Gender Analysis
of Roma Women and Girls in VET in Albania

Author: Jarmila Bujak Stanko

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Roma Education Fund

The Roma Education Fund (REF) is an international foundation established in 2005 and dedicated to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. With an active and growing network of representative offices across Central, Eastern, South Eastern Europe and Turkey, REF provides grants and scholarships to entities and individuals who share its belief in quality, inclusive education and desegregated schools and classrooms.

Austrian Development Cooperation

Austrian Development Cooperation supports countries in Africa, Asia, South Eastern and Eastern Europe in their sustainable development.

The Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and International Affairs plans the strategies. The Austrian Development Cooperation implements programmes and projects together with public institutions, civil society organizations as well as enterprises.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This *Gender Analysis of Roma Women and Girls in VET in Albania* (hereinafter *GA*) is developed for The Roma Education Fund within the framework of the project *Education, Employment, Partnerships and Gender Equality: A Winning Formula for Roma in VET* (hereinafter *WinForVET Project*), funded by the Austrian Development Agency and implemented by REF, in cooperation with project partners Roma Versitas Albania and Roma Versitas Kosovo.

The overall objective of the *WinForVET Project* is to contribute to social inclusion and poverty reduction of Roma in Albania and Kosovo through support of vocational education and training, facilitation to the labor market and empowering stakeholders to take measures to support the transition of Roma to employment. Understanding that gender plays an important role in poverty reduction, it was recognized that it is necessary to integrate a gender perspective into the *WinForVET Project* in order to be able to achieve its important goal. By setting out to systematically address gender inequities stemming from deep-rooted gender roles and power dynamics that impact both men and women in the domain of education and labor, the *WinForVET Project* aims to strengthen its effectiveness and simultaneously contribute to the promotion of gender equality.

For that reason, the purpose of this *GA* is to provide *WinForVET Project* staff and partners with necessary inputs and foundational information on relevant gender concerns for systematic mainstreaming of gender into the *WinForVET Project*.

The **main recommendations** of the *Gender Analysis of Roma Women and Girls in VET in Albania* are:

Regarding the public sector:

- Advocate for publicly available ethnic and sex-disaggregated, reliable, representative and comprehensive data, sufficiently specific and disaggregated in necessary details regarding Roma and Egyptian employment, education and VET, gender, and especially the intersectionalities[1]

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[1] Intersectionality/Intersectionalism - The concept explains how all oppression is linked, how social categorizations based on gender, race, class, nationality, etc. are interconnected and create overlapping and interdependent systems of disadvantage, marginalization or discrimination. It defines interlocking systems of the social, economic and political ways in which identity-based systems of oppression and privilege connect, overlap and influence one another. It describes the complex mix of identities (gender, race, class, culture, religion, sexuality, etc.) which influence the way an individual participates at all, or any, level of society. This concept has its roots in the North American Feminist Movement, specifically the Black Feminist Movement, of the 1990's as the theoretical framework and has subsequently developed into the approach to empowerment and participation of women that acknowledges that everyone has unique experiences of discrimination and oppression, and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalize people – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc. (explanation from the author's Manual on Gender Mainstreaming, published by REF, February 2021)
In other words, intersectionality is a prism for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other, a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects and how different forms of oppression work together to exacerbate injustice and to exclude and discriminate against certain groups. Intersectionality is a tool for analysis, advocacy and policy development that challenges intersecting forms of discrimination and power relations such as racism, sexism, hetero-sexism, adultism, ableism, ethnocentrism and classism (definition by UNWOMEN).

Please refer to this footnote for interpretation of the word throughout the document.

- Advocate for an intersectional approach to different sub-groups of Roma and Egyptians and designing policies based on it
- Advocate for evidence-based policy making for Roma and Egyptian communities
- Advocate for full and transparent implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all Roma and Egyptian gender related policies
- Advocate for anti-discriminatory policies
- Advocate for engagement of staff from Roma and Egyptian populations at the contact points for work with Roma and Egyptian communities
- Advocate for gender mainstreaming at all levels, in all the policies, not only the specific gender policies
- Advocate for meaningful inclusion of Roma and Egyptian representatives in planning, monitoring and evaluation of relevant national and local policies as partners
- Continuously participate in planning, monitoring and evaluation of relevant national and local policies as a partner
- Bring gender-based violence in Roma and Egyptian communities to the agenda, starting with early marriages and advocate for intersectionally targeted interventions within policies
- Advocate for tax reduction in specific sectors, like waste collecting and recycling, farming and various services relevant for Roma and Egyptians

- Advocate for targeted VET measures and transition programmes from education to employment or self-employment relevant for Roma and Egyptians

- Advocate with VET providers to ensure that they offer courses acceptable for Roma and Egyptian girls, but ensure that those don't reinforce gender division of labor
- Advocate with VET providers and employers for a stronger connection of VET with employment opportunities for Roma and Egyptian women, to ensure that women have a prospect of decent employment based on VET
- Advocate for greater inclusion of Roma and Egyptian girls and women with VET and employment services
- Advocate for greater inclusion of Roma and Egyptian children in state kindergartens
- Advocate for improving quality, equity, and access at all levels of education for all Roma and Egyptians
- Advocate for interventions targeted at narrowing of gender gaps for Roma and Egyptian girls and women in all aspects of education and employment
- Advocate for financial support for Roma and Egyptians in all levels of education including VET, with focus on Roma and Egyptian girls and women
- Advocate for non-segregation and nondiscriminatory practices at all levels of education for all Roma and Egyptians
- Advocate for ALMPs and PESs to offer more interventions that help Roma and Egyptian workers access the labor market, overcoming sectoral and spatial mismatches, and increasing the outreach of PESs toward Roma and Egyptian
- Advocate for the financial incentives for hiring of Roma and Egyptians
- Advocate for implementing broader affirmative action programs in Roma and Egyptian employment policies and practices
- Advocate for prioritizing job creation for Roma and Egyptians, with priority given to creating any acceptable job, not just full formal employment
- Advocate public institutions to become role models for nondiscriminatory practices and promote such examples, especially in Roma and Egyptian communities

Regarding the CSOs

- Advocate for gender mainstreaming at all levels of CSOs
- Advocate for shadow reporting regarding Roma and Egyptian employment, education and VET, gender, and especially the intersectionalities
- Advocate for publishing, sharing and disseminating of relevant data regarding employment, education, VET and gender of Roma and Egyptians,
- Form networks and coalitions for joint actions on Roma and Egyptian employment, education and VET, and gender issues
- Strengthen local CSOs, especially community and grass-roots Roma and Egyptian CSOs

Regarding the business sector

- Advocate for socially responsible practices of employers regarding employment of Roma and Egyptians
- Advocate for inclusion and integration of Roma and Egyptian in employment
- Advocate for anti-discriminatory policies in businesses
- Advocate with employers for a stronger connection with VET to ensure that Roma and Egyptian women have a prospect of adequate and decent employment based on VET
- Initiate and support establishment and maintaining of coordination of local VCTs with employers
- Conduct information campaigns to increase employer awareness on employment issues for Roma and Egyptian, and best approaches in tackling them
- Provide businesses with information on how to work with vulnerable groups, and encourage them to do so

Regarding the work with Roma and Egyptian communities

- Systematically collect and publish data, ethnically and sex-disaggregated, sufficiently specific and disaggregated in necessary details regarding Roma and Egyptian employment, education and VET, gender, and especially the intersectionalities
- Continue collecting in-depth data on specific Roma and Egyptian communities' needs and gender norms, roles and practices to the comprehensive geographical coverage and capturing diversities between and within Roma and Egyptian communities and understanding of dynamics in different sub-groups
- Fully mainstream gender in work at all levels
- Aim for at least gender sensitive interventions, and where possible, for gender transformative ones
- Adopt the intersectional approach acknowledging different realities of different sub-groups of Roma and Egyptian girls and women and designing interventions based on it
- Enable meaningful participation of Roma and Egyptian representatives in planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects through advisory committee or similar mechanisms
- Work on de-normalization and de-internalization[2] of ethnic stereotypes and discrimination with Roma and Egyptian communities, empowering them in this direction through group and individual interventions

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[2] Normalization and internalization are harmful processes that occur during growing up and upbringing in which an individual normalizes negative ethnic and gender stereotypes, i.e. accepts them as normal and obligatory, as the only possible view. An individual also internalizes them, i.e. incorporates them into his or hers identity as

- Work on de-normalization and de-internalization of gender stereotypes and discrimination with Roma and Egyptian communities, especially regarding the gender-based violence, empowering them in this direction through group and individual interventions
- Continuously provide group and individual empowerment interventions with Roma and Egyptian girls targeting their specific, high vulnerability
- Initiate self-help groups for Roma and Egyptian girls and women targeted to reduce gender-biased social norms
- Work on awareness rising in Roma and Egyptian communities, and especially families, on the need and importance of women's education and employment
- Provide counseling and support to Roma and Egyptian women in inclusion to VET and labor market
- Inform, empower and sensitize Roma and Egyptian communities for different, non-traditional vocations for girls within VET
- Support Roma and Egyptian girls and women in transition to non-traditional vocations within VET and when seeking (better paid) employment, help them step out of traditional gender norms even when it is not in accordance with the traditional female role
- Organize childcare services within the families, in the community, and greater inclusion of Roma children in state kindergartens, to ensure that Roma and Egyptian women will be able to attend VET service and especially take up the full employment based on VET, given their homemaking duties
- Provide targeted counseling and support services to Roma and Egyptian women who want to get employed, focused on solving these issues
- Develop alliances and partnerships with Roma and Egyptian families to support the girls in VET and employment, especially with strong female figures in the households
- Provide additional educational and financial support for Roma and Egyptians, especially girls and women in VET
- Provide mentoring support and role models for Roma and Egyptian students, especially girls and women in VET
- Promote the use of Roma/Roma and Egyptian mediators at all levels of education
- Promote the positive role models of well educated, employed and successful Roma and Egyptians in their communities and in the broader society
- Organize informational and awareness rising campaigns on VET in Roma and Egyptian communities and support for interested members of those communities in accessing the VET, with focus on women and girls
- Facilitate the process for Roma and Egyptians from VET enrollment, graduation, internship, to employment, with focus on women and girls
- Support the social enterprises of Roma and Egyptians both in terms of financing and counseling
- Organize financial literacy and entrepreneurship courses and on-going support for Roma and Egyptians interested in self-employment

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apprehension of himself or herself. For example, a woman learns that all women are inferior and that this is the normal state of things and considers herself inferior.

