the extreme religious sects and resist the democratic institutions” (Lipset, 1969:15; according to Jakimovski 2000:16). It is clear that, due to the fact that they have long been excluded and on the margins, Roms do not manage to break out of the circle of problems that are closely connected with each other. Thus, it is still a challenge to reveal the reasons for Roms’ situation; whether it lies in the internal relations inside the Romani community or rather in the overarching social system. This gives rise to a dilemma as to priorities in solving the problem knot – is it more important to ensure better education first, or to get more jobs? Better education implies suitable economic power, which means regular job or income in the family, and vice versa - competency and competition in the labor market takes suitable education.

Education is the key to the problems faced by the Romani population is also what makes them uncompetitive in the labor market. Romani families are not financially able to provide their children better education, with the situation so alarming that they cannot even afford to meet the basic needs for primary education. Although there have been some initiatives for granting scholarships in the past years, the results will be revealed in the years to follow. An additional hindrance for the Romani community is the fact that at the moment when children choose a secondary school, Romani children are usually channeled into the less attractive schools, which produce less productive and uncompetitive professionals for the labor market.

Incompetence is a great obstacle for the normal employment of Roms. This problem needs urgent steps to be solved. The problem cannot be solved in isolation and only by Roms; all the relevant international and domestic institutions must participate

in dealing with it. 88% of Roms have low education and no particular qualifications – so their part in the labor market is far from competitive. The barely 10% who have secondary education do not have the power to start the social changes that would be necessary to improve Roms' situation.

We also cannot neglect the facts that employers do not respect the law or that the laws are inefficient in addressing the problem of unemployment. The discussions in the focus groups confirmed that Roms accept discrimination and feel it simply could not have been otherwise. On the other hand, even if they wanted to fight discrimination, they lack power, money and faith in the institutions to sort things out to the end.

Roms stand even slimmer chances to get a job since many people get a job because of their ethnic or family origin². Getting a job based on the ethnic origin is a special problem, and it is a result of the numerous social, cultural, traditional, and recently even political reasons. It is not seldom that there is a discriminatory behavior when employment of Romani people is in question. However, these instances are skillfully hidden behind legislative incompetence and institutions. Recently, there have been open statements claiming that employers avoid employing Romani people for various reasons. What is worse, at moments one can feel self-discrimination³ in the community, or beliefs that put the state in the role of a repressive apparatus, rather than an apparatus that offers its citizens services. The focus group discussions confirmed that there is enough awareness to start action in order to solve the problems in the Romani community. Mistrust in the system as well as in the Romani community itself makes it more difficult and weakens the chances for the integration of Romani people. There have been efforts to put the views of existing Romani structures together to create a single lobby, but it is a difficult process. In spite of the fact that many domestic and foreign mediators have offered help, there has hardly been any progress.

The research shows that most of the Roms who used to work (79.1%) engaged in manual labor, whereas only 20.9% performed intellectual jobs. This leads to two possible conclusions: a) at the moment, most Roms offer physical work on the labor market or b) the employers need Roms just to do the hard or simple jobs. Such a dilemma deserves special attention and further investigation.

2. In the Republic of Macedonia it is easier to get a job with the help of friends or relatives, and people prefer to employ someone from the same ethnic group.

3. The notion of self-discrimination describes the following phenomenon: As a result of the internalization of negative stereotypes held about Roms by the surrounding population, Roms give up in advance on looking for work because they are convinced that they will lose any given career opportunity as soon as their ethnicity becomes known. For these reasons, many individuals do not even apply for work, and particularly not for attractive opportunities.

External Factors

Roms do not have suitable organizational structures to take active part in the social and economic transformation of the system. We can say that their group had no influence at all in the most important moments over the events in the country. On the other hand, we must point out that the transition produced unemployment and made the situation of the proverbially poor Romani people even worse. Being the poorest citizens, Roms cannot cope with institutional negligence, political and institutional corruption and hidden discrimination. These are the main factors Roms have had to face in the course of the 15-year transitional period, without effort to resist. The political and the civil organizations motivate and encourage Roms to find a way out of the situation. There are certain local and short-term initiatives that do not produce long-term results. This is usually due to the discontinuity of measures which depend on foreign funds.

