

Registration and Possession of Personal Identification Documents as Preconditions for Better Education of Roma People, through Case Studies of the Settlements of Topaana and Sredorek in Skopje and Kumanovo



BEST PRACTICES
for
ROMA INTEGRATION
in the Western Balkans

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Topaana Settlement: Topaana is a small Roma community that is located at no more than 10 minutes walking from the center of Skopje. 99% of the 5,000 inhabitants of Topaana are Roma. Although the settlement is so close to the center of the capital, the community is a completely different world. For a long time, Topaana was a neglected part of the historical core of Skopje. Skopje and the country developed around this community, but the community itself remained isolated and poor. Today, more than 90% of all Roma in Topaana are receiving social financial assistance.

Sredorek Settlement: According to the 2002 Census, the Roma community in the Municipality of Kumanovo is comprised of 4,256 inhabitants. Sredorek is an exclusively Roma settlement with some 600 houses and more than 2,500 inhabitants. The majority of them are facing a number of challenges in the areas of infrastructure, living in sub-standard conditions and unregulated property rights. The high unemployment rates and devastating housing conditions, as well as dysfunctional families contribute to the high number of uneducated Roma living in this settlement, as well as a high percentage of children dropping out from school.

Contents

1. Executive summary		9
2. General information about Roma people		11
3. General information about possession of personal identification documents and education of Roma people		13
4. Legal framework		17
5. National normative framework		19
5.1. Analysis of the documents originating from the Roma Decade		20
5.2. International documents ratified by the Government		24
5.3. Zagreb Declaration		25
6. Analysis of international documents and activities in the field of education		27
7. Field survey		29
7.1. Survey methodology		29
7.2. Results from the questionnaires for parents		30
7.3. Analysis of interviews		35
8. Conclusions and recommendations		39
Annex 1 Questionnaire for parents		41
Annex 2 List of interviewed representatives of various institutions		45

List of Tables


- Table 1. Number of children – Total – 30
- Table 2. Did you encounter any problems in obtaining personal identification documents? – 31
- Table 3. If yes, what kind of problems did you encounter in obtaining personal identification documents? – 31
- Table 4. What is the biggest problem that you encounter in the procedure for obtaining personal identification documents? – 31
- Table 5. Do you think that the institutions provide sufficient assistance to the citizens in obtaining personal identification documents? – 32
- Table 6. Did you obtain your personal identification documents personally? – 32
- Table 7. If NO, who assisted you in the process of obtaining personal identification documents? – 32
- Table 8. Do all of your children attend school? – 33
- Table 9. If any of your children do not attend school, what are the reasons? – 33
- Table 10. Do any of your children attend extra-curricular activities? – 33
- Table 11. Do you have any children enrolled at a university? – 34
- Table 12. Do you receive any social cash benefits? – 34
- Table 13. Do you have health insurance (blue insurance slips)? – 34
- Table 14. Have your children received all the vaccines? – 35

1. Executive summary

Constitutional and legal provisions stipulate equal opportunities for education of all citizens, in accordance with the international conventions and rights. The Government is a signatory of all significant international conventions and declarations that refer to human rights, child rights and the right to education. This document is an attempt to analyze the situation regarding the education of Roma by looking at the implementation and effects of the measures and activities in this field.

For the purposes of this analysis, a field survey was carried out during the period from August to December 2012. The analysis is based on the so-called desk research, which included an analysis of all relevant laws and documents on the national level, as well as the survey which was conducted through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with representatives of governmental institutions, non-governmental sector and educators.

This analysis underlines several phenomena which have significant adverse effects on the education of Roma and their inclusion in general. There is lack of inclusive approach by the state towards different categories of children who belong to the vulnerable groups, as well as children who should enroll at school for the first time. Furthermore, there is lack of financial and strategic responsibility on the part of the institutions, when it comes to solving the problems faced by this vulnerable population on continuous basis.



The state institutions have reduced their involvement in the process of institutionalization of this problem. Although education is free of charge according to the law, the expenses for education are very high and therefore, many of the families started to exclude their children from the educational process.

One cannot deny the fact that the problem of lack of personal documents and the educational level, i.e. inclusion of Roma population in the educational system is far worse and almost incomparable to the general population. The social status of Roma people is also influenced by the difficult living conditions, inadequate housing and extremely poor financial status of families. In recent years, all improvements of the overall education system and inclusion of Roma without personal identification documents were more or less made as a result of the influence and financial support from the civil society sector.

2. General information about Roma people

According to the 2002 Census, Roma represent 2.7% (53,879)¹ of the total population which makes them the fourth largest ethnic community in the country. According to the estimates of local non-governmental organizations that work in the field of Roma issues, the share of Roma in the total population is far greater. Roma people live in 64 out of the total 85 municipalities in the country. Almost 45% of the Roma live in the following ten municipalities: Bitola, Debar, Gostivar, Kicevo, Kocani, Kumanovo, Prilep, Shtip, Tetovo and Vinica. Almost the same percentage of the Roma population (43.1%) lives in the capital city of Skopje, and half of this population lives in the municipality of Suto Orizari.

New and objective data about the population policy would be of major importance for the realization of the priorities specified in the *Decade of Roma Inclusion*. The establishment of the exact number of Roma people would ensure their better position, adequate representation in the institutions and will serve as a condition for creation of the necessary critical mass for improvement of the general status of all Roma people.