Empowering interventions in working with such vulnerable people are then to de-normalize harmful stereotypes and norms (learn that one's own inferiority is not normal and natural but imagined and imposed) and de-internalize (learn that oneself is not inferior and to value oneself more).

(Explanation from the author of this analysis.)

- Organize "bridging" courses for Roma and Egyptians who don't qualify for VET due to the insufficient formal education and lack of skills

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADA - Austrian Development Agency

ALMM - Active Labor Market Measures

ALMP - Active Labor Market Policies

COE - Council of Europe

CSO – Civil Society Organizations

EIGE - European Institute for Gender Equality

EO - Employment Office

EPP - Employment Promotion Programmes

EU – European Union

GA - Gender Analysis

GBV - Gender Based Violence

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

ICT - Internet Communication Technology

NAPIRE - National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NEET - Neither in Education, Employment, or Training

NESS - National Employment and Skills Strategy

NSAPGE - National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality

OIC - Organization of Islamic Cooperation

OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

PES - Public Employment Services

REF - Roma Education Fund

RVA - Roma Versitas Albania

RVK - Roma Versitas Kosovo

UN - United Nations

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

VET - Vocational Education and Training

WTO – World Trade Organization

METHODOLOGY

Purpose and Objectives of the Gender Analysis

The purpose of this *GA* is to provide *WinForVET Project* staff and partners with the necessary inputs and foundational information on relevant gender concerns for systematic mainstreaming of gender into the *WinForVET Project*. The ToR for this assignment is in the *Annex 1*.

The objectives of this *GA* are to identify:

- Which gender relations affect the achievement of sustainable results of *WinForVET Project*

- How the *WinForVET Project* affects the relative status of men and women

- Which gender-related issues should and can be addressed within the *WinForVET Project.*

Overall Process of the Gender Analysis

Gender Consultant has conducted *GA* in following phases:

- **Initial interviews with REF project team and local project team in Albania**
    - Clarifying, discussing and agreeing on the **GA Plan**
    - Going through **GA questions**
        - Feedback on questions
        - Choosing appropriate respondents for the stage of collecting information for GA.

- **Collecting information for GA**
    - Desk review
        - Publicly available documents
        - Data on request
    - Focus groups
    - Interviews with key informants as needed
        - Assessing the potential of the project to empower women, address strategic gender interests and transform gender relations
        - Identifying opportunities and entry points for mainstreaming gender into the project.

- **Finalizing findings**
    - Reviewing and analyzing collected data
    - Formulating findings and recommendations
    - Writing the report.

Applied methodology of GA

The gender analysis consisted of collecting and analyzing primary and secondary data:

- Secondary data encompassed the review of available documents (desk review). List of Reviewed *WinForVET Project* and REF documents is in *Annex 2*. Additionally, numerous other data sources were used (i.e. state statistics; relevant international, regional and country researches, state strategies and laws, etc.)

- Primary data encompassed the collection of new data, using different techniques depending on examinees:

  - In-depth interviews were used in individual and group setting for gaining in-depth insight into the *WinForVET Project* dynamics and some specific gender issues. The list of Interviewed Persons is in *Annex 3*, and the Indicative List of Interview Questions is in *Annex 4*.

  - Focus groups were conducted with *WinForVET Project* beneficiaries and other representatives of Roma and Egyptian communities for gaining in-depth insight into the relevant social norms and attitudes. The List of Focus Groups Participants is in *Annex 5*, the Indicative Lists of Focus Groups Questions are in *Annex 6*, and the Report from the Focus Groups is in *Annex 7*.

Limitations and caveats

The first and foremost limitation of this GA was a lack of reliable, representative and comprehensive data sufficiently specific and disaggregated in necessary details for the purpose of this GA, especially regarding the intersectionalities.

COVID-19 has posed a significant additional constraint on conducting this GA, both directly – where direct meetings and group gatherings were (almost) impossible, but also indirectly – where work of institutions and organizations was slowed down and altered due to the COVID-19 restrictions on movements, gatherings and presence at work. These difficulties have been overcome using the telephone and Zoom instead of face-to-face interviews for contacts with some respondents.

Focus groups conducted under this GA have provided highly valuable data, but within the limited time and resources for that and especially with the COVID-19 constraints it was not possible to collect fully reliable data and data representative of all geographical variants, sub-groups and sub-cultures within the Roma and Egyptian communities. Therefore, it is important to continue with collection of this precious data through the project so that the full picture of in-depth data relevant for this project is collected.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Republic of Albania - Country Context and Gender Issues

Politically, Albania is a unitary parliamentary constitutional republic and a developing country with an upper-middle income economy. It went through the process of transition following the end of communism in 1990, from centralized planning to a market-based economy. Albania provides universal health care and free primary and secondary education to

its citizens. Albania is a member of the United Nations, World Bank, UNESCO, NATO, WTO, COE, OSCE, and OIC. It is an official candidate for membership in the European Union[3].

Socio-economically, in recent decades, Albania has made considerable progress in economic development, which has resulted in poverty reduction and increased economic growth. The global financial crisis hit Albania after 2008 and resulted in reduced economic growth, reaching its lowest rate in 2013[4]. The economic growth started to recover in the later years and peaked in 2017. Nonetheless, per capita GDP is much lower in Albania than EU-28[5]. The main economic sectors contributing to economic growth are services, industry, construction, and agriculture[6].

Albania's population is 2,845,955 where women make up for 50.1 %[7]. More than half of Albania's population lives in rural areas, and 57 % of them being women. Poverty is more widespread in rural areas, where 4 out of 5 people are poor[8].

Albania publishes annual publication "Men and Women in Albania"[9] which presents data on different areas of life divided by gender, in order to reflect the problems of society in terms of achieving gender equality. It also publishes The „Gender Equality Index"[10] which measures gender equality based on the methodology of the Gender Equality Index 2017, developed by EIGE for the European Union and its Member States[11]. Both publications, as well as other sources, suggest the constant progress of Albania towards gender equality, but still indicate a substantial gender gap. Some main findings from both publications relevant for this analysis include:

- Albania has made considerable progress in establishing a relevant **institutional framework and policies**, as well as participation in relevant international commitments to ensure gender equality. Legislation in the field of gender equality has been considerably improved, especially from 1995, with the most important advancements made after 2006[12].

- Albania has the **National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality** (NSAPGE) 2016-2020 which encompasses a comprehensive set of measures for advancing gender equality in the country and is a main driver of policy making in gender equality.

- The Official Statistics Program[13] entails **gender statistics** in the official statistics.

- Albania **ranks in the middle of all countries** that report Gender Equality Index, which include all EU Member States and two EU candidate countries - North Macedonia and Serbia.

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[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albania#Minorities
[4] 5 INSTAT. National Accounts. http://instat.gov.al/al/temat/ekonomi-dhe-financ%C3%AB/llogarit%C3%AB-komb%C3%ABtare-gdp/#tab2
[5] In 2017, the per capita GDP of Albania was EUR 4,024 compared to EUR 27,780 for the EU-28.
[6] Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Albania 2020,
http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6661/gender_equality_index_for_the_republic_of_Albania_2020.pdf
[7] On 1 January 2020, http://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/demography-and-social-indicators/population/
[8] Data obtained from REF's key informants through in-depth interviews.
[9] http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/women-and-men-in-Albania-2020/
[10] Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Albania 2020,
http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6661/gender_equality_index_for_the_republic_of_Albania_2020.pdf
[11] https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index
[12] Detailed overview can be found in the Women And Men In Albania 2020
[13] http://www.instat.gov.al/en/Home.aspx

- One factor that contributed to the better ranking of Albania compared to the listed countries is higher achievement in the domain of *power* than in majority of EU Member States. The domain of *power* scores 60.9 and places the Republic in 6th place vis-a-vis the rest of the countries. The high score results from Albania having a **high representation of women in *political and economic power***. Representation of women in decision-making has increased continuously for years since 2013 at the legislative and executive level. Women represent 29.3 percent of the members of the parliament and 57 percent of the government is represented by women ministers.

- On the other hand, **women's *social power***, that is, representation in bodies of research financing, media, and top sports organizations boards, is lagging the progress in political and economic power.

- The largest **gender gaps** are in the domains of *knowledge*, *money* and *time*, while scores are similar in the domains of *work* and *health*.

- **Education attainment** in Albania shows that the gender gap favors boys in lower grades and then reverses in tertiary education, in favor of girls. Men have 0.5 years higher attainment than women (10.25 against 9.75 years), although the situation is reversed for the younger cohort aged 20-39 (10.6 against 11 years on average).

- **Enrolment in preschool** in Albania is 76.3, but boys have higher enrollment.

- Although there are more **highly educated women** than men in Albania, their share is still relatively low compared to EU levels and national targets.

- The **segregation according to fields of education** is still prominent, with female tertiary students concentrating in the areas of education, health and welfare, humanities and arts, and male students prevail in the field of services, engineering, manufacturing, construction and agriculture.

- The **labor market shows disparities** between women and men in Albania; women have lower labor force participation rates and employment rates, and higher inactivity rates due to household responsibilities.