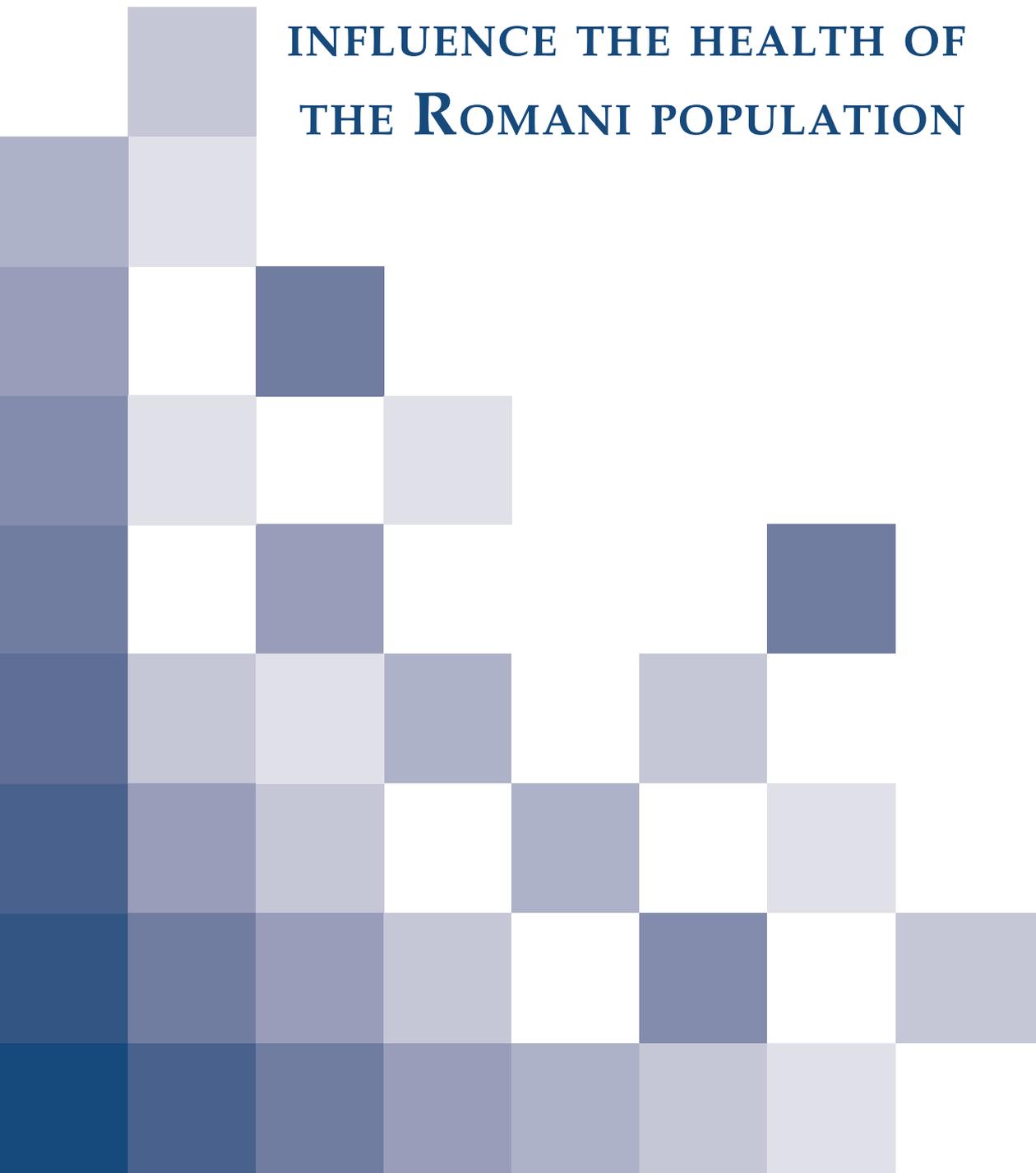
The answers of the respondents employed in the Employment Agency give the impression that some Roms do not register regularly, and we wonder what the reason for this is. Again, it is obvious that the lack of education is a critical problem that influences the possibility to realize personal rights and to take advantage of the possibilities the system offers. We can also conclude that the Employment Agencies do not offer proper information and mediation in the process of applying for a job. It is worrying that 22% of the people who work in the Employment Agencies do not care whether Romani people apply or not. The role of the local Employment Agencies has changed since from 2005, they will be more active in the mediation, change of qualification and additional qualification of the unemployed, but thus far this has not brought any obvious changes in the Romani community.

It is clear that Roms still have to fight stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination in the environment and the people around them. The past events affect the present situation. Roms strongly believe that the state should provide affirmative steps to include them in the social life of the country. Everyone, including the Employment Agency, agrees that affirmative measures will significantly improve the situation. The local agencies, just like the rest of the state agencies, have not developed a system of cooperation with the community. It is crucial to cooperate with the community, especially when dealing with vulnerable groups like this. Therefore lobby groups can in a way improve the situation.

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VACCINATION AND HABITS THAT INFLUENCE THE HEALTH OF THE ROMANI POPULATION



INTRODUCTION

Health is one of the essential human needs. It is a precondition for the success of an individual in the society, as well as a condition for happiness throughout life. Enjoying the highest possible standard of health is a right of every human being, regardless of religion, race, sex, political convictions or economic and social status.

Medicine has followed the development of this understanding of health and in the past, as well as today, efforts have been made to fully explain this term, so that today health is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a state of full physical, psychological and social welfare, and not only as absence of illness and incapability.

This definition clearly indicates that besides physical and mental health, social welfare, too, is a fundament of health. This means that the preservation of health requires a balance to be maintained between physiological processes inside the human body and the environment, or more precisely, the family, the community and in general, the country in which a person lives.

Recent political occurrences and the poor economic situation in the Republic of Macedonia are the reasons for which emphasis has not been placed on the improvement of the health system, leading directly to a poor state of health within the entire population, and especially among the more vulnerable groups in the society, including the Roms.

With regard to the state of health of Roms in the Republic of Macedonia, we should keep in mind certain specifics that stand out in the general picture of the health situation in the country. These result from the poor socio-economic conditions in which Roms live and the low education level, as well as the high unemployment rate. All these factors further aggravate the health situation of the Romani population in the Republic of Macedonia.

In addition to these factors, the health condition of the Roms is also directly and indirectly influenced by the culture, historical habits and customs, and lifestyle of the Romani population itself.