1 State Statistical Office, 2002 Census.

With regard to unemployment and poverty, 2010 data show that 5.2% of all unemployed people are Roma.² Data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the review of the national action plans provide an insight into the educational profile of the unemployed Roma population. Namely, 33% of the Roma are without primary education, 7% have complete or incomplete secondary education, and only 0.1% (31 individuals) completed their university education.³ The analysis conducted by UNDP in 2010 shows that the unemployment rate of the Roma population in 2008 was 75%, being the highest unemployment rate compared to all other ethnic communities and twice as much in comparison with the national average of 30%.⁴ The issue of unemployment is of major importance in the context of education because low or insufficient education is both a reason for poverty and a consequence of poverty.

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- 2 Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, *Situational analysis and decline in the number of Roma girls and boys in the educational process in the Republic of Macedonia*, Skopje, 2010.
 - 3 Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2009. *Review of the national action plans from the "2005—2015 Decade of Roma Inclusion"* and the Strategy for Roma in Republic of Macedonia for the period 2009—2011, Skopje.
 - 4 UNDP and the University of Southeastern Europe, *Citizen Based Analysis*, 2010.

3. General information about possession of personal identification documents and education of Roma people

The Constitution and the general legal framework create favorable conditions for education and general well-being of Roma people. This research is an attempt to assist the state institutions in offering adequate measures for addressing the needs in the Roma community. Furthermore, the research is aimed towards identifying the gaps between the legal standards and the practice in the field.

The survey and interview results show that the most significant weaknesses in the sphere of education of Roma people are as follows: insignificant inclusion in the educational process and high dropout rate, poor quality of education, segregation in education, as well as lack of financial means to obtain personal identification documents.

In recent years, all improvements of the overall education system and the inclusion of Roma people without personal identification documents, were more or

less made under the influence of the non-governmental sector. Although the legislation stipulates that education is free of charge (and mandatory), hidden expenses are very high and cause many families to exclude their children from the education process. In order to ensure increased access to secondary education, the participation fees were abolished starting from the school year 2008/09, and transportation was provided for students in the first year of secondary education who live further than 2.5 kilometers from the school they attend, as well as free accommodation in the dormitories. Since 2009/10, it was also planned to provide free textbooks for all students in order to further decrease expenses for education.⁵ Regrettably, though planned, the free transportation in 2008/09 was implemented with certain delay and was not provided for all students. In the school year 2009/10, most students were given textbooks with a certain delay, whereas the majority of students from technical secondary schools did not receive their textbooks.⁶

The situation with regard to pre-school education is very poor, because it is not free of charge, and the rate of Roma inclusion is extremely low (only 0.6% of Roma children aged 0—3 are included in this type of education). This has a negative impact on their further adjustment to the higher educational levels and on the dropout rate. In 2006, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy initiated the project “Inclusion of Roma children in public pre-school institutions” to raise the awareness about the importance of education and development in early childhood, in particular for children from the vulnerable groups.⁷ The UNICEF office in Skopje provided didactic materials for the project and trained the staff. The project was initially implemented in 15 municipalities and then scaled up to 22 municipalities in 2011, with the costs shared between the Ministry, participating municipalities and the Roma Education Fund.⁸

Considering the ethnicity and teaching language, during the school year 2010/2011, there were 9,933 Roma students in regular primary schools, 727 of whom completed their education. Again, based on their ethnicity, during the same school year, there were 1,636 Roma students attending the regular secondary schools, only 300 of whom graduated.⁹ These numbers indicate a high dropout rate. There were also 54 students who attended secondary school irregularly.¹⁰

5 Centre for Research and Creation of Policies, *HOW to achieve 100% enrolment in secondary schools*, 2009, Skopje.

6 *Free textbooks turn out to be very expensive*, *Vreme*, 19 October 2009.

7 Thanks to funding from the Roma Education Fund.

8 See page 13: <http://www.romachildren.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/RECI-Macedonian-final-WEB.pdf>.

9 89 of the students completed the 3-year secondary education and 211 completed the 4-year education.

10 3 in the 3-year secondary programme and 46 in the 4-year secondary programme. Statistical overview: Population and Social Statistics, Skopje, June 2012.

While these figures are far below the proportional representation of Roma in the total population, when it comes to the special needs education the situation is diametrically opposite. Namely, according to some estimates, 36% of the total number of children who attend special needs primary schools, and 28% of the total number of students enrolled at the secondary schools, are Roma.¹¹

¹¹ FOSIM – Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia, *Analysis of the education for Roma people*, 2011.

4. Legal framework

The Preamble of the Constitution stipulates that the Roma ethnic community as equal to the ethnic communities of Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Serbs and Bosniaks.¹² Furthermore, the Constitution guarantees the right to education as a universal right.¹³

A number of laws also define the education and linguistic rights of Roma (and other minorities):

- The 2008 *Law on Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Members of Communities Constituting Less than 20% of the Population in Republic of Macedonia*, guarantees the right to education in the languages of the minorities in all spheres of education.¹⁴
- The *Law on Prevention and Protection from Discrimination* from 2010 regulates the protection from discrimination and prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, skin color, gender, membership of a marginalized group, ethnicity, language, citizenship,

¹² *Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia 52/1991; Amendments (4-18) to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia 91/2001.*

¹³ Same, Article 44.