- The largest difference in labor market indicators between women and men is in the **labor force participation rate**, with a gap of 17.2 percent.

- Although men have a slightly higher **unemployment rate** than women in Albania, unemployment statistics mainly capture underemployment for women, since a large percentage are counted as employed in unpaid family labor.

- Lastly, the **gender wage gap** is 10.7 percent in Albania (in comparison to 16.0 percent in the EU-28), but it should be noted that the gender wage gap in Albania is calculated from wages declared at the tax office. As a result of informality, wages are often underreported, especially the higher wages, which pertain to men. Consequently, the gender wage gap is reduced.

- **Gender segregation in the labor market** is still prominent and reflected in the higher concentration of women in sectors such as social services.

- 47.1 % of people benefiting from urban **pensions** are women while the gender ratio for rural pensioners significantly differs, of whom 66.4 % are women.

- The average **retirement age** is 65.1 for men and 61 for women, while for a mother with many children the average retirement age is 55.8 years old.

- The domain of *time* has the lowest index score (48.1), indicating very **unbalanced responsibilities regarding care for family members and unpaid household work**. While women carry a majority of these responsibilities, they do not participate as much as men in social activities that are important for their wellbeing and quality of life.

- In addition to the differences in the labor market **women also face a double burden**, since they are primarily responsible for the unpaid labor within the household, which is mainly focused in household chores and child-care. Regardless of their employment status, women are by far the largest participants of unpaid care work. Over 90 percent of women regardless of their employment status participate in unpaid work compared to less than 50 percent of men. Furthermore, employed women devote about 4 hours to unpaid work compared to less than one hour for men. The difference is much larger for women who are not in employment- they spend about 6 hours in unpaid work compared to about one hour spent by men who are not employed.

- Overall, 1 in 2 women, or 52.9 % of women, have experienced **partner domestic violence** at least once in their lifetime, and 36.6 % of them are currently experiencing violence. The most common forms of violence are experienced during a love affair or in the family and are exercised by the intimate partner.

- The age groups that have experienced the most frequent domestic violence from the intimate partner are the age groups from 45-54 years old and from 55-64 years old. All forms of violence are less common in the 18-24 age group.

- Among women aged 18-74, 18.2% have experienced violence by someone other than their husband/boyfriend (**non-partner violence**) at least once since age 15, and 2.4% are currently experiencing it.

- **Social norms** do not condemn violence. 46.5 % of community members where abused women live believe that domestic violence should be tolerated in order to keep the family together. The physical violence experienced by women in the family is seen primarily as part of their guilt, and publicizing the experience of violence outside the family circle is considered shameful.

Unfortunately, none of these reports show the position of Roma and Egyptian women, nor do they contain any **statistics specific** to this groups, which is particularly unhelpful knowing that the gender dynamics itself is not the same in all subgroups. **Intersectionality** of any kind is also completely invisible.

In addition to broad state trends mentioned above, some new trends emerged with the **influences of COVID-19 pandemic**. Again, with the appearance of the crisis in society, women's vulnerabilities were reinforced[14]:

- As women's economic security was diminished, their share of unpaid care and domestic work increased - 76% of women reported increased time spent on unpaid domestic work in comparison to 66% of men.

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[14] The impact of COVID-19 on women's and men's lives and livelihoods, UNWOMEN, 2020, https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/12/the-impact-of-covid-19

- 72% of women reported increased time spent on unpaid care work in comparison to 62% of men.
- Women's psychological and mental health was more affected, and they experienced more challenges seeking health services.

FINDINGS OF GENDER ANALYSIS

Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania

The Albanian government adopted legislation on official minorities in 2017 which provides official minority status for nine national minorities without distinguishing between national and ethno-linguistic groups. The legislation provides for minority language education and dual official language use for the local administrations in which minorities traditionally reside or in which a minority makes up 20 percent of the total population. With this law, Albania recognized the following nine national or cultural minorities: Aromanian (Vlachs), Greek, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Serb, Roma, Balkan-Egyptian, Bosnian and Bulgarian[15]. Until the 2017 Law on the Protection of National Minorities[16], Roma were only recognized as a linguistic minority, while Egyptians were recognized neither as a linguistic minority nor as a national minority.

Contrary to official statistics that show over 97 per cent Albanian majority in the country, minority groups have frequently disputed the official numbers, asserting a higher percentage of their country's population[17]. According to the 2011 population census, 8,301 Roma and 3,668 Egyptians live in Albania. It is estimated that the real number of Roma in Albania ranges between 13,000 and 150,000[18]. The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities warned that the results of the census should be viewed with the utmost caution and is not to be relied exclusively in determining policy on the protection of national minorities[19].

It response to this criticism, Albanian authorities indicated that a new census was planned with the improved methodology. Meanwhile, the authorities as well as civil society representatives operate on the assumption that the combined numbers of the Roma and Egyptian communities in the country are about 30,000 to 40,000 persons[20].

Here we need to stress that Roma and Egyptians, although often discussed jointly due to perceived similar issues and impediments to their integration and inclusion, are in fact **different groups**. Various representatives of Roma and Egyptian communities point out that they do not agree with the political approach of designing one public policy towards both groups and already advocate for differential statistics and following approach. Albanian

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[15] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (11 May 2005)."World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Albania : Overview". United Nations High Commission for Refugees.
[16] Republic of Albania, Assembly of the Republic of Albania, Law No. 97/2017 on the Protection of National Minorities in the Republic of Albania. https://www.parlament.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ligj-nr-96-dt-13-10-2017-1.pdf
[17] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albania#Minorities
[18] commission staff working document, Roma inclusion measures reported under the EU Framework for NRIS, 2019, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52019SC0320
[19] "Third Opinion on Albania adopted on 23 November 2011". Advisory Committee on the Framework for the Protection of National Minorities. https://rm.coe.int/168008c633
[20] ECRI report on Albania (sixth monitoring cycle). https://rm.coe.int/report-on-Albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241

authorities accepted the need for respecting differences between Roma and Egyptian communities, as well as within these communities, but there are some setbacks in the implementation of the changed approach[21]. The main difference between two peoples is that Egyptians are, in general, more integrated into Albanian society than Roma[22]. However, where Egyptians and Roma reside in the same neighborhoods they often tend to be perceived as the same group and encounter similar obstacles to full inclusion, especially in the fields of education, employment and housing.

Furthermore, Roma and Egyptians are **diverse groups** and can be distinguished according to traditional group affiliations, religion (Islam, including Bektashi, Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant), or their (first) language (Romani or Albanian in particular). There are also significant intra-Roma and intra-Egyptian differences and sub-cultures within each community determined by the type of their settlement, history and influences, neighborhood, migration, place of birth, ancestry, housing, schooling, etc.[23] In fact, given the estimated dimensions and significance of these differences[24] it is de facto a stereotype to treat them as monolith groups. The data on these kinds of differences are completely absent, especially in the official statistics, and they would be a very important resource, valuable for planning all sorts of interventions with the right impact and potential for sustainability.

Legal and policy framework on Roma and Egyptians in Albania has been considerably developing in the recent years. The 2017 law contains paragraphs relating to prohibition of discrimination and creates obligations on the Albanian government to enact bylaws that ensure the participation of national minorities in public, cultural, social and economic life. Numerous national laws, strategies, policy documents and international obligations determine the policy towards Roma and Egyptians in Albania and their situation. In addition to more general documents such as the Law on the Protection from Discrimination, the relevant sectoral laws and policies (e.g. in education or employment), Albania has Roma-specific policies, in particular the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians (NAPIRE) 2016-2020 which is a part of the overall social protection and social inclusion approach in Albania within the framework of the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020. NAPIRE provides specific measures for education and promotion of intercultural dialogue, employment, and vocational education and training, among other fields.

Although the **discriminatory attitudes towards Roma and Egyptians** are (only) relatively mild in Albania in comparison to other Balkans countries, they still do prevail and affect all aspects of lives of these populations in Albania[25]. Research show that vulnerable categories tend to be the last to benefit in periods of sustained prosperity and the first to suffer in times of austerity or economic decline, which explains even worsening situation of Roma in some periods even after some progress has been made. Among all the researched vulnerable groups in the society Roma in particular remain victims of deeply held prejudices in both social and professional settings. So, majority Albanians are much less supportive of affirmative action for Roma than for other vulnerable groups in relation to access to education, employment in

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[21] Albanian authorities first started collecting differentiated statistics, but this practice was recently stopped again. Data obtained from REF's key informants through in-depth interviews.
[22] ECRI Report On Albania (sixth monitoring cycle). https://rm.coe.int/report-on-Albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241
[23] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019, https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans
[24] Data obtained from REF's key informants through in-depth interviews.
[25] Balkan Barometer 2019: Public Opinion SURVEY, RCC, https://www.rcc.int/pubs/89/annual-report-of-the-secretary-general-of-the-regional-cooperation-council-2019-2020

the public sector, and better housing. In addition, social distance shows a deeply rooted prejudice against this minority group where only 54% of Albanians would invite a Roma to their house, 69% would buy products from Roma/made by Roma, 76% would agree to their children going to school with Roma children and only 24% of them would marry Roma or allow their children to marry Roma.

Although Albania has made important steps towards Roma and Egyptians integration, there is still a long way to go. The **main open issues currently** are[26]:

- **Lack of ethnically, intra-ethnic group and sex-disaggregated data** to base on and assess the impact of national policies and interventions supporting the inclusion of Roma and to monitor the impact of financial support in priority areas.

- **Inequalities in education** between Roma and non-Roma: low enrolment in pre-primary education (with a gap of 31%), in compulsory education (the gap between Roma and non-Roma in Albania reaches 31% with 66% of Roma children enrolled), the gap in completion of tertiary education (significantly increased in for majority, but for Roma remained around 1%).

- **Inequalities in employment and labor market access**, with over 55% of economically active working-age Roma unemployed.