Major factors in the aggravation of the health condition of the Romani population are the reduction of governmental aid in this area, the reduction of aid for the unemployed and emigration. In the transition period in the Republic of Macedonia, a large number of Romani families left the country in search for a better life elsewhere, but have returned through a process of mandatory repatriation. In the meantime, a large number of them were dropped from the Employment Agency's documentation, losing their health insurance as a result. On the other hand, the new procedure for unemployment registration appears to be a problem, since

many Roms fail to register on the scheduled terms, and thus lose the right to register, health insurance and the “blue cards” (insurance coupons) altogether for a period of two years.

The health condition of children is affected in a similar fashion. By law, health care of the children is an obligation of their parents, who are, on the other hand, unable to pay greater attention to their children’s psychophysical development as a result of the difficulties they face in the everyday battle for survival. This may lead to a worsening of their health. Due to the insufficient inclusion of Romani children within the regular educational process, systematic monitoring of their health status (vaccination, systematic medical checkups) is lacking, leading to an even further deterioration of their health, since they are excluded from the regular health promotion program.

RESEARCH GOALS

All of the above-mentioned reasons are only a part of the problems faced in this area by the the Romani population in the Republic of Macedonia. They exert a major influence on the poor health condition of this population, and particularly on Romani children.

According to a UNICEF research (1996), mortality among Romani children is twice that of other ethnic groups. The existence of such a health condition among the Romani population in the Republic of Macedonia, differing significantly from that of the rest of the population, is itself alarming. It is obviously necessary to take timely and adequate preventive measures in order to prevent the further deterioration of the health of the Romani population.

ECMI’s (European Centre for Minority Issues) Expert Group on Health came to a conclusion that with the right approach, or more precisely, with thorough research into the problems which will lead to the adoption of appropriate measures, it is possible to improve the health condition of the Romani population in the Republic of Macedonia.

The Expert Group on Health decided that the first step should be research on the vaccination of the Romani children and the way it is related to dietary habits, personal health care and frequent illness of the Romani population.

Except for a few smaller research projects carried out by non-governmental organizations, no significant research has yet been done on the topic of the health of the Romani population. The Republic Institute of Public Health (a public health care organization), which houses all the data on vaccination and health status from healthcare institutions throughout the country, does not have any data that treat the Romani population in particular. According to the available data, in the year 2004, immunization had been performed on 95.28% of the children in the country.

In a study supported by UNICEF, which, besides other areas, covered the health condition and the vaccination of the Romani population in the Republic of Macedonia, it was found that mothers do not know the precise order of the vaccines (Aloui et al. 1999). Only 9.3% knew the approximate age of vaccination against measles. This research also showed that 38.7% of respondents' children had diseases similar to pneumonia in the first month of their lives. This is due to many different factors, including the quality of the living space and air pollution.

The Expert Group on Health did not find any other data on the topic of the vaccination of the Romani children and its frequency or on the topic of diseases that frequently strike the Romani population and their food habits, meaning that our research is the first of its kind. Its goal is to make us learn more about Roms' situation regarding the vaccination of their children, as well as to reveal the possible causes of some of the diseases.

The gathered data could serve further, more systematic studies, but could also be of use for the creation of strategies and action plans by non-governmental organizations or government institutions aimed at improving the health condition and facilitating the overall integration of Roms in the Republic of Macedonia.

METHOD

Participants

In order to provide a representative sample, 800 participants from 400 families were surveyed, all coming from the 10 cities inhabited by most of the Romani population. (Table 1).

City	Number of participating families	Total participants	%
Bitola	32	64	8.0
Vinica	12	34	3.0
Gostivar	20	40	5.0
Kičevo	16	32	4.0
Kočani	12	24	3.0
Kumanovo	40	80	10.0
Prilep	40	80	10.0
Skopje	172	344	43.0
Tetovo	28	56	7.0
Štip	28	56	7.0
Total	400	800	100

Table 1. Structure of the sample according to locality

The questionnaire consisted of two parts, one designed for the mother to answer, and the other part for the father. However, due to the frequent absence of fathers, the whole questionnaires were usually answered by mothers. This resulted in a total number of 474 participating mothers and only 326 participating fathers, with the first and the second part of the questionnaire answered by 400 participants each (total of 800). Only parents with children younger than 18 took part in this health research.

This questionnaire was answered by 400 families, covering a total of 2173 individuals, with an average of 5.43 members in a family. The total of children younger than 18 was 959, with 63.3% of the total number of families having 4, 5 or 6 members.

Measuring instruments

The questionnaire for data acquisition is the basic instrument for the needs of this research. The research was conducted through a questionnaire made by the Expert Group on Health of the European Centre for Minority Issues, Skopje Regional Office.

The questionnaire itself consists of two parts. The first part refers to the vaccination of children, and the second one refers to the habits of the family with regards to food, living conditions, infrastructure and diseases related to living conditions. The questionnaire consists of 47 questions. The first 10 refer to general data, the following 10 to vaccination, with five of the questions in this group measuring the position of parents on the vaccination of their children. In the second part of the questionnaire, the first 10 questions refer to the social and economic conditions as well as to infrastructure, with the following 7 questions referring to the dietary habits. The remaining 9 questions refer to the health aspects and indicators that influence the situation of the Romani family.

Conducting the research

The research was conducted in the course of May and June 2005. The selection of participants was fully random, since families were selected in the houses on the left side of the street, with every third house visited. In the case of no parents present in the visited house, or no children under 18, the house next to the initially selected one was visited next. Those who wanted to fill in the questionnaire themselves were allowed to do so, but those were only few in number. Usually, the questions were read by the pollster and the participants were offered a choice among the answers on the questionnaire.