¹⁴ *Law on Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Members of Communities constituting less than 20% of the Population in the Republic of Macedonia, Law on Changes and Amendments to the Law on Secondary Education, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia 92/2008.*

social background, religious belief, other beliefs, education, political affiliation, personal or social status, mental or physical disability, age, family or marital status, income, health status or any other grounds which are prohibited by law or international documents.¹⁵

- The legal framework on primary and secondary education prohibits any discrimination and guarantees the education in the languages of the minorities.¹⁶

The Law on Social Protection¹⁷ regulates the system and organization of social protection, rights to social protection, financing and the procedure for exercising social protection rights, as well as the 2012—2014 Strategy for Social Inclusion¹⁸ which addresses the following specific issues:

1. Affirmation of the Prevention in social protection
2. Continuation of the decentralization process in the area of social protection
3. More efficient realization of the rights to cash benefits
4. Improvement and development of the services for non-institutional social protection
5. Improvement of the institutional social protection

15 *Law on Prevention and Protection from Discrimination, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia* 50/2010.

16 See: *Law on Primary Education, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia* 103/2008.

17 *Law on Social Protection (Official Gazette No.79 dated 24 June 2009).*

18 http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/strategija_socijalno_vklucvanje.doc.

5. National normative framework

Having implemented the highest standards for the observance of human rights, it is legitimate to say that the political system is open to and aligned with all modern democratic processes. Following the changes of the Constitution from 2001, Roma people are explicitly listed in the new preamble along with other ethnicities that live in the country as holders of the independence and sovereignty of our common state.¹⁹

“The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, the Macedonian nation and the citizens that live within its borders, who are part of the Albanian people, Turkish people, Vlach people, Serbian people, Roma people, Bosniak people..., having taken the responsibility for the presence and future of their country..., equal in their rights and obligations for the common good –decided to constitute the Republic of Macedonia as an independent, sovereign country, with the aim to introduce and strengthen the rule of law, to guarantee human rights and citizens’ freedoms, to ensure peace and cohabitation, social justice, economic wellbeing and progress of personal and collective life”.

¹⁹ See: http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/strategija_romi.pdfctp.16.

This is the first time that Roma people are mentioned and recognized by the Constitution as a constitutive nation. In accordance with the existing provisions, they are equal in their legally guaranteed rights and obligations, to all other citizens.²⁰

Besides the established foundation in the Preamble, the wording of the Constitution stipulates the basic human rights, which provide the basis for the obligations of the State towards every citizen, including the Roma, and establishes the foundation for the rest of the legislation.²¹ “Free expression of nationality, adequate and fair representation of all citizens that belong to the communities in the state administration bodies and other public institutions at all levels” are among the fundamental values of the constitutional order.²²

Since the introduction of political pluralism and the first multi-party elections, Roma people have their political representatives in the Parliament (Assembly, legislature), i.e. in 1990 there were two Roma MPs, in 1994, 1998 and 2002 one MP and at the elections in 2006, two Roma MPs were elected among the 120 Members of Parliament. On a local level, in 2004/2005, 0.31% of all members of the local councils were Roma. In 2003/2004, Roma accounted for 0.19%, and in 2002/2003 this percent was 0.29%. Apart from the political representation at national and local level (which nevertheless does not correspond to the total Roma population), Roma participation in decision-making is not effective and most of the Roma people consider themselves as partially or completely excluded from the decision-making process.²³

5.1. Analysis of the documents originating from the Roma Decade

The process of adoption of the *National Strategy for Roma People in the Republic of Macedonia* coincided with the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005—2015) and the formulation of its priorities. Given the similar approach of both processes, they are carried out in parallel and in an intertwined manner, which implies overlapping of some of the priorities.

The National Strategy²⁴ is a strategic document which addresses the status of education of Roma people, as well as other spheres of social life. It was adopted in 2004 and revised in 2009. The document specifies the objectives in the field

²⁰ Constitution, Number 08-4642/1, Skopje.

²¹ http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/strategija_romi.pdf.

²² Article 8 line 2 of the Constitution, 2001.

²³ Written comments by the European Centre for Roma rights and the National Roma Centre for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to be reviewed by the Committee on economic, social and cultural rights at the United Nations at the 37th session, 19 September 2006.

²⁴ See: http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/strategija_romi.pdf.

of education, including the equal quality of knowledge and education between Roma and non-Roma children, increase in the level of formal education among young Roma, and among the adults outside of the formal educational system, building professional and social capacities and elimination of illiteracy. However, the absence of sufficient analyses and research related to the implementation of the Strategy makes it difficult to evaluate its impact.

This is also valid for the global objectives of the Decade, such as: eradication of poverty, elimination of discrimination and reduction of the social exclusion of minorities. The basic criteria for development are monitored through the Millennium Development Goals²⁵ and the EU Program for Social Inclusion. The following areas were specified in the Decade as priority issues for the Roma: housing, education, health and employment. It is expected that the Roma Decade priorities are given a central place among the objectives and tasks listed in the National Strategy.

The objectives of the revised National Action Plans for Education for the period 2009—2011 include:

1. 4.5% Roma children in pre-school institutions by 2011 (of the total number of Roma children aged 4—5)
2. Decline in the dropout rate of Roma students in secondary schools – Increase in the rate of Roma students that remain within the educational system – decline in the rate of Roma students who leave education too early (100% enrolment rate for Roma children in primary education);
3. Increase in the percentage of Roma students to 1.8% of the total number of students enrolled in the first year of university studies by 2011, retaining the students in the education system and their graduation with special focus on the creation of teaching staff.
4. 5% of illiterate Roma adults (3% of whom women) becoming literate every year, during the period 2009—2011.
5. Reduction of the number of Roma students in special needs schools by 5% annually.

The objective of 100% enrolment of all children in primary schools is an unrealistic estimate, which is even more unrealistic for the Roma children. During the drafting of this report, it was evident that Roma children encounter problems with enrolment, because they lack personal identification documents (both the children and their parents) and are unable to pay the costs for the medical certificates required for enrolment, irregular immunization, etc.