- Roma and Egyptians continue to face **problems in accessing healthcare**. Many members of these communities do not have health insurance cards due to the fact that they are neither regularly employed nor registered as unemployed. Poor housing conditions, low levels of education and health-related knowledge, physical distance from healthcare centers and experiences of discrimination exacerbate existing problems. The lack of health insurance coverage is hindering access to certain medical examinations and the affordability of expensive medicines and lowering vaccination rates among children for members of the Roma and Egyptian communities compared to the overall population[27].

- **Access to housing** is a constant issue among Roma and Egyptians in Albania, alongside with access to electricity and connection to public sewage or wastewater tanks, even observed to be worsening in recent periods. Additional concern of discrimination in the housing sector persists. The mainstream population is not willing to rent to Roma. As a result, they cannot enter rental contracts and benefit from rent support. Moreover, local governments have insufficient capacity to design housing policies and prepare investment proposals that take into account the needs of beneficiary populations and eradicate segregation[28]. Besides this, the widespread lack of ownership or secure tenancy arrangements makes many Roma and Egyptians vulnerable to evictions. Many have built their illegal houses on unused public land or on property whose ownership remained unclear after the fall of communism. The authorities usually tolerated the use of public land by Roma and Egyptians as long as that land was not designated for any other purpose, such as infrastructure projects or sale to commercial enterprises. With increasing economic development in Albania, Roma and Egyptians living in informal houses have come under pressure to abandon

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[26] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52019SC0320

[27] ECRI Report on Albania (sixth monitoring cycle). https://rm.coe.int/report-on-Albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241

[28] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52019SC0320

their places of residence, in some cases being evicted multiple times from different places without easy access to alternative and permanent housing solutions[29].

- **Many Roma lack civil documentation**, which remains a major barrier to access to services such as health care and housing, graduation certificates and formal jobs. Lack of documentation is also a barrier to accessing justice. For example, although there is a legislative provision for free legal aid in Albania, the aid is inaccessible to many Roma because they do not have the documentation required to prove residence or income and therefore are not eligible to receive the state-funded legal assistance[30]. Access to documentation disproportionately affects returnee children who have benefited from schooling in the EU, but the lack of documentation leads to delays in the enrollment in formal education systems upon return to Albania.

Compared to Roma and Egyptian men, **women**:

- Have a lower education level, spend fewer years in school, are more likely to drop out of school and are slightly less literate;

- More frequently are inactive in the labor market, work in informal employment, and receive substantially lower payments for their work;

- Experience intersectional discrimination, i.e. they face discrimination and social exclusion on multiple grounds of ethnicity/race, gender, class and education[31];Roma women do not always have free choice in deciding about their reproductive right and choosing their partner;

- Some of the domains in which the patriarchal system violates women's freedom are related to body integrity, unfair distribution of housework, early and arranged marriages.

All these dimensions of inequality of Romani and Egyptian women in Albania will be presented and discussed in more details in the following thematic chapters of this analysis.

In-depth data from this research has also shown that traditional **gender norm** control is very powerful in Roma and Egyptian communities. Women and men, as a rule, abide by traditional gender norms. This division of gender roles is dominant, and men deal with the public while women deal with the private sphere of life. Roma and Egyptian women are responsible for maintaining the home and taking care of the children, while men are expected to earn and provide for the family. Our in-depth analysis has also confirmed this finding. In this respect, traditional values are still very much alive and influential, perpetuated by older generation because they believe in them, and by younger ones because of family pressure and strong family ties. What is new and changed is that almost all respondents now acknowledge the

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[29] ECRI Report on Albania (sixth monitoring cycle). https://rm.coe.int/report-on-Albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241
[30] Regional Roma Surveys of 2011 and 2017, https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html
[31] Gender-Based Violence Against Roma Women Report of a field study of Roma communities in Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2018, https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/nowhere-to-turn-gbv-against-roma-women.html

importance of education and employment for both men and women. But for girls and women it is important unless it gets in the way of their marriage and having children. These roles are still an absolute must for Roma and Egyptian women. Given the importance and depth of influence of these norms on every aspect of Roma and Egyptian women lives, it is important to include specific interventions in every project targeting them.

Traditional gender roles and norms give more freedom, rights and power to boys and men than to girls and women in all spheres of life. As our research confirmed, this starts very early, with the diminished or completely denied right to have a voice, say and give opinion within the family. Young girls are especially vulnerable and underappreciated. For them, the breaking of their human rights starts within their families. With age, and fulfilled women's duties of being married and doing all the housework, older women gain some power and appreciation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that they are even some Roma sub-cultures where older women are the decision-makers in the home, while men keep their power in the public and the appearance of being the "head of the household". Other than that, the level of women's power will depend on the level of integration of the family.

The gender role of a woman as a housewife, mother and wife is imposed on girls from early childhood, **denying them the opportunity of pursuing different life choices**. Although the focus groups have shown that all boys and girls, women and men think that education and employment are very important and want better education and good jobs, yet, believing that women's most important role is to become a wife, mother and housewife, significantly narrows down their chances of actually achieving that. Roma and Egyptian girls who live in segregated settlements are not expected to complete their education or to find jobs because neither improves their chances of becoming a wife and mother, but it rather endangers it. This is especially important for higher secondary and tertiary education. As one male group concluded – it is important and good for a girl to finish education as much as she can, but if she is over 20 and something and still unmarried, then no one will want to marry her, because they will think that she has either "been with someone" or there is "something wrong with her". It is worth noting that all participants in our focus groups stated that acceptable age for marriage is after 18, after finishing secondary school and becoming an adult.

Traditional gender norms in Roma communities support **early marriages**. Roma girls are directed by parents, families, and the entire communities to leave school and marry early. These views are still held by older members of Roma and Egyptian families, while for younger generations early marriages are completely unacceptable, especially below the age of 18. The norm that still stays through all generations is that it is very important that girls get married as virgins which is considered to maintain and defend the family name and honor. This is the reason why the younger generations might accept early marriages as "justified" and "understandable". It is the impression that this form of intrusion is completely normalized and internalized, and none of our respondents seem to mind it. The very concept of "virginity", and especially treating is as the family possession and community matter where everyone is allowed and even invited to comment and inspect a girls "virginity" is a form of gender based violence in complete breach of girl's boundaries and basic human rights. It is thus important to tackle this specific issue in the context of work on other gender norms.

Roma girls are also expected to bear children and gain status within the community in this way. Fulfilling these gender roles and demands provides girls with community membership and protection. Due to social and economic exclusion and high rates of poverty, Roma and Egyptian women who live in settlements have no other choice than to rely on their community and follow these very restrictive norms and roles. Also, this research has indicated that in sub-groups or individual families where the level of poverty is high, the traditional norms –

marrying early is seen as a good way out or escape for girls. On the other hand, all of our respondents recognize that early marriages bring a burden of many new problems, too.

As for the dimensions of the phenomenon of early marriages, 50 percent of Roma and Egyptian women in Albania were married before they turned 18. The **arranged marriages are considered acceptable** by majority of this population in Albania, 56 percent of Roma and Egyptian men, and 60 percent of women consider it acceptable to arrange the marriage of their son. Even more, 63 percent of Roma and Egyptian men and 68 percent of women in Albania consider it acceptable to arrange the marriage of their daughter[32]. That said, we have to emphasize that our research has not fully corroborated this finding. Namely, all of our respondents consider this practice obsolete and wrong, especially if it is against the will of the daughter. For boys, they say that the wishes of sons are taken into consideration much more, even in most traditional customs.

Our research is indication that the acceptability of **early and arranged marriages is in decline**, **showing more variability between the sub-groups,** but it is still higher than in non-Roma and Egyptian communities. At this moment, early and arranged marriages are being pushed to the margins of Roma and Egyptian communities – to most poor, secluded and segregated settings.

Previous research[33], as well as this one, show the evidence that **Roma women have less power and voice in the family** and social norms tend to favor men, especially once women marry. This pertains to control over and decisions on education, employment, money, having children, marrying children and pretty much every other aspect of life. In-depth data shows a much more complex picture, where women gain power through life with age, marriage, motherhood, homemaking, nurturing, i.e. through fulfilling traditional gender roles. So, at least in some sub-groups, **mothers and mothers-in-law are those making decisions in the family while preserving the picture of a male household head outside the house. This is an important finding of the research signaling that the dominant female figures would be in some cases the best family allies for interventions addressing gender norms.**

It is important to emphasize that this research has again indicated that there are significant differences in gender norms between Roma and Egyptian cultures as well as intra-group differences for both cultures depending on other factors (location, neighborhoods, urbanity, poverty level, etc.). For example, the appropriate and acceptable age of marriage for girls and boys varies significantly between these groups. As well as the traditions of child marriages, arranged marriages and "stealing the bride" practically don't exist in some sub-groups, while in others they are widespread. Given that this was a qualitative research, true dimensions of differences in norms cannot be established, and it would be important to continue collecting data in this direction.

An especially devastating part of traditional gender norms concerns the **gender-based violence** (GBV). This research has shown, although violence was not a topic in focus, that GBV is widely present and influential in Roma and Egyptian communities as well as highly normalized. Such a situation calls for addressing this issue by every intervention that aims to be at least gender sensitive.

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[32] Regional Roma Surveys of 2011 and 2017,
https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html

[33] Closing the Gender Gaps among Marginalized Roma in the Western Balkans
https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34557

No official data on gender-based violence against Roma and Egyptian women is available in Albania, but a recent study on this issue confirms the heightened vulnerability to violence of female Roma and Egyptians[34].

Roma and Egyptian women also report violence substantially less frequently than the overall population and tend to try to solve these situations with the mediation of the family and in-laws because they trust their family members much more than official institutions. In our group of respondents, no one sees any other viable option.