The pollsters conducting the research were Roms. In the areas where Romani language was spoken, the whole procedure was conducted in the Romani language. During the research process, the research workers often met to share the experiences they acquired.

The choice of Romani researchers was made in order to strengthen local research capacity, as well as because the Romani language made the research more understandable for the target group.

RESULTS

Vaccination of Romani children

The research results show that while the majority of children are vaccinated regularly, almost a quarter of them are not, and 7.4% of the children have not been vaccinated at all (Table 2).

We should also take into consideration the large number of irregularly vaccinated children. Out of a total of 959 children, 203 are not vaccinated regularly, which makes for a very large percentage (21.2%). When we add to this percentage the share of unvaccinated children (7.4%), we reach an alarming total percentage of 28.6% unvaccinated and irregularly vaccinated Romani children.

Vaccinated	Number of children	%
Regularly	685	71.4
Irregularly	203	21.2
Never	71	7.4
Total	959	100

Table 2. Regularity of vaccination

Besides the irregularity of vaccination and the significant percentage of unvaccinated children, the research also shows that about one third of the participants have a distorted view of the purpose of vaccination. If to this percentage we add the percentage of participants that have answered that they do not know what the vaccine is for, then we come to a disturbing percentage of 42% of the mothers that are either mistaken about the purpose of the vaccine, or have no knowledge about it whatsoever (Table 3).

What is the vaccine for?	Answer	%
Prevents contagion	86	21.5
Cures diseases	34	8.5
Prevents diseases	232	56.0
I don't know	48	12.0
Total	400	100

Table 3. The purpose of the vaccine

Crosschecking the data on the purpose of vaccination with the data on the regularity of vaccination (Table 4) yields the finding that only 50% of the mothers who do not know the purpose of the vaccine have regularly vaccinated children, while the percentage of regularly vaccinated children with mothers that believe that vaccines prevent contagion is 82.3%, and the percentage of regularly vaccinated children, whose mothers believe that vaccines cure diseases is 73.4%.

This indicates that children whose mothers are not familiar with the purpose of the vaccine are the least regularly vaccinated.

What is the vaccine for?	Have your children received all the vaccines so far?			Total
	Regularly	Irregularly	Have not received any	
Cures contagions	156	31	5	192
	81.3%	16.1%	2.6%	
Cures diseases	55	16	5	76
	72.4%	21.0%	6.6%	
Prevents diseases	403	115	31	549
	73.4%	21.0%	5.6%	
I don't know	71	41	30	142
	50.0	28.9%	21.1%	
Total	685	203	71	959

Table 4. Vaccination purposes and regularity

The relationship between the regularity of vaccination and knowledge of its purpose is in turn related to the level of education of the mother. In this context, the gathered data also show that the respondents who were not familiar with the purpose of the vaccine had usually completed a lower level of education, or were even illiterate. For example, the respondents who had not finished primary school had twice as irregularly vaccinated children as respondents who had completed primary education, and ten times higher irregularity compared to respondents with a secondary school degree (Table 5). This clearly shows us how the regularity of vaccination of children is closely related to the parents' level of educational attainment.

Level of education of the mother	Mothers	Have your children received all the vaccines so far?			Total number of children
		Regularly	Irregularly	Have not received any	
No education	250	412	169	62	643
		64.0%	26.4%	9.6%	
Elementary school	124	223	32	9	264
		90.5%	13.0%	3.4%	
Secondary school	22	44	1		45
		97.7%	2.2%		
Advanced school	1	2	1		3
University degree	3	4			4
Total	400	685	203	71	959

Table 5. Vaccination regularity and levels of education

The connection between level of educational attainment and regularity of vaccination becomes apparent when comparing the data on school attendance with the data on vaccination regularity (Table 6). 43.5% of the children that do not attend school are vaccinated irregularly, and 14% of them are not vaccinated at all. At the same time, 11.4% of the children that attend school are vaccinated irregularly, and only 0.8% of them are not vaccinated at all. This fact clearly shows us that the vaccination problem occurs with the children that are not included in the educational process.

Do the children regularly attend school?	Have your children received all the vaccines so far?			Total
	Regularly	Irregularly	Have not received any	
Yes	323	42	3	368
	87.8%	11.4%	0.8%	
No	85	87	28	200
	42.5%	43.5%	14.0%	
Total	408	129	31	568
	71.8%	22.7%	5.5%	

Table 6. School attendance and vaccination regularity

The inclusion of Romani children in the educational system has a positive influence on the regularity of their vaccination. An indicator for this is the 87.8% of the children who regularly attend school that have received all regular vaccinations.

Sending vaccination invitations by mail from the competent health care institutions to the parents also has a great influence on the regularity of vaccination. Linking the data gathered on this topic with the data on vaccination regularity (Table 7) shows that 85.5% of the invited families have their children vaccinated regularly, while the same thing applies to only 47% of the uninvited families (whatever the reason for the absence of invitations for them).