25 See: <http://www.un.org.mk/mileniumski-razvojni-celii.html>.

The **Action plan on improving the situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area** aims to enhance the efforts of the participating countries and relevant institutions and OSCE structures that strive to ensure the participation of Roma and Sinti in our societies and eliminate discrimination against them. The Action plan is based on the international and regional legal framework for human rights, the current efforts of the OSCE and the best practices from countries throughout Europe. The special measures envisaged in the Action plan to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti are based on the International Convention for Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. Some of the most important recommendations made to participating States are as follows:

- To ensure that the national legislation contains adequate provisions that prohibit racial segregation and discrimination in education and provision of efficient sanctions for violation of the respective legal provisions.
- Consultations with the representatives of Roma and Sinti communities when creating educational policies that affect their communities.
- Allocation of funds for transfer of Roma children in the regular schools and for preparation of support programs for the schools, to facilitate the transfer to regular education.

The legal framework, in general, stipulates equal educational opportunities for all citizens, in accordance with the international law and conventions. The country is a signatory of all important international conventions and declarations that refer to human rights, child rights and the right to education. The legislation provides for education that allows for nourishment of the personal identity. From the aspect of the legal framework and the official documents related to these matters and the Roma people, another important segment is the Law on Identity Card²⁶ whereby according to Article 1:

The identification card is a public document that proves the identity, citizenship and residence of the citizen of the Republic of Macedonia. The citizen can possess only one identity card. Every citizen aged 18 and over is obligated to have an identity card. An identity card can be issued to a citizen aged 15, upon his/her request.

In 2004, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy published the Strategy for Roma, which was fully supported by the Government. It regulates the National Action Plans for Education, Healthcare, Employment and Housing. The **2009 European Commission Progress Report** reports that:

²⁶ Law on Identity Card (Official Gazette of RM, No.38/2002).

The number of Roma children who attend school is still insignificant, with the dropout rate remaining very high. The segregation of Roma students is still in existence. The practice of sending Roma children with learning difficulties to specialized institutions for mentally disabled children has continued. The number of Roma street children is on the increase. The introduction of mandatory education for children up to the age of 18 is believed to have contributed towards the reduction of social exclusion. Steps have been taken with regard to the reduction of the high dropout rate in the early years of education. The project of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy enabled 243 Roma children aged 4 and 5 to attend pre-school. Still, a large number of Roma children, i.e. girls from villages and children with special needs have not yet completed their education.²⁷

Nevertheless, some progress can be observed. As part of the affirmative action for Roma students, the Government decided that all Roma students who apply for secondary schools should be enrolled, regardless of the total number of applicants. State universities have established quotas for enrolment of Roma students, in proportion to the overall Roma population. The access of Roma students to state scholarships for higher education has improved through simplification of the application process. A joint project of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Foundation Open Society Institute, provided scholarships for 650 Roma students in the first year of secondary education. The support program Romaversitas, through grants and mentorship, provides support to all Roma students who study social sciences. Nevertheless, the reported number²⁸ of Roma undergraduate students in the academic year 2007/2008 was 184, i.e. less than 0.3% of the total number of 62,935. The number of Roma students who graduated in 2008 is 30, compared to the total number of 10,838 graduates, which also illustrates a very small percentage.

With regard to unemployment, 65% of the registered unemployed citizens are Macedonians, 23% Albanians, 4% Turks and 5% Roma. The survey carried out by UNDP shows that the unemployment rate among the Roma population is 79%, however, according to the Roma non-governmental organizations, the real figure is over 90%.²⁹ One of the long-term objectives of the Strategy is also the reduction in the number of unregistered Roma, who are not able to exercise their social protection rights because they do not possess personal identification documents.

27 European Commission, *2009 Progress Report*, available at: http://www.sep.gov.mk/content/Dokumenti/MK/EK_izvestaj_2009_mk.pdf.

28 State Statistical Office, *Statistical Overview – Population and Social Statistics*, 2009.

29 UNDP, *Report on the Disadvantaged People – Focus on Roma People*, 2006.

In the upcoming period, all strategic documents and action plans arising from the Roma Decade shall be reviewed.³⁰ The Decade is focused on the priority areas, i.e. education, employment, health and housing, and obligates governments to take into account the other basic issues of poverty, discrimination and gender integration.

5.2. International documents ratified by the Government

According to Article 1 of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights:

All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence. The States Parties to the present Covenant, shall promote the realization of the right of self-determination, and shall respect that right, in conformity with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

According to Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- ♦ *The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;*
- ♦ *The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;*
- ♦ *The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;*
- ♦ *The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of*

³⁰ See: www.romadecade.org.

sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

- ♦ *The development of respect for the natural environment.*

- **Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination**,³¹ considering that the Charter of the United Nations is based on the principles of dignity and equality of all people and that all state parties have made a commitment to act, together and individually, in cooperation with the Organization, to reach one of the goals of the United Nations, i.e. to develop and stimulate the general and factual respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, regardless of their race, gender, language or religion.
- **The Convention against Discrimination in Education**³² contains the definition of discrimination that includes “any difference, exclusion, limitation or favoritism based on race, skin color, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social background, economic status or birth, which is aimed towards or prevents or endangers the equal treatment in education as a consequence.
- **European Convention on Human Rights**:³³ A Universal declaration of human rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1984, which stipulates the principles that still have a strong impact throughout the whole world. Although the Declaration itself is not binding, many lawyers would state the argument that it has become legally binding through the international case law and practice, because it has been referred to in the constitutions and legal proceedings in many countries.³⁴