What complicates the situation significantly is that Albania has no legislation on gender-based violence that addresses intersectional discrimination (discrimination on multiple grounds) like in Roma and Egyptian women. Subsequently, women from these groups who are survivors of domestic violence face more difficulties due to the lack of social services in the areas where they live, high rates of poverty and social exclusion. Furthermore, they encounter racial bias and prejudice when trying to get public services such as social work, police, parties in a court system (judges and public prosecutors), preventing them from receiving the proper assistance and averting them from further attempts.

In addition, and as one of causes, GBV is normalized and acceptable in high percent. 27 percent of Roma and Egyptian men in Albania find it acceptable for a husband to slap his wife. Bride kidnapping, when a boy steals a girl to force her parents to agree to the marriage, is acceptable for 73 percent of both Roma and Egyptian men and women[35] and it is not even seen as violence.

Employment

The situation regarding Roma and Egyptians employment in Albania is continuously very concerning, characterized by high levels of unemployment and activities in the informal sector which rarely provides them a real opportunity to earn a decent income. Virtually all the indicators related to employment are far below those of majority population:

- Over 55% of economically active working-age Roma and Egyptians are **unemployed** in Albania in contrast with 38% of majority population**[36]**.

- Not only is employment low among Roma, but the incidence of **informal work** is high and accounts for 62% of total Roma and Egyptians employment in contrast with 22% of majority population[37]. However, given the low employment rates, boosting job creation rather than formalization should be a priority, especially among such vulnerable groups[38].

- The percentage of **NEET - Not in employment, education, or training youth** (ages 15–24) of Roma and Egyptians is also very high – 76% in comparison with 37% of

[34] Closing the Gender Gaps among Marginalized Roma in the Western Balkans
https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34557
[35] Gender-Based Violence Against Roma Women Report of a field study of Roma communities in Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2018,
https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/nowhere-to-turn-gbv-against-roma-women.html
[36] Commission Staff Working Document, Roma inclusion measures reported under the EU Framework for NRIS, 2019, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52019SC0320
[37] ECRI Report on Albania (sixth monitoring cycle). https://rm.coe.int/report-on-Albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241
[38] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019,
https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans

majority population NEET[39]. The reasons for the high NEET rates among Roma are obvious - levels of educational attainment are lower among Roma, who thus have weaker labor market prospects.

- Some trends[40] even suggest a **decrease** in labor force participation, employment to population ratio (dropped from 42% to only 18% of working age Roma), unemployment rate and NEETs (not in employment, education or training).

- Roma and Egyptians are also less **likely to start a business** (around 5% in comparison with 12% of majority population), and if they start one, it is likely to be **an informal one.** Among Roma start-ups, around 80 percent are not registered; among the start-ups of non-Roma neighbors, around 80 percent tend to be registered[41].

- Additionally, Roma are often **self-employed, primarily in low-profile occupations** such as scrap metal collection or small second-hand trade. Egyptians are more frequently involved in the service sector, domestic care and construction work[42]. This indicates that specific interventions aimed at supporting social enterprises, tax reduction and specific sectors, like waste collecting and recycling, farming and public service could be more effective if accompanied by vocational education measures and transition programmes from education to employment or self-employment. Access to finance and financial literacy would additionally facilitate the creation of micro and small enterprises. The aforementioned measures would also serve to tackle the informal work of Roma[43]

- There are **significant earnings differences** between Roma and Egyptians in comparison to majority population, where non-Roma neighbors earn an average of 45.5 percent more an hour than Roma and Egyptians[44].

There are several important identified **reasons of Roma and Egyptians low employment**. Firstly, labor inactivity among Roma men is related principally to the lack of jobs in the market (52 percent of inactive males), but health problems are also a factor among older men ages 40–64[45]. Interventions that might mitigate low labor market demand could be aimed at **encouraging the private sector to focus on hiring Roma, and facilitating and mediating those connections**. The perception that they are being discriminated against seems to be the reason for inactivity for only 4 percent Roma and Egyptian job seekers in Albania. Given that the share of them who have reported discrimination during the process is ten times higher, it is likely that discrimination is even more widespread, but deeply internalized and accepted

[39] Regional Roma Surveys of 2011 and 2017,
https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html
[40] Regional Roma Surveys of 2011 and 2017,
https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html
[41] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019,
https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans
[42] ECRI Report on Albania (sixth monitoring cycle). https://rm.coe.int/report-on-Albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241
[43] Regional Roma Surveys of 2011 and 2017,
https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html
[44] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019,
https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans
[45] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019,
https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans

among Roma[46]. Our research also confirms that discrimination is widely present in the labor market. In addition, all of the respondents have heard various such examples, and are aware that this is an issue. Interventions that might mitigate these adverse factors should be aimed at awareness rising and prohibition of discrimination as well as empowerment of minority communities. Additionally, providing new positive role models is also important to counter these negative and discouraging examples. In addition, Roma and Egyptians have limited employment information sources. The most frequent modes of learning about job vacancies are usually the word of mouth and announcement boards at the municipality and civil society organizations [47]. Interventions that might improve this situation should be aimed at better access to employment services, facilitation and mediation of those connections, and provision of alternative sources of information.

Contrary to popular discriminatory beliefs, nonlabor income such as remittances, or social assistance and household transfers **do not create work disincentives** among Roma and Egyptians[48]. Data indicates no significant differences in labor force participation between Roma individuals in households receiving social assistance and those in nonrecipient households[49].

There are also several **limitations that affect Roma and Egyptian equal employment**. These include firstly the lack of skills and experience and long stretches of unemployment. Additionally, other limitations include a lack of mobility, residential segregation, a lack of childcare and eldercare options (especially among women), limited flexibility in work arrangements, lack of documentation, and adverse attitudes, social norms, and discrimination, and a lack of role models successful enough in finding a decent job[50]. These barriers on the labor supply side could be lifted through higher educational attainment and training, provision of services that mitigate them as well as community promotion programmes that would widely offer positive employment models.

Roma and Egyptian employment is affected by **actions of public employment services** (PES) in several different ways[51]**.** They are affected by significant constraints in obtaining information on labor market opportunities and serviced differently than other vulnerable clients of PES. Roma are disproportionately channeled to public works programs that have little impact or a negative impact. In Albania, for instance, public works have been proposed as a way to provide employment for registered Roma or Egyptian job seekers through the involvement of the public sector. Less often, registered Roma job seekers are offered training programs for traditional arts and crafts, reinforcing stereotypes and the exclusion from learning skills that are in demand on the labor market. This finding is also corroborated by key informants' interviewees in this research, and by the field example that when the PES had the Roma employee, it resulted in much higher Roma employments in that period. Furthermore, registered Roma job seekers seemed to be less active compared with other job seekers. They were less likely to participate in Active labor market policies (ALMPs), despite

[46] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019,
https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans
[47] Community Assessment, 2018, REF, Unpublished
[48] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019,
https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans
[49] Regional Roma Surveys of 2011 and 2017,
https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html
[50] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019,
https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans
[51] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019,
https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans

showing higher than average rates of employment after graduating from ALMPs. Moreover, ALMPs remain underfunded, limited in scope and unavailable in rural areas, covering only 5.5% of the unemployed. While vocational training and active employment programmes are provided to registered unemployed jobseekers, most Roma are not registered and therefore remain outside of the reach of such programmes.[52]. The implementation of employment promotion programmes subsidized from the state budget has limited impact on the Roma employment rates[53]. According to official data from the National Employment Agency, in 2018 only 239 Roma out of 5,845 registered Roma job seekers were employed. In addition, the Employment Promotion Programmes (EPP) are not tailored enough to Roma and Egyptians needs and provide an adequate support to vulnerable jobseekers to transit into higher productivity jobs[54]. These findings suggest that interventions related to work of PES and their connections with Roma and Egyptian community would be beneficial for the advancement of their employment. Furthermore, Roma and Egyptians not registered as unemployed should also be actively encouraged to participate in these activities through close cooperation with local communities.

The main identified reasons for Roma and Egyptians **dropping out of jobs** are discrimination and dire working conditions[55]. This finding also calls for designed interventions that would target improvement of the working environment.

In response to such a dire employment situation, a large share of Roma and Egyptians in Albania - 44 percent would **consider migrating to another country** for jobs and better living conditions[56]. This does not mean these people plan to permanently stay abroad, but their willingness to do so signals possible future emigration and a continuation of back-and-forth migratory patterns between the Western Balkans and the EU.

For **Roma and Egyptian women**, the circumstances regarding employment are even worse.

The **gender gaps in employment indicators** are significant for Roma and Egyptian women in Albania[57], for labor force participation rate (23 percentage points), for employment to population ratio (13 percentage points), unemployment rate (10 percentage points), and for NEET (20 percentage points). At the same time Roma and Egyptian women are significantly more in the informal employment (22 percentage points) [58]. In comparison, Roma men have low employment rates, but nevertheless higher employment than both Roma women and non-Roma women.

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[52] ECRI Report on Albania (sixth monitoring cycle). https://rm.coe.int/report-on-Albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241

[53] Regional Roma Surveys of 2011 and 2017, https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html

[54] WinForVET project

[55] Regional Roma Surveys of 2011 and 2017, https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html

[56] Regional Roma Surveys of 2011 and 2017, https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html

[57] Gender-Based Violence Against Roma Women Report of a field study of Roma communities in Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2018, https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/nowhere-to-turn-gbv-against-roma-women.html

[58] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019, https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans

The gender gap is mostly **determined** by gender discrimination of employers against Roma and Egyptian women, and by (discriminatory) gender norms that tend to relegate women to the home and prevent them from participating in traditional household decision making.

As for the employer discrimination, usually intersectional and based on at least race, gender and class, the most potentially successful interventions would focus on anti-discriminatory policies, campaigns and the empowerment and support of victims.