Have you received vaccination invitations for your children?	Have your children received all the vaccines so far?			Total
	Regularly	Irregularly	Nave not received any	
Yes, for all of them	527	78	11	616
	85.5%	12.7%	1.8%	
Yes, for some of them	73	56	33	162
	45.0%	34.6%	20.4%	
For none of them	85	69	27	181
	47.0%	38.1%	14.9%	
Total	685	203	71	959
	71.4%	21.2%	7.4%	

Table 7. Vaccination invitations and vaccination regularity

We can conclude this battery of questions with the ascertainment that a significant number of Romani children are being vaccinated irregularly, or even remain entirely unvaccinated. This alarming situation is influenced by many factors, but those which emerge from our analysis as crucial are the inclusion of the children in the educational system, the parents' level of educational attainment, and the way they are informed about the purpose of the vaccine. These realizations point out the areas where action is needed in order to raise the degree of regularity with which Romani children receive vaccines, improving their general health condition in so doing.

Dietary habits

The health condition of the people greatly depends on the quality of the diet and on the manner in which it is consumed. The presence of certain food products in the diet, such as meat, fish, milk, vegetables etc. is particularly important. In that

direction, the data gathered through this research shows that Romani families use very little meat in their usual diet. 44.5% have meat once a week, while 21.3% usually have no meat through the week (Table 8).

How many times a week?	Meat	Fish	Milk
Never	85	153	117
	21.2%	38.2%	29.3%
Once	178	176	99
	44.5%	44.0%	24.8%
2-3 times	112	54	91
	28.0%	13.5%	22.8%
Every day	21	7	81
	5.3%	1.8%	20.3%
I don't know	4	10	12
	1.0%	2.5%	3.0%
Total	400	400	400
	100%	100%	100%

Table 8. The weekly presence of meat, fish and milk in the diet

The presence of fish in their diet is even less frequent. It is important to note here that when asking this question, the kind of fish (fresh or canned) was not considered important.

The presence of milk in the diet is slightly better in comparison with the presence of fish and meat. Still, even milk is rare on the table of the majority of the tested Romani families. The research shows us that 29.3% of them do generally not buy milk at all, 24.8% buy milk once a week, and 20.3% buy milk every day.

The weekly presence of fresh fruit and vegetables in the diet is also unsatisfactory. The research shows us that the Romani families use very little fresh fruit in their diet. 30.5% of them do not buy fruit at all, while 42.5% buy fresh fruit once a week (Table 9.).

How many times a week?	Fruit	Vegetables
Never	122	61
	30.5%	15.3%
Once	170	144
	42.5%	36.0%
2-3 times	80	150
	20.0%	37.5%
Every day	21	40
	5.3%	10.0%
I don't know	7	5
	1.7%	1.2%
Total	400	400
	100%	100%

Table 9. The weekly presence of fresh fruit and vegetables in the diet

Vegetables are present 2-3 times a week in the diet of 37.5% of the participants, while 36% of them have stated that they buy vegetables once a week and 15.3% of them have stated that they do not buy vegetables at all.

Unemployment and the poor economic situation make it impossible for the majority of the surveyed Roms to visit fast-food restaurants frequently. Instead, they try to satisfy their food needs with their modest finances, usually at home, by making dough-based meals. The data in Table 10 provide a numerical illustration of this issue.

How many times a week?	Fast food	Dough-based meals
Never	233	26
	58.3%	6.5%
Once	73	80
	18.3%	20.0%
2-3 times	52	198
	13.0%	49.5%
Every day	16	81
	4.0%	20.2%
I don't know	26	15
	6.5%	3.8%
Total	400	400
	100%	100%

Table 10. Consumption of fast food and dough-based meals

The research shows that the majority of the Romani families, or 58.3% of them, do not consume fast food at all. Only 4% of them consume fast food every day. On the other hand, the gathered data show that dough-based food is rather frequently used in the diet of the Romani population. It was also found that 49.5% of the surveyed Roms eat dough-based meals 2-3 times a week.

Living conditions and the general hygienic and sanitary situation

Our findings point out that the Roms live in substandard conditions in small-sized homes which often do not offer the necessary privacy and are not adequate in volume for the number of people living inside. Often, a single house can be the home of several families. Most Roms surveyed, or 69%, live within 10-50 square meters as one of 4-6 inhabitants on the average. This kind of a situation greatly influences the health of the Romani population.

The bathroom and health. The research shows that 66 houses, or 16.5% of the 400 researched houses, are not connected to the public sewer system. This number is relatively small, since the participants live in urban areas and in larger cities, but it still imposes a great risk of the emergence of some contagious diseases. The number of households equipped with bathrooms is also small. This is another obstacle to regular proper hygiene. All of this negatively influences the general health situation, which is frequently disturbed by infections of the gastrointestinal tract accompanied by diarrhea. This is illustrated by the data shown in Table 11, and especially by the fact, that out of 161 families that have no bathroom, 27 people or 16.8%, answered that there is a person with diarrhea in the family.

Do you own a bathroom?	Number of people in the family suffering from diarrhea						Total
	None	1	2	3	7	10	
Yes	221	11	7				239
	92.5%	4,5%	3,0%				100%
No	134	17	5	2	2	1	161
	83.2%	10,6%	3,1%	1.25%	1.25%	0.6%	100%
Total	355	28	12	2	2	1	400

Table 11. The presence of bathrooms and the number of people in the family suffering from diarrhea

In a similar way, the lack of a bathroom also reflects on the presence of other contagious diseases, such as infectious hepatitis (jaundice). It is a widely known fact that this disease easily appears where personal hygiene is not on the proper level. It is also known as the “disease of the unclean hands”, as it is commonly

distributed through the consumption of food with dirty hands. Our research shows that this disease is more frequent by a factor of 7.2% in the homes that lack a bathroom, compared to the ones that are equipped with bathrooms, as shown in Table 12.