5.3. Zagreb Declaration

Participants at the Conference on Provision of Civil Documentation and Registration in South Eastern Europe³⁵ proposed that all obstacles for documentation and registration should be eliminated, in particular for the marginalized population. This includes legal reforms, adequate residence, reducing bureaucratic procedures, tax reductions, and registration at birth and issuance³⁶ of personal identification cards.³⁷

31 See: <http://www.edulaws.mk/images/pdf/cerd.pdf>.

32 See: http://www.edulaws.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=264&Itemid=306&lang=sq.

33 See: http://www.echr.coe.int/NR/rdonlyres/28DB92A0-FCBC-40DB-86CB-645A8028A019/0/MKD_CONV.pdf.

34 See: http://mk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Европска_конвенција_за_човекови_права.

35 Zagreb, 26-27 October 2011.

36 See: http://www.edulaws.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=280&Itemid=311&lang=mk.

37 See: <http://www.osce.org/hcnm/85249>.


6. Analysis of international documents and activities in the field of education

With regard to the European documents in the field of education, the Bologna Declaration for Higher Education and the Copenhagen Declaration on Vocational Education and Training serve as roadmaps for the reforms in these educational subsystems. They serve as the base for introduction of the single European educational area. The Government signed the Bologna Declaration³⁸ in Berlin in 2003 and undertook specific obligations to implement structural reforms in the higher education. Since the signing of this Declaration, follow-up conferences have been organized every two years, in order to analyze the progress made. The achievements of the education system in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have been continuously assessed as average.

With regard to the Copenhagen Declaration,³⁹ which refers to the harmonization of the reforms in the secondary vocational education, progress is less visible. The credit transfer system, the qualifications framework and the standards for skills in vocational education are imperatives, which are far from our reality. The establishment of the Centre for Secondary Vocational Education and Training will hopefully enable a more serious approach towards the realization of the recom-

³⁸ http://mk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bologna_declaration.

³⁹ See: http://ec.europa.eu/education/pdf/doc125_en.pdf.



mendations from the Copenhagen Declaration and the Maastricht Communiqué with complete support from the European Training Foundation.

In the meantime, the Law on Establishment of the National Agency for Community Programs in Education⁴⁰ was adopted, which will ensure application of the principle of decentralized management of European funds. Since 2008, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has complete access to the integrated 2007—2013 Lifelong Learning Program, which includes the following sub-programs: Comenius, Leonardo Da Vinci, Socrates, Erasmus and Grundtvig.⁴¹

Project implementation and efforts undertaken by foreign donors, who are active in the field of promotion of education, child rights and improving the legalistic culture of Roma people, contributed to the improvement of the economic status of Roma people and their general integration. Some of the results achieved by the non-governmental sector and international donors are now part of the governmental programs and regular activities of state institutions, thus ensuring the continuity of the whole process.

40 <http://www.na.org.mk/nacionalna-agencia.html>.

41 Analysis of the capacities for good governance in education, Skopje, December 2007.

7. Field survey

7.1. Survey methodology

The field survey was carried out in two separate phases, i.e. filling out questionnaires for parents and semi-structured interviews with parents. A total of 60 randomly selected parents were surveyed in the field and in the local non-governmental organizations, i.e. 18 men and 42 women. Thirty respondents live in the settlement of Topaana in Skopje and 11 in the settlement of Sredorek, while the remaining 19 respondents live close to Sredorek in Kumanovo. In both settlements, most of the parents are up to 41 years of age. 61.7% of them are without primary education, which makes them least competitive on the labor market. The unemployment rate amongst them is 90%, i.e. of the total of 60 interviewed parents, 54 are unemployed. This situation contributes to poverty and lack of necessary funds to obtain personal identification documents, education, etc.

In addition, between 15 November and 10 December 2012, 10 in-depth interviews were carried out with stakeholders involved in the process of resolving the problem of non-possession of personal identification documents and integration of children in the educational system. The interviewees included the President of the Roma Political Party for Integration, representatives of the Roma Information Centers, non-governmental organizations, educators, representatives from the Ministry of Health, as well as a specialist physician from the City

General Hospital “8 Septemvri”- Skopje. They all work actively on the prevention of exclusion of marginalized groups from the system.

The questionnaire included 14 questions about different aspects related to the lack of personal identification documents, as an obstacle for the integration of Roma children in the educational system.

7.2. Results from the questionnaires for parents

The table on the number of children (no. 1 below), clearly illustrates the significant number of children per family that require allocation of funds for their education and integration into the system. Over 40% of the parents had 4 or more children.

Table 1. Number of children – Total

	Number	Percentage
.00	1	1.7
1.00	8	13.3
2.00	7	11.7
3.00	18	30.0
4.00	14	23.3
5.00	5	8.3
6.00	5	8.3
7.00	1	1.7
8.00	1	1.7
Total	60	100.0

Most interviewees possess the basic identification documents, as well as documents for health care. Only one interviewee had a driving license, because the expenses for obtaining that document are high, whereas, when it comes to obtaining other documents, they are informed and financially supported by the local non-governmental organizations in Kumanovo⁴² and Skopje⁴³ at the respective settlements. Those non-governmental organizations work on providing the population with personal identification documents and raising the awareness of parents and citizens about their inclusion in the institutional system.

⁴² Such as <http://www.nationalromacentrum.org/mk/>.

⁴³ Such as <http://www.sumnal.org/>.

Table 2. Did you encounter any problems in obtaining personal identification documents?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	19	31.7
No	40	66.7
No answer	1	1.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 3. If yes, what kind of problems did you encounter in obtaining personal identification documents?