As for the social norms and household decisions, this is where the harmful traditional **gender norms and practices** collide with the need for women's employment and prevent them in obtaining one, in many ways. Thus, the main reason behind female inactivity in the labor market is the presence of children in the household and family responsibilities.[59] The lack of affordable childcare, together with social norms that dictate that childcare and eldercare are women's responsibilities here represent binding constraints on women. Roma women tend not to participate in the labor force mostly during the childbearing years, often not reaching peak participation until they are in their forties[60]. This finding points to the conclusion that expanding the coverage of good-quality, affordable childcare may boost female labor force participation. In addition, the lack of access to part-time work and the state policy of de facto discouraging it may hinder women from joining the labor market in this way and call for the initiatives to advocate for, promote and expand part-time employment opportunities for Roma and Egyptian women.

Roma and Egyptian women with low educational achievement often choose not to work because they do not find adequate incentives to join the labor force. Participating in the labor market for very low wages is less profitable than homemaking and it will cause them to have to pay for additional childcare services, transport costs etc. However, Roma and Egyptian women with higher educational achievement may obtain sufficiently attractive salaries and a larger share of such women do work, though their labor force participation rates still are lower than those of Roma men with similar or even lower educational attainment. In Albania, labor force participation rates are lower among Roma and Egyptian women who have completed upper-secondary education or above than among Roma and Egyptian men who have not completed compulsory education[61].

As some previous research have proved, some Roma and Egyptian women make a living by working informally, in the grey economy, mostly collecting cans or other recyclable materials, selling products in bazaars and open-air markets, or cleaning people's homes. This type of work is possible only for those women who can rely on someone (usually another woman in the family, the mother-in-law or the eldest daughter) to take care of young children. Divorced and widowed Roma and Egyptian women have to work as there is nobody who can provide for them and their children[62]. Our in-depth research has also shown such tendencies in Roma and Egyptian women employment. Additionally, begging is considered informal work according to the respondents and also an option to the most disadvantaged.

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[59] Commission Staff Working Document, Roma inclusion measures reported under the EU Framework for NRIS, 2019, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52019SC0320
[60] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019, https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans
[61] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019, https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans
[62] Gender-Based Violence Against Roma Women Report of a field study of Roma communities in Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2018, https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/nowhere-to-turn-gbv-against-roma-women.html

The in-depth data from this research – interviews and focus groups **-** has corroborated previous data on gender roles, but also emphasized that there are significant differences exactly in these norms and intersectionalities between Roma and Egyptians as well as that they vary depending on other characteristics - between different settlements, religions and other sub-groups within these populations. These findings cannot be corroborated by a reliable quantitative data for now. Therefore, it is important to gather and study such data in a systematic way in the future.

Education

The situation regarding Roma and Egyptians' education in Albania is continuously very concerning, with all the indicators far below those for majority population. Inequalities in several dimensions of education between Egyptians and Roma and majority population emerge early in life:

- **Preprimary education** (ages 3–5) enrollment rates of Roma and Egyptians are significantly lower in Albania in comparison to those of majority population (33% and 64% respectively). Such large ethnic differences in preprimary enrollment are concerning given the importance of preschool and kindergarten for children's school readiness and early achievement. Children from low-income households, i.e. Roma and Egyptians, benefit even more from preprimary education than children from high-income households as it stimulates early developments and makes up for some disadvantages of deprivation in the families. Preprimary attendance can also help Roma and Egyptian children overcome language barriers.[63].

- Ethnic enrollment gaps are even wider in **compulsory education**. While it is nearly universal among the majority population in Albania (96%), this is not the case among Roma and Egyptian children (only 66%). Although it had risen from 48% in 2011, this number is still far too low in 2018. The compulsory public school system is supposed to be the great equalizer by providing equal opportunities for children regardless of ethnicity or socioeconomic background, but large inequalities persist[64].

- Furthermore, particular attention needs to be paid to **differences between enrolment, attendance and completion rates**. While there is no reliable national data on the attendance rate, local representatives, especially Roma organizations are warning that ethnic gap further widens at this point. Roma and Egyptian children often have much lower attendance rates due to various causes. Missing the opportunity to intervene at the point of attendance and ensuring it, means letting further drop-outs to happen and enabling subsequently the drop in the rate of compulsory education completion, which is extremely low for Roma and Egyptian children at only 43% in comparison to 98% of majority population[65]. Given that completed elementary education is the bare minimum for getting any legal/official employment and even a necessary prerequisite for entering VET, leaving more than half of this minority population without it means leaving them also without a chance to ever get a proper job.

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[63] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019,
https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans
[64] ECRI Report on Albania (sixth monitoring cycle). https://rm.coe.int/report-on-Albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241
[65] ECRI Report on Albania (sixth monitoring cycle). https://rm.coe.int/report-on-Albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241

- Ethnic gaps in educational attainment are further widening for **upper secondary and tertiary education**. Few Roma complete upper secondary educations (15% in comparison to 75% in majority population). Tertiary education completion rates are close to zero among Roma and Egyptians (1% in comparison to 25% in majority population)[66]. These rates are similar to the rates observed in the least developed countries, which range from 5 percent among the poorest inhabitants to 21 percent among the overall population[67]. Since completing secondary education is necessary for getting a decent job as a qualified worker and leads to higher employment rates, higher earnings, higher levels of participation in civic life, and better health, it is clear why interventions in narrowing this large gap are needed. Similarly, tertiary education becomes increasingly important in the labor market and especially for higher earnings in the economy where those are rare, so it is also clear why attention to this level of education of Roma and Egyptians is also needed. Not to mention how much having role models of Roma and Egyptians intellectuals would affect racial stereotypes in majority population and aspiration levels in minority communities.

- **Literacy rates** among the majority population in Albania (ages 15-64) are close to 100 percent. However, among Roma and Egyptians males at 65 percent in Albania[68]. Adult education is particularly important for narrowing this gap, considering the low self-reported literacy rates.

- An additional issue with education is a **non-inclusive school environment and discrimination.** Although the official reports state that segregation of Roma and Egyptian children in schools does not exist, there were some examples of de facto structural discrimination and segregation of Roma and Egyptian pupils in schools as well as complaints about its sub-standard conditions[69], which indicates the need for close monitoring of such trends. Furthermore, a significant proportion of Roma and Egyptians attend majority Roma schools (19%). In comparison, their non-Roma students are less likely to attend such schools – only 10%[70]. This situation could possibly indicate lower quality education, which can be due to poorer infrastructure and lower teacher qualifications. However, efforts to integrate schools more should be very careful, since it could lead to lower attendance and higher drop-outs due to additional travel costs, time spent in traveling and greater exposure to discriminatory environment.

There are several important identified **reasons of Roma and Egyptians low educational attainment**. Firstly, discrimination and social norms are the most significant constraints to their education[71]. Affordability[72] is an additional preventing factor. This points out the need

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[66] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019, https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans

[67] UNICEF global databases, 2017, based on Demographic and Health Surveys, Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys, and other national household surveys

[68] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019, https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans

[69] ECRI Report on Albania (sixth monitoring cycle). https://rm.coe.int/report-on-Albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241

[70] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019, https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans

[71] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019, https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans

for a broad range of interventions for mitigating these adverse influences such as providing childcare subsidies or other financial incentives to low-income families, outreach and communication about the benefits of formal childcare and education among Roma and Egyptians, awareness rising about harmful social norms, fee waivers, food coupons, free transport, hiring of more Roma and Egyptian teachers or mediators in schools, policies aimed at improving school completion rates and reducing the number of students dropping out of school, stronger monitoring and evaluation of them etc.

There is also a strong **link between family background—mostly the educational attainment of mothers and compulsory school enrollment** among Roma and Egyptians. The probability of child enrollment increases significantly with each additional year of education of the mother[73]. Enrollment also increases with the number of years of education of the father, but this effect is smaller. These results point to a vicious intergenerational circle among Roma and Egyptians where low educational attainment among parents perpetuates lower school enrollment among the children and are associated with low educational aspirations among parents and children**.** Such a situation calls for interventions focused at raising the educational attainment of mothers, improving parenting skills, rising awareness of parents and offering different role models to children.

The next high-ranking reason for not attending the education among males is the need to **work** for income (20%). Differently, among women, **early marriage[74]** is an important factor affecting enrollment and dropping out (21%)[75]. These findings were reiterated in our research and they point out to a differentiated approach in mitigating low educational attainment in Roma and Egyptian males and females.

For Roma and Egyptian women, the circumstances regarding education are even worse than for men. The **gender gaps in education** indicators are significant for Roma and Egyptian women in Albania[76]. Preprimary education enrollment rates of Roma and Egyptians girls are somewhat lower than those for boys (30% and 35% respectively). Compulsory education enrollment rates are identically low - 66%. Compulsory education completion rates show the wider gender gap between girls and boys (39% and 47% respectively). Roma and Egyptian girls are disproportionately affected by drop-outs. While for upper secondary and tertiary education gender gaps are miniscule – 1%, this is a sign of extremely low rates for both sexes, not of a narrow gender gap. Literacy rate among Roma and Egyptians males is 65 percent while for women is, again significantly lower - 58%[77].