Do you have a bathroom?	Hoe many people are suffering from hepatitis in your family?				Total
	None	1	2	3	
Yes	225	12	1	1	239
	94.2%	5.0%	0.4%	0.4%	100%
No	140	20		1	161
	87.0%	12.4%		0.6%	100%
Total	365	32	1	2	400

Table 12. The presence of a bathroom and infectious hepatitis

Usually, Romani settlements are located on the margins of cities, often on a hillside or by a river. The infrastructure is usually not complete and often there is no drainage system, so that the wastewater freely runs through the streets and between houses. These are potential sources of various types of bacteria and insects which carry infectious diseases. Children are often near these waters, playing or even bathing in them. As a result, the probability of infection is enormous. Diarrhea is very common with these children.

Besides this, a part of the surveyed households are not connected to a proper sewer system, which also leads to an increasing frequency of diarrhea and other infectious diseases among family members. Out of a total of 400 surveyed families, 55 have no connection to the sewer system. The presence of diarrhea is 6.5% more frequent in these households than in households that are connected to the sewer system.

Are you connected to the sewer system?	Number of people in the family with diarrhea						Total
	None	1	2	3	7	10	
Yes	300	21	11	2			334
	39.8%	6.3%	3.3%	0.6%			100%
No	55	7	1		2	1	66
	83.3%	10.7%	1.5%		3.0%	1.5%	100%
Total	355	28	12	2	2	1	400

Table 13. Connection to the sewer system and infectious diseases

Moisture and health. Another lacking sanitary precondition for the health of many Romani families is moisture, which is greatly present in the Romani households. Out of a total of 400 families participating in the study, 251 or 62.8% live in humid conditions (indicated by unpleasant smell and moist walls). Over the course of the field research, it has been noticed that most of the Romani houses are constructed out of old materials. These houses are dilapidated, made out of inadequate materials and usually poorly built. Often the location of the houses is near rivers, brooks, or streams of wastewater which run freely between the houses. This causes the spreading of an unpleasant smell through the houses, and is also the reason for the dampness in the walls.

Moisture in homes is a significant factor for the emergence of certain diseases of the respiratory system. There is an obvious connection between moisture in the houses and the presence of bronchitis. In humidity-affected homes, the number of people ill from bronchitis is 5.1% larger than in households where such moisture is absent (Table 14).

Is there moisture in your home?	Number of family members ill from bronchitis					Total
	None	1	2	3	4	
Yes	164	68	15	1	3	251
	65.4	27.0	6.0	0.4	1.2	100%
No	105	41	3			149
	70.5	27.5	2.0			100%
Total	269	109	18	1	3	400

Table 14. Moisture in houses and the presence of bronchitis

Treatment. The described health and sanitary conditions, as well as the financial condition of the participating Romani families, are reflected in the way they treat the above-mentioned diseases. The gathered data show that the majority of the 400 families, that is 237 of them or 59.3%, stated that some family member needs to take medicine regularly, while 35.3% of families do not have a member who takes medicine on a daily basis (Table 15).

Is there a family member with a daily need to take medicine?	Answer	%
Yes, all of them	22	5.5
Yes, some of them	237	59.2
No, none of them	141	35.3
Total	400	100

Table 15. Daily need for medicine

Contrary to this need to take the proper medicine regularly, the majority of the surveyed Roms are not financially able to purchase and then take the needed medicine. A quarter of them cannot afford the necessary medicine at all, and almost two thirds purchase only some of the prescribed medicine.

How much of the prescribed medicine can you afford?	Answer	%
All	39	9.8
Some	259	64.7
None	102	25.5
Total	400	100

Table 16. Purchase of necessary medicine

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the last ten years or so, the country had no significant opportunities to adopt adequate measures addressing the health of the Romani population. With the beginning of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the government's adoption of the Strategy for Roms in the Republic of Macedonia in early 2005, however, new opportunities have been created to take the measures necessary for the improvement of the quality of health care of Roms as a particularly vulnerable group.

The data gathered through this empirical research give the opportunity to single out some of the more important conclusions that can be of great importance for the undertaking of further appropriate measures.

In this direction, our research shows that:

- Roms usually live in ghettos

- they usually live in old, dilapidated and substandard homes of a poor construction quality, in which they lack the fundamental living conditions. Living in such small and unsanitary residences which themselves represent a risk factor constitutes a reason for the emergence of certain diseases.
- vaccination of children is highly irregular, and a certain percentage of them is not vaccinated at all. The problem of unvaccinated children is a serious one and needs a serious and analytical consideration to reveal the reasons for its occurrence.
- there appears to be a connection between the mother's level of educational attainment and the regularity with which their children receive vaccinations on the one hand and mother's unfamiliarity with the purpose of the vaccine on the other. Children who attend school irregularly are also subject to irregular vaccination or not vaccinated at all. The data gathered on this topic match the results of previous studies.
- with regard to nutrition, it is noticeable that the Romani population uses more dough-based food and less meat, milk, fish and fresh fruits in the daily diet, and it is a common answer that Roms buy these products only once a week. The irregular diet, which is a consequence of Roms' poor social and economic condition, is a fundamental reason for reduced immunity and a precursor to further deterioration in the health condition of the Romani population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The data gathered through this research point out certain problems with the state of health of the Romani population in the Republic of Macedonia. A conclusion is that these problems require special attention as well as great seriousness and precision in approach in order to fully define and elaborate the health-related problems Roms face. Nevertheless even the data resulting from our research sounds an alarm for undertaking concrete steps towards the improvement of the health condition of the Romani population.