	Number	Percentage
Lack of funds	19	95.0
Other	1	5.0
Sub-total	20	
I was not informed	40	
Total	60	100.0

With regard to the personal problems encountered by citizens, tables 2 and 3 show that the lack of information or interest by the citizens or lack of funds, make the process of registration and access to the institutions very difficult for the marginalized groups.

Table 4. What is the biggest problem that you encounter in the procedure for obtaining personal identification documents?

	Number	Percentage
High administrative fees	32	53.3
Complex and unclear procedures	12	20.0
Bad attitude by the staff in the institutions	8	13.3
Other	4	6.7
No answer	4	6.7
Total	60	100.0

The biggest institutional problem that citizens encounter when obtaining personal identification documents are the high administrative fees, as well as the complex and unclear administrative procedures (table 4). Local NGOs have an important role in overcoming these problems, as they serve as mediators between marginalized citizens and the institutions.

Table 5. Do you think that the institutions provide sufficient assistance to the citizens in obtaining personal identification documents?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	17	28.3
No	36	60.0
No answer	7	11.7
Total	60	100.0

Answering the question whether they think that institutions provide sufficient assistance to citizens, 60% of the respondents said that the assistance is insufficient, which confirms previous conclusions about the complex procedures and high administrative fees.

Table 6. Did you obtain your personal identification documents personally?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	42	70.0
No	17	28.3
No answer	1	1.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 7. If NO, who assisted you in the process of obtaining personal identification documents?

	Number	Percentage
Family member / relative	3	18.8
Friend	1	6.3
Employee at the Roma Information Centre	2	12.5
Local non-governmental organization	10	62.5
Sub-total	16	100.0
Other	44	
Total	60	

Table 6—7 shows that 70% of the respondents requested assistance to obtain personal identification documents, and more than 60% were given assistance by the local non-governmental organization and the Roma Information Centers. Roma Information Centers⁴⁴ serve as an information link between the Roma community and the local institutions, in order to ensure faster integration in society. Roma Information Centers have the task of informing the public, in a planned and structured manner, about the implementation of the Strategy for Roma and the action plans at the local level.

The survey also showed that almost all children have birth certificates, which is a good precondition for their integration and enrolment in the education system.

44 See: <http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/?ItemID=16963527D912DC41B48380E0B6034274>.

The reasons for non-possession of citizenship certificate, passport and other personal identification documents can be seen in the previous table,⁴⁵ i.e. high administrative fees and complex and unclear procedures. It is worth noting that the highest percentage of documents was obtained with assistance.

Table 8. Do all of your children attend school?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	35	58,3
No	23	38,3
No answer	2	3,3
Total	60	100,0

Table 9. If any of your children do not attend school, what are the reasons?

	Number	Percentage
Lack of funds	11	18,3
Education will not be of any help in life	2	3,3
Other reason	9	15,0
Non-possession of documents	38	63,3
Total	60	100,0

From Table 11—12, one can clearly see that the percentage of children who do not attend school is very high, the reasons being lack of personal identification documents, lack of funds and low awareness of parents, about the importance of education. One has to underline the importance of raising the awareness of parents and the necessity for additional financial support to cover the costs of obtaining personal identification documents, as well as for more complicated cases that require DNA analysis for issuance of such documents.⁴⁶

Table 10. Do any of your children attend extra-curricular activities?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	28	46,7
No	31	51,7
No answer	1	1,7
Total	60	100,0

Furthermore, it should be underlined that high percentage of children use the services of the local NGOs for additional academic support, such as assistance in writing homework, mentorship, assistance for school enrolment, organization of educational and other special events to support the education of Roma children and youth, support for students to enroll at universities, etc. These are just some

⁴⁵ See page 12.

⁴⁶ See: <http://vlada.mk/node/3972>.

of the activities,⁴⁷ and more work remains to be done about raising the awareness of parents for complete utilization of the potentials of local non-governmental organizations.

Table 11. Do you have any children enrolled at a university?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	4	6.7
No	55	91.7
No answer	1	1.7
Total	60	100.0

In addition, the higher education of Roma, i.e. their inclusion in the higher education process is at an unsatisfactory level. Despite the scholarships⁴⁸ granted to Roma students and the additional academic support that they can receive,⁴⁹ the number of Roma students is still insignificant (91% of the parents reported they have no children enrolled at university). Given the assistance that Roma students receive, it is still necessary to raise the trust and awareness of both parents and secondary-school students. They need to know what are the opportunities that are being offered after the completion of their studies.

Table 12. Do you receive any social cash benefits?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	29	48.3
No	31	51.7
Total	60	100.0

Table 12 shows that 51.7% of the parents do not receive social cash benefits in spite of the fact that they could qualify, partly because of the lack of necessary documents.

Table 13. Do you have health insurance (blue insurance slips)?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	58	96.7
No	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0

47 See: <http://www.sumnal.org/index.php?categoryid=30>.

48 See: <http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/>.

49 See: www.romaversitas.edu.mk.

Table 14. Have your children received all the vaccines?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	46	76.7
No	14	23.3
Total	60	100.0

The lack of documentation is a particularly serious problem for children, because they are excluded from the education and preventive health care system (in particular, immunization and systematic physical examination). Children born at home, face particularly high risks. There are initiatives to vaccinate any children who are outside of the education system and street children who visit the day care centers, however, they remain insufficient. These initiatives could include most of the children if the population is properly and timely informed. For part of the Roma population, the non-possession of personal identification cards and birth certificates prevents their access to public health services (and health insurance). The necessity for renewal of documents is an additional financial burden for poor families.