[72] Regional Roma Surveys of 2011 and 2017, https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html

[73] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019, https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans

[74] Child Marriage in Albania (Overview), 2016, UNFPA Albania. http://Albania.unfpa.org/en/publications/child-marriage-Albania, accessed March 14, 2018

[75] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019, https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans

[76] Nowhere to turn Gender-Based Violence Against Roma Women Report of a field study of Roma communities in Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2018, https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/nowhere-to-turn-gbv-against-roma-women.html

[77] Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans 2019, https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/breaking-cycle-of-roma-exclusion-in-western-balkans

Here is where the harmful traditional **gender norms and practices** collide with the need for education of both boys and girls in different ways and prevent them in many ways. Our in-depth research has shown that both women and men, younger and older equally highly value education for their prospects in life. As do their parents. They all are aware that education is important for them and that they should finish it. But both Roma and Egyptian boys and girls are dropping out of school early (girls significantly earlier than boys). While boys are usually allowed to finish their compulsory education, girls are often pulled out of school before the completion. The most frequent reasons for dropping out of school among girls were early marriage, preserving their virginity for marriage and helping out with household chores. Among boys, the most common reason was the need to start working and earning. Our research strongly corroborates these findings, with addition that newer generations think that those practices are harmful and should be changed. They were also stating that practices are already changing, and fewer girls get married early. The factor that is hindering faster changes in accepted norms is that parents and girls are afraid that if a girl doesn't marry early enough, she won't be able to find a husband at all because nobody would want to marry her if she is "too old for marriage". This fits with expressed attitudes of young boys who also said they would look for a young enough bride for themselves.

Both of these reasons are strongly determined by tough **traditional gender norms** on what is considered proper masculine or feminine behavior which women and men, even with some new changes, still as a rule abide. Roma boys prioritize the role of earner and provider over their education, while the girls prioritize the role of mother, wife and housewife over it. One of the crucial differences between girls and boys who drop out of school is that boys drop out voluntarily, while the girls do so involuntarily, under pressure. Our respondents also added that if a girl doesn't obey the family decision a lot of bad things could happen to her, including disowning or forced marriage. This points to a need for family and community interventions targeting social norms and attitudes and empowering women as the necessary component of every programme aiming at sustainable improvements in the field of Roma and Egyptian education and employment.

Our research has shown that all men and women, boys and girls want better education, good jobs and improved conditions of living. However, Roma and Egyptian girls are not expected to complete their education or to find jobs because neither improves their chances of fulfilling their gender role of becoming wives and mothers. Instead, they are expected to get married as virgins, to have children, and gain acceptance and status within their community in this way. Given the social and economic exclusion, high rates of poverty, and relative powerlessness, Roma and Egyptian girls mostly have no other choice than to rely on their community and follow very restrictive traditional rules and roles. This demonstrates how intersectional inequalities deprive the Roma and Egyptian girls. Other cultural characteristic – strong family ties and a sense of loyalty to the family - also contribute to the enforcement of these rules. This points to a need for the interventions aiming at empowerment of girls that are rooted in their communities and offer the assistance "from within". As one group of girls has emphasized – Roma organizations working with girls in their community are the only thing that has really supported them.

Traditional gender roles, and norms, in Roma communities especially, strongly support **child and forced marriages**[78]. Research has shown that 50 percent of Roma women in Albania were married before the age of 18. Arranged marriages are considered acceptable for 56

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[78] Nowhere to turn Gender-Based Violence Against Roma Women Report of a field study of Roma communities in Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2018, https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/nowhere-to-turn-gbv-against-roma-women.html

percent of Roma men and 60 percent of Roma women (if it is to arrange the marriage of their son) and even more, 63 percent of Roma men and 68 percent of Roma women if it is to arrange the marriage of their daughter [79]. This points to a need for family, community and individual interventions to develop the awareness of gender-based violence and de-normalize these violent practices.

Although there are some strong indications that all of these harmful gender norms and practices are slowly shifting, especially in the mixed communities, there is still a long way to go and the interventions tackling them are very much needed.

As it was for the employment of Roma and Egyptians in Albania, again, the same situation is true for their education regarding the availability of data. Available, reliable and comprehensive national official data on all dimensions of Roma and Egyptian education do not exist. Although some progress has been made (a database in the Ministry of Education and Sports on Roma and Egyptian children enrolled in school)[80], based on the existing data it is not possible to form a comprehensive picture of the situation of Roma and Egyptians, especially on gender dimensions and other intersectionalities. To think that national policies and their assessments are based on such truncated, incomplete and insufficient data shows the crucial importance of major improvements in data collection, processing and publication.

Albanian VET system and Roma and Egyptians

Upon the fall of communism in 1991, Albania has achieved an outstanding transformation, from being the poorest country in Europe to becoming an upper-middle income country. However, the capacity for increased productivity, competitiveness and job creation is still low. Despite all the reform efforts that have been made, there is still a significant skill shortage and skill gap in the Albanian labor market, mainly due to insufficient collaboration between the world of education and the world of work. In such situation the Government of Albania has recognized the need to address the employment issue and the importance of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in it. In the National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS) 2014 – 2020 two out of four policy priorities are dedicated to setting up a quality VET system to meet the demands of the labor market. The major achievements of the VET reform since the adoption of NESS are made in the establishment of a comprehensive legislative framework that defines the guiding principles and structure of the VET system, the roles and responsibilities of the key actors and overall standards for VET provision, assessment and certification[81].

The Albanian VET system is deeply rooted in the formal education system, creating a system in which professional training is rarely acquired in informal settings or companies. Students mostly enroll in VET after completing the 9th grade. Most VET programmes last two to four years and are divided in three types: the first type (structured in three levels 2+1+1 years), the

[79] Regional Roma Surveys of 2011 and 2017,
https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets.html
[80] ECRI Report on Albania (sixth monitoring cycle). https://rm.coe.int/report-on-Albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241
[81] Review of Albania's Vocational Education and Training System 2020, UNDP,
https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/review-of-albania-s-vet-system-.html

second type (has two levels 2+2 years) and the third type that (has one level of four years). After every level, the VET student receives a certificate[82]. Vocational Training Centers can last from three to twelve months and offer a vocational certificate. The majority of vocational training centers are free for qualifying individuals, including the vulnerable groups, but there are also a handful of vocational programs offered by fees-based private institutions.

The VET student population in Albania remains relatively low even compared to other Western Balkan countries mainly due to the poor reputation of VET. Traditionally, VET was and is still viewed as a less attractive option for pupils enrolled in upper secondary education and regarded as a second option if a student could not make it into academic education. Another reason is the limited ability of VET institutions to attract highly qualified teachers and trainers. Recently, this image is improving, particularly because VET graduates find it easier to find jobs[83] and because of the state-wide VET promotion. Vocational schools have also been encouraged to enroll more VET students.

Overall VET enrolment rates remain very low. Only 8.1 percent of participants come from marginalized groups - Roma or Egyptian, victims of violence, orphans, returnees[84]. Recent study[85] has shown particularly low results in Roma and Egyptians VET completion and employment rates. It also provided some insights into the considerable gender gap:

Table 1: Number of Roma and Egyptians (male and female) completing VET[86]

Roma	Year 2016	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019
Female	30	39	69	91
Male	60	58	79	154
Total	90	67	119[87]/148[88]	245

Table 2: Number of Roma and Egyptians (male and female) completing VET who then managed to get work or become self-employed

Roma	Year 2016	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019
Female	N/A	N/A	N/A	6
Male	N/A	N/A	N/A	19
Total	N/A	N/A	N/A	25

Given the overall Roma and Egyptian population in Albania and the scale of the problem, it appears obvious that these numbers are far from sufficient to bring about any meaningful

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[82] How and Why Does the Private Sector Participate in Vocational Education and Training? A Descriptive Case Study of VET Projects in Albania and Kosovo 2018, https://www.dcdualvet.org/wp-content/uploads/2018_Wanklin_How-and-Why-Does-the-Private-Sector-Participate-in-Vocational-Education-and-Training.pdf

[83] Dhëmpo, E., Dibra, S., Papa, A., & Shehaj, E. (2016). Skills for Jobs: Research Report. Tirana: Swisscontact.

[84] EU Progress Report for 2018, WInForVET project documents.

[85] Albania Country assessments on Roma in VET, Ina Kokedhima, REF, 2020

[86] National Employment Service, 2020

[87] National Employment Service, 2020

[88] Report on the Implementation of Roma Integration Public Policy in Albania for 2018, www.romalb.org

change that is required to lift a significant number of Roma and Egyptians out of unemployment and poverty.

As documented[89], VET programs in Albania are not sufficiently inclusive of Roma and Egyptians or sensitive to their specific needs. For instance, VET and active employment programmes are provided to registered unemployed jobseekers, but most Roma and Egyptians are not registered and therefore ineligible for such programmes. Moreover, minimum educational requirements to participate in such training activities (completed nine grades of compulsory education) are too high for most Roma and Egyptians, not to mention other groups of insufficiently educated members of these communities. First of all, for VET and active employment programmes to have any real impact they should be expanded to those not registered as unemployed, those who only completed primary education or have no formal education at all, as well as those who attended school but remained illiterate. To tackle the demand side of VET, Roma and Egyptians should also be actively encouraged to participate in these activities through outreach and promotional programs as well as through close cooperation with local communities, Roma organizations and other CSOs.

There are some state incentives to increase this rate, but insufficiently effective for now. For example, the "Second chance" programme of school reintegration for adults enables Roma and Egyptians to finish compulsory education, gaining in this way eligibility to continue further with VET. In addition, as an incentive, the National Employment Service offers a number of vocational trainings to Roma and Egyptians free of charge. However, due to the lack of career orientation activities within this intervention measure, Roma community members place very few requests for those trainings. Also, our research has shown that Roma and Egyptians think that often VET is a loss of time since, in their opinion, it doesn't lead to employment. There aren't enough jobs in the market and, with discriminatory practices against Roma and Egyptians, this leads to an impossibility to find a job even if they finish the VET. Some other incentives and support needed for success and sustainability of VET with Roma and Egyptians are still lacking, like combining VET with supporting services such as mentoring, paid or non-paid internships, financial incentives for employees (scholarships for VET students, paid internships or traineeships, stipends for participants in short-term courses) and employers.