With regard to vaccination, it would be desirable to organize visiting-nurse service teams which would take care of the children that have been brought back from Western countries and would make sure that they are vaccinated and registered while also taking care of those who have not yet been registered. The services responsible for sending invitations to vaccination should also perform their tasks more responsibly, as a large number of families have stated that for whatever reason they do not receive such invitations. Frequently, health workers verbally pass information about coming vaccinations to the mothers. As a result, it often happens that the mothers forget the date of vaccination.

It is a fact that a large number of Romani mothers have a relatively low level of education and are not familiar with the purpose of the vaccines. It is therefore necessary to find a way for them to be familiarized with the purpose as well as the timing of vaccinations.

The gathered data also show that infectious diseases are becoming even more frequent within the Romani population. All these are a consequence of the poor social and economic situation. The activities that lead to their elimination include general feature of development, but it remains necessary to act towards improving social and health maintenance measures aimed at the Romani population as a particularly vulnerable group.

All this points to the need for the Ministry of Health to pay greater attention in the future to improving the quality of health maintenance, primarily public health, and to create the conditions for equal access to healthcare services – particularly for the more vulnerable groups in the society -- to bring about an improvement in the state of health condition of the Romani population in the Republic of Macedonia.

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**MEMBERS OF THE ROMANI EXPERT
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EXPERT GROUP ON EDUCATION

- **Fatma Bajram**, Skopje. An advanced student of education at the University of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Ms. Bajram worked for a Romani political party before commencing her university studies. During her career as a student, she has been active in the NGO sector, attending in particular to issues affecting Romani women and youth. Currently, she is a co-ordinator of a Romani Children's Centre in Skopje.
- **Ljatif Demir**, Skopje. Mr. Demir is an author of several publications, research papers, and essays on various aspects of Romani language and culture. For his literary accomplishments, Mr. Demir has received several awards. Additionally, he has delivered lectures on Romani language and culture in several European countries. Mr. Demir currently works as executive director of the Romani educational centre *Darhia* in Skopje.
- **Žaklina Durmiš**, Skopje. Trained as a lawyer, Ms. Durmiš is currently pursuing an MA in social work and social policy at the University of St. "Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje, where she has successfully completed several courses on civil society. She also works as a legal advisor for Romani families at the Caritas office in Skopje, as an assistant in a law office, and as a director of a project to provide educational support to Romani children and youth.
- **Ahmet Jašarevski**, Kumanovo. One of two leading activists in the Kumanovo-based Romani NGO *Drom*, Mr. Jašarevski has designed and implemented projects in pre-school, remedial, and adult education for the local Romani population. He also serves on the Country Working Group formed in preparation for the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Additionally, Mr. Jašarevski has taken part in events organized by the US-based NGO Project on Ethnic Relations (PER) toward developing a government strategy on Roms in Macedonia. He is also a member of the National Working Group for the Decade of Roma Inclusion.
- **Gjulsefa Kurteši**, Skopje. A university-trained primary school teacher, Ms. Kurteši worked at the "Brothers Ramiz and Hamid" school in the Romani-majority municipality of Šuto Orizari. She was also a member of the working group on human rights formed in the framework of the ECMI project "Securing Implementation of the Ohrid Agreement through Concrete Policy Action".
- **Sabina Mustafa**, Skopje. Ms. Mustafa is a student of journalism at the University of Skopje's law faculty. Having completed an extended internship in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, she now works on the staff of the Romani student magazine *Roma Index*. In addition, she took part in an internship programme within the World Bank, Skopje.
- **Robert Rustem**, Skopje. A final - year student of metallurgy, Mr. Rustem now works as an advisor on Romani issues in the Skopje mission of OSCE. With a broad range of experience gathered from his previous work in the NGO sector, Mr. Rustem has a special interest in conflict resolution, education, and intercultural studies.

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

EXPERT GROUP ON HEALTH

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

• *Afrodita Berat*, Skopje. A third-year medical student at the University of Skopje, Ms. Berat has been involved in several NGO-sector projects, including the Forum for the Integration of Roms' project on female virginity. Additionally, she works as a volunteer in the Skopje office of the International Organization for Migration, also providing advice to persons over 60 years of age in healthcare centres.

• *Džemile Berat*, Skopje. Since graduating from the University of Skopje's medical faculty, where she specialized in neuropsychiatry, Ms. Berat has participated in many professional seminars in Macedonia and abroad. At present, she serves as an external advisor to the Institute for Social Medicine in Skopje. Ms. Berat has also acted as a consultant on various projects in the NGO sector.

• *Atilan Etemi*, Tetovo. Mr. Etemi holds a degree in pharmacy from the Anadolu University in Turkey, where he graduated in 2001. He is currently employed within the public healthcare sector.

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

• *Arif Pini*, Gostivar. An advanced medical student in Skopje, Mr. Pini has been active in the NGO sector in Gostivar as well as in Skopje. Mr. Pini was also involved in projects concerning Romani children education.