7.3. Analysis of interviews

According to the results of the field survey, all interviewees were familiar with the programs and projects implemented by state institutions to ensure equal and broad access of Roma children to education. They pointed out the scholarships granted by the Ministry of Education and Science for Roma secondary school students,⁵⁰ free textbooks for students from socially deprived families, free public transport, free accommodation in the dormitories and in respect of the higher education – the positive discrimination in enrolment of Roma students.

The main obstacles for the enrolment and continuous participation of Roma children in education are the poor socio-economic status of the families and their inadequate dwellings (housing) which are located outside of the areas with stable infrastructure. In addition, insufficient awareness of the parents is another obstacle, so field work is of crucial importance to ensure a better future for Roma children. Some of the respondents indicated their poor knowledge of the Macedonian language as yet another obstacle, which prevents them from mastering the curriculum.⁵¹ Another problem mentioned are the complicated procedures for establishing citizenship using the time-consuming and expensive DNA analyses,⁵² as well as the seasonal migration of some parents, who take their

50 Competition for awarding scholarships to Roma secondary school students: <http://www.mon.gov.mk/en/konkursimon/889-2011-12-01-09-02-08>.

51 Interview with a representative from the Ministry of Health.

52 Interview with a representative from the Roma Information Centre – Kumanovo.

children out of school. The small number of textbooks in Romani language also poses an obstacle, because children cannot gain new knowledge in their mother tongue.

With regard to the funds for educational activities, which are allocated by the government (and the local authorities) for the integration of Roma children who do not have personal identification documents, there were two dissenting opinions and attitudes, as follows: the institutions do their best to identify these individuals; they are flexible, although they should be more rigorous and punish the parents who did not register their children on time,⁵³ whereas the others believe that the maximum has not been reached in this particular area and that all possibilities that are to be provided by the state for this marginalized group, have not been fully explored.

According to the **Laws on Primary and Secondary Education**, primary⁵⁴ and secondary education⁵⁵ are mandatory. The state should sanction any violation of these legal provisions – this is the only way to prevent and reduce the school dropout rate for Roma children. The same laws stipulate that every child has the right to education and that any discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, skin color, national, social, political, religious, property and social background, regarding the realization of the rights specified by the laws is prohibited.⁵⁶ In spite of these standards, the prevailing opinion is that the number of Roma secondary school students is at an unsatisfactory level. The main reasons include the strict scholarship criteria and lack of funds in some families, required to fulfill the basic needs of a student.

In general, the lack of personal identification documents among the Roma is a major problem and while funding is provided, there is a lack of continuity in civil registration activities. In other words, no measures have been implemented to identify any individuals without documents in the field and for the costs to be covered by state institutions. Consequently, the lack of personal identification documents is a serious problem, because the guaranteed rights cannot be exercised within the institutions of the system.⁵⁷

The activities to improve the access of Roma to personal identification documents should be aimed towards raising the awareness of parents regarding the importance of civil registration; the respective health and social services should be more engaged in their work in the field, so that the situation can be monitored and every newborn registered. Strict legal measures and punishment should be

53 Interview with the president of the Party for integration of Roma.

54 See the *Law on Mandatory Secondary Education*: http://www.mon.gov.mk/download_mk/Documents/Zakoni/zakon+za+osnovnoto+obrazovanie.pdf.

55 *Law on Secondary Education (Official Gazette of RM, No.44/95)*, 2012.

56 Interview with a government representative.

57 Interview with the president of the citizens' association „Biosfera“ – Bitola.

imposed for any child who is not registered at birth, and funds should be allocated to assist families with newborns (that would stimulate the family to register the child, which would prevent any problems regarding personal identification documents and make the process of integration later in life much easier).⁵⁸

The additional activities that are being proposed, include organization of whole-day classes at the schools, training of teaching staff about the educational and upbringing process in a multicultural community, focusing on the equality among children, and additional education for the future teaching staff at the pedagogical faculties about multicultural work, as well as increasing the number of textbooks in Romani language.⁵⁹

All interviewees think that it would be necessary to sensitize the teaching staff about working in multicultural communities and educate them further about educational-upbringing work in multiethnic communities. Children should remain what they are, without any ethnic and/or religious labeling. Teachers often become second parents of children, and the inclusion of children in the educational system often depends on their actions.⁶⁰

The **Roma Information Centers** have continuous communication with citizens, whereby in accordance with the legislation and their work duties and program, they timely inform, counsel, refer and provide logistic support to citizens, so that they can exercise their rights and obligations (in the areas of social protection, employment, health, housing, education, issuance of personal identification documents), in a timely manner, without any specific problems and consequences. In specific cases that require obtaining certain documents, they are involved in fieldwork and provide direct assistance or they inform the community through promotional materials (public announcements etc.).

At the Roma Information Centre in Kumanovo, 62 individuals requested assistance in obtaining personal identification documents in the course of 2012. The Centre provided the following legal assistance: filling out requests and payment orders and giving explanations about the whole procedure for issuance of the necessary document. Most frequently, the citizens approach the Centre to ask for assistance in obtaining identity cards and birth certificates.

At the Roma Information Centre in Skopje, in the course of 2012, legal assistance in obtaining personal identification documents (birth certificate, identity card, passport) was provided to 54 clients, whereas 14 individuals without any personal documents also received the required help.