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

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

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

EXPERT GROUP ON CIVIL RIGHTS

- *Redžepali Čupi*, Gostivar. Mr Čupi is a student at the Faculty of Law in Skopje. Since 2002, he has been a member of the Foundation "Open Society Institute Macedonia's" (FOSIM) Romani higher education programme, Romaversitas. Additionally, Mr Čupi has been involved in various projects aimed at improving the situation of the Romani population in Macedonia.

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

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

- *Ferki Demirovski*, Delčevo. A native of Eastern Macedonia, Mr Demirovski is also active in Central and Western Macedonia. In Central Macedonia, Mr Demirovski acted as a coordinator for a citizens' advising centre founded by the Romani NGO *Mesečina* to serve Skopje and Veles. On the other hand, Mr Demirovski studies public administration at the South East European University in Tetovo.

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

- *Idaver Memedov*, Veles. Mr Memedov graduated at the law faculty of the University of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Skopje. He also works in the office of the Macedonian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Skopje.

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

- *Senad Mustafov*, Delčevo. Originating in Eastern Macedonia, Mr Mustafov has worked with the Romani NGO *Phurt*. More recently, he has been chosen as a director of the (FOSIM) Romani higher education programme, Romaversitas. Additionally, Mr Mustafov is a final-year law student at the University of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Skopje.
- *Alma Mustafovska*, Kriva Palanka. After completing primary and secondary education in Kriva Palanka (northeastern Macedonia), Ms Mustafovska enrolled in and graduated from the law faculty of the University of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Skopje. Her concern with human rights in general and equal treatment of Roms in particular manifests itself both in her choice of profession and in her work in the NGO sector.
- *Amza Pini*, Gostivar. A native of Western Macedonia, Mr Pini completed secondary theology school in Skopje before moving on to a dual programme of study in theology and political science at the University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina where he graduated. Mr Pini has also been involved in various initiatives in the NGO sector.
- *Muhamed Toči*, Gostivar. A member of the presidency of the West Macedonian Romani NGO *Mesečina* since its founding in Gostivar in 1993, Mr Toči has specialized in human rights monitoring and the provision of legal aid. Most recently, he put his extensive experience in this area to use in designing the citizens' advising centres now in operation throughout the country. Additionally, Mr Toči has taken part in events organized by PER toward developing a government strategy on Roms in Macedonia.

EXPERT GROUP ON EMPLOYMENT

- *Gjulten Dalipovska*, Skopje. Ms Dalipovska is a final-year law student at the University of Skopje with a particular interest in women's human rights. In addition to her work experience relating to equal participation of Roms in public institutions in Macedonia, Ms Dalipovska is an able trainer in advocacy and lobbying. She works for the Ministry for Finance.
- *Vaska B. Mustafa*, Skopje. Employed as a journalist for the Romani-language section of Macedonian state radio, Ms. Mustafa has focused her work on problems faced by Macedonia's Romani population. She has also prepared in cooperation with UNHCR a radio programme for refugees, as well as material for the European Roma Rights Center in Budapest.
- *Enver Jonuz*, Skopje. Trained and employed as a social worker, Mr. Jonuz works in the Skopje municipality of Čair. Since 1997, he has also been a member of the amateur theatre group Roma.

- *Mabera Kamberi*, Tetovo. Ms. Kamberi's professional training and experience as a labour sociologist already constitute sufficient grounds for her selection to participate in the Expert Group on Employment. Adding to her qualifications are her interest in issues of gender, her membership in the Executive Committee of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the Advisory Program Committee of Romaversitas, and the Boards of the Roma Education Fund in Budapest and the Foundation "Open Society Institute Macedonia", as well as her employment with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.
- *Dilbera Kamberovska*, Kumanovo. President and founding member of the Kumanovo-based Romani women's NGO *Daja* since 1993, Ms. Kamberovska is one of Macedonia's leading Romani activists. Particularly successful have been *Daja's* vocational training initiatives, which Ms. Kamberovska designed.
- *Remzi Medik*, Bitola. His own youth and that of the NGO he co-founded notwithstanding, Mr. Medik has already proven his skills as a community organizer in Bitola. In the area of employment in particular, he has played a crucial role as a liaison between the local Employment Office and the Romani community. Mr. Medik has also taken part in events organized by PER toward developing a government strategy on Roms in Macedonia.
- *Nadir Redžepi*, Tetovo. Mr. Redžepi brings to the Expert Group on Employment his eight years of experience as a programme and project coordinator in the Romani NGO *Sonce*. In the past, he coordinated preparation of a shadow report on implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, as well as a micro-study on future employment policies for Roms in Macedonia. Mr. Redžepi is also a member of the National Working Group for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, preparing policy documents and presentations with national and broader regional application.
- *Samet Skenderi*, Gostivar. A founding member of and sectoral coordinator in the Romani NGO *Mesečina*, Mr. Skenderi currently serves as assistant coordinator on that organization's civil advisement centres project. Additionally, he serves as programme advisor to the civic association *Zaednički vrednosti*, and as a member of the group formed to write a shadow report on implementation of the Framework Convention on National Minorities in Macedonia. Mr. Skenderi is also a member of the Executive Board of the Macedonian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, as well as a member of the National Working Group for the Decade of Roma Inclusion.
- *Nijazi Elmazov*, Skopje. Graduated at the Faculty of Physical Education. An active member of the Romani NGO sector (worked for Anglunipe and Feryp), Mr Elmazov is interested especially in the areas of Romani education and employment. He has participated in many seminars on project development, discrimination and domestic violence.

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