58 Interview with a specialist physician from the City General Hospital" 8 Septemvri" Skopje.

59 Interview with the President of the citizens' association "Sumnal" Skopje.

60 Interview with the educators at the citizens' association "Sumnal" Skopje.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

1. The Government should demonstrate stronger political commitment, in particular the Roma representatives in the government, to ensure that strategies are turned into actions, especially by allocating the required funds.
2. Improvement of administrative capacities, co-ordination and communication among institutions responsible for Roma policies (Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Ministry of Justice, Minister without Portfolio, etc.).
3. Improvement and raising the profile of the work of the intersectoral working group for solution of the problem of people without personal identification documents and involvement of the civic sector, especially the Roma Information Centers.
4. Allocation of funds (more than 10%) by the State for institutional resolution of the problem related to the people without personal identification documents, especially for more complicated cases that require DNA analysis and cooperation with institutions in other countries where the individuals were born.
5. Adequate institutional promotion of any implemented measures that facilitate the access to personal documents.
6. Children should continue attending classes throughout the process of obtaining all necessary documents, so that they are not absent from school.

7. Reconciliation of the official data from the governmental and non-governmental sector on the number of people without personal identification documents (field work and identification of all people without documents).
8. Sensitizing teaching staff for improved work in multiethnic areas and better quality teaching for Roma children provided by the Ministry of Education, i.e. The Directorate for development and promotion of education in the languages of the communities (the project implemented by the Association for Development of the Roma Community “Sumnal”⁶¹ from Skopje, should be used as an example).
9. Raising the awareness of parents about the importance of inclusion of their children in the education system, in particular for the girls.
10. Increasing the number of Roma teachers working with children using the Romani language, who would serve as leading figures for the young Roma.

⁶¹ The OSCE Mission in Skopje and the NGO “Sumnal” implemented the most innovative project aimed towards sensitizing teaching staff. The project is entitled „Strengthening the capacities of future teachers, pedagogues and social workers, working in multiethnic environments”.

Annex 1

Questionnaire for parents

Dear parents, please read carefully and answer the following questions. If you come across any problems, the staff from the Roma Information Centre will be glad to help you. The data from the questionnaire will be used to identify the gap between the legal standards and the practice in the field, regarding the possession of personal identification documents as a precondition for better education.

Please circle the appropriate answer.

Sex:

1. Male
2. Female

Place of residence:

1. Topaana
2. redorek
3. Other

Age:

1. Below 18
2. 18 to 25
3. 23 to 31
4. 31 to 41
5. 41 to 51
6. 51 to 65 or
7. Over 65

Education:

1. None
2. Primary
3. Secondary
4. Higher

Number of children:

____ male
____ female

Occupation (profession):

1. Unemployed
2. Employed in a state/public institution
3. Employed in or owner of a private business
4. Agricultural worker
5. Student
6. Other _____

QUESTIONS

1. Which personal documents do you possess?
 - a. Birth certificate
 - b. Identification card
 - c. Passport
 - d. Citizenship certificate
 - e. Health insurance booklet
 - f. Driving license
2. Have you encountered any personal problems when obtaining your personal documents?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No answer
3. If yes, what kind of problems did you encounter in obtaining your personal identification documents?
 - a. Lack of funds
 - b. Discrimination by the institutions
 - c. Lack of information
 - d. Other _____
4. Which is the biggest problem that you came across in the procedure for obtaining personal documentation?
 - a. High administrative fees
 - b. Complex and unclear procedures
 - c. Bad attitude by the staff in the institutions
 - d. Other _____
(please indicate accordingly)

5. Do you think that institutions provide sufficient assistance to citizens in obtaining personal documents?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No answer

6. Did you obtain your personal documents personally (on your own)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No answer

7. If NO, who assisted you in the process of obtaining the personal documents?
 - a. Family member or relative
 - b. Friend
 - c. Employee at the Roma Information Centre
 - d. Local non-governmental organization
 - e. Other _____

8. Please indicate the personal documents that your oldest child possesses?
 - a. Birth certificate
 - b. Identification card
 - c. Passport
 - d. Citizenship certificate
 - e. Other _____

9. Please indicate the personal documents that your youngest child possesses?
 - a. Birth certificate
 - b. Passport
 - c. Citizenship certificate
 - d. Other _____

10. Do all of your children attend school?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No answer

11. If any of your children do not attend school, what are the reasons thereof?
 - a. Lack of funds
 - b. Education will not be of any help in life
 - c. Lack of personal identification documents
 - d. Other reason _____

12. Do any of your children attend extra-curricular activities?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

13. Do you have any children who are enrolled at a university?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

14. Do you receive any social cash benefits?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No


15. Do you have health insurance (blue insurance slips)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

16. Have your children received all the vaccines?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No answer

Annex 2

List of interviewed representatives of various institutions

Name and Surname	Institution	Date
Bajram Berat	Party for Roma Integration	26.11.2012
Neshat Azemovski	Citizens' Association "Biosfera" – Bitola	05.12.2012
Fatma Bajram	Association for development of the Roma community "Sumnal" – Skopje	30.11.2012
Dzemile Berat	City General Hospital "8 Septemvri" – Roma activist	28.11.2012
Afrodita Rakipovska	Roma Information Centre – Skopje	07.12.2012
Merdan Muslievski	Roma Information Centre – Kumanovo	05.12.2012
Afrodita Berat	Ministry of Health	24.11.2012



Name and Surname	Institution	Date
Stojanka Dimkovska	Educator at the Association for development of the Roma community "Sumnal" – Skopje	03.12.2012
Nadica Shtrbevka	Educator at the Association for development of the Roma community "Sumnal" – Skopje	03.12.2012
Oliver Mitov	Lawyer	22.11.2012
David Berat	General Secretariat of the Government	06.12.2012