Additionally, VET services do not have sufficient connections with employers even for the practice, let alone the employment. Most students have to find the business, organization or institution where they could have practice by themselves[90]. Solving this issue within the VET system would be the incentive for enrollment of students by itself, also it would largely boost the impact of VET within the strategy for economic development and employment strengthening, too. Thus, it would be important to develop these kinds of partnerships and synergy with employers as the integral part of VET.

Furthermore, as this research has shown, most VET centers and employment offices do not have any employees of Roma or Egyptian minority, which leads to insufficient sensitivity in their activities with Roma and Egyptians, misunderstandings between the administration and the communities and sometimes even discriminatory attitudes when providing the service. Respondents in our research clearly recognized the discrimination and neglect from the VET instructors. Apart from the irreplaceable sensitivity trainings for existing staff, those services would hugely benefit from actually employing representatives of Roma and Egyptians at adequate places and conducting monitoring and assessment with these issues in focus.

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[89] ECRI Report on Albania (sixth monitoring cycle). https://rm.coe.int/report-on-Albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241
[90] Albania Country assessments on Roma in VET, Ina Kokedhima, REF, 2020

One characteristic of VET which particularly affects girls and women is that in some cases it offers more courses acceptable and attractive to men than to women. This is particularly visible at the local level where some girls at the end choose ICT courses as the only ones remotely acceptable for them. Contrary to what is offered, girls and women in our research stated that preferred VET courses and employment for Roma and Egyptian women would be tailoring, hairdressing, and culinary. In the design process of much needed interventions to tackle this issue, it is of utmost importance to maintain gender sensitivity and avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes, but at the same time not pushing for too big of a change as it might be counterproductive.

As with other data, the data on VET is even more scarce, fragmented, unreliable and inconclusive. Specific data disaggregated by gender and ethnicity in full detail is missing. Based on the existing data it is not possible to form a comprehensive picture of the situation of Roma and Egyptians, especially on gender dimensions and other intersectionalities related to VET. And again, this calls for more efforts to establish functional reporting and documenting of VET activities in the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding the public sector:

- Advocate for publicly available ethnic and sex-disaggregated, reliable, representative and comprehensive data, sufficiently specific and disaggregated in necessary details regarding Roma and Egyptian employment, education and VET, gender, and especially the intersectionalities
- Advocate for an intersectional approach to different sub-groups of Roma and Egyptians and designing policies based on it
- Advocate for evidence-based policy making for Roma and Egyptian communities
- Advocate for full and transparent implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all Roma and Egyptian gender related policies
- Advocate for anti-discriminatory policies
- Advocate for engagement of staff from Roma and Egyptian populations at the contact points for work with Roma and Egyptian communities
- Advocate for gender mainstreaming at all levels, in all the policies, not only the specific gender policies
- Advocate for meaningful inclusion of Roma and Egyptian representatives in planning, monitoring and evaluation of relevant national and local policies as partners
- Continuously participate in planning, monitoring and evaluation of relevant national and local policies as a partner
- Bring gender-based violence in Roma and Egyptian communities to the agenda, starting with early marriages and advocate for intersectionally targeted interventions within policies
- Advocate for tax reduction in specific sectors, like waste collecting and recycling, farming and various services relevant for Roma and Egyptians

- Advocate for targeted VET measures and transition programmes from education to employment or self-employment relevant for Roma and Egyptians

- Advocate with VET providers to ensure that they offer courses acceptable for Roma and Egyptian girls, but ensure that those don't reinforce gender division of labor
- Advocate with VET providers and employers for a stronger connection of VET with employment opportunities for Roma and Egyptian women, to ensure that women have a prospect of decent employment based on VET
- Advocate for greater inclusion of Roma and Egyptian girls and women with VET and employment services
- Advocate for greater inclusion of Roma and Egyptian children in state kindergartens
- Advocate for improving quality, equity, and access at all levels of education for all Roma and Egyptians
- Advocate for interventions targeted at narrowing of gender gaps for Roma and Egyptian girls and women in all aspects of education and employment
- Advocate for financial support for Roma and Egyptians in all levels of education including VET, with focus on Roma and Egyptian girls and women
- Advocate for non-segregation and nondiscriminatory practices at all levels of education for all Roma and Egyptians
- Advocate for ALMPs and PESs to offer more interventions that help Roma and Egyptian workers access the labor market, overcoming sectoral and spatial mismatches, and increasing the outreach of PESs toward Roma and Egyptian
- Advocate for the financial incentives for hiring of Roma and Egyptians
- Advocate for implementing broader affirmative action programs in Roma and Egyptian employment policies and practices
- Advocate for prioritizing job creation for Roma and Egyptians, with priority given to creating any acceptable job, not just full formal employment
- Advocate public institutions to become role models for nondiscriminatory practices and promote such examples, especially in Roma and Egyptian communities

Regarding the CSOs

- Advocate for gender mainstreaming at all levels of CSOs
- Advocate for shadow reporting regarding Roma and Egyptian employment, education and VET, gender, and especially the intersectionalities
- Advocate for publishing, sharing and disseminating of relevant data regarding employment, education, VET and gender of Roma and Egyptians,
- Form networks and coalitions for joint actions on Roma and Egyptian employment, education and VET, and gender issues
- Strengthen local CSOs, especially community and grass-roots Roma and Egyptian CSOs

Regarding the business sector

- Advocate for socially responsible practices of employers regarding employment of Roma and Egyptians
- Advocate for inclusion and integration of Roma and Egyptian in employment
- Advocate for anti-discriminatory policies in businesses
- Advocate with employers for a stronger connection with VET to ensure that Roma and Egyptian women have a prospect of adequate and decent employment based on VET
- Initiate and support establishment and maintaining of coordination of local VCTs with employers

- Conduct information campaigns to increase employer awareness on employment issues for Roma and Egyptian, and best approaches in tackling them
- Provide businesses with information on how to work with vulnerable groups, and encourage them to do so

Regarding the work with Roma and Egyptian communities

- Systematically collect and publish data, ethnically and sex-disaggregated, sufficiently specific and disaggregated in necessary details regarding Roma and Egyptian employment, education and VET, gender, and especially the intersectionalities
- Continue collecting in-depth data on specific Roma and Egyptian communities' needs and gender norms, roles and practices to the comprehensive geographical coverage and capturing diversities between and within Roma and Egyptian communities and understanding of dynamics in different sub-groups
- Fully mainstream gender in work at all levels
- Aim for at least gender sensitive interventions, and where possible, for gender transformative ones
- Adopt the intersectional approach acknowledging different realities of different sub-groups of Roma and Egyptian girls and women and designing interventions based on it
- Enable meaningful participation of Roma and Egyptian representatives in planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects through advisory committee or similar mechanisms
- Work on de-normalization and de-internalization of ethnic stereotypes and discrimination with Roma and Egyptian communities, empowering them in this direction through group and individual interventions
- Work on de-normalization and de-internalization of gender stereotypes and discrimination with Roma and Egyptian communities, especially regarding the gender-based violence, empowering them in this direction through group and individual interventions
- Continuously provide group and individual empowerment interventions with Roma and Egyptian girls targeting their specific, high vulnerability
- Initiate self-help groups for Roma and Egyptian girls and women targeted to reduce gender-biased social norms
- Work on awareness rising in Roma and Egyptian communities, and especially families, on the need and importance of women's education and employment
- Provide counseling and support to Roma and Egyptian women in inclusion to VET and labor market
- Inform, empower and sensitize Roma and Egyptian communities for different, non-traditional vocations for girls within VET
- Support Roma and Egyptian girls and women in transition to non-traditional vocations within VET and when seeking (better paid) employment, help them step out of traditional gender norms even when it is not in accordance with the traditional female role
- Organize childcare services within the families, in the community, and greater inclusion of Roma children in state kindergartens, to ensure that Roma and Egyptian women will be able to attend VET service and especially take up the full employment based on VET, given their homemaking duties
- Provide targeted counseling and support services to Roma and Egyptian women who want to get employed, focused on solving these issues

- Develop alliances and partnerships with Roma and Egyptian families to support the girls in VET and employment, especially with strong female figures in the households
- Provide additional educational and financial support for Roma and Egyptians, especially girls and women in VET
- Provide mentoring support and role models for Roma and Egyptian students, especially girls and women in VET
- Promote the use of Roma/Roma and Egyptian mediators at all levels of education
- Promote the positive role models of well educated, employed and successful Roma and Egyptians in their communities and in the broader society
- Organize informational and awareness rising campaigns on VET in Roma and Egyptian communities and support for interested members of those communities in accessing the VET, with focus on women and girls
- Facilitate the process for Roma and Egyptians from VET enrollment, graduation, internship, to employment, with focus on women and girls
- Support the social enterprises of Roma and Egyptians both in terms of financing and counseling
- Organize financial literacy and entrepreneurship courses and on-going support for Roma and Egyptians interested in self-employment
- Organize "bridging" courses for Roma and Egyptians who don't qualify for VET due to the insufficient formal education and lack of skills

List of Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Annex 2: List of Reviewed WinForVET Project and REF Documents

Annex 3: List of Interviewed Persons

Annex 4: Indicative List of Interview Questions

Annex 5: List of Focus Groups Participants

Annex 6: Indicative Lists of Focus Groups Questions

Annex 7: Report from the Focus Groups

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Position: Gender Consultant

Vacancy issued: July 22, 2020

Deadline for Application: August 11, 2020

No. of Posts 1

The Roma Education Fund (REF) is looking for **Gender Consultant** to ensure gender sensitive project interventions in Albania and Kosovo[91]. This is a short-term consultancy engagement for the project "Education, Employment, Partnerships and Gender Equality: A Winning Formula for Roma in VET", funded by Austrian Development Agency and implemented by REF, in cooperation with project partners RomaVersitas Albania and RomaVersitas Kosovo.

The Consultant should identify opportunities and entry points for mainstreaming gender into the project, develop a training manual and lessons-learned publication, and deliver a 2.5 day "training-of-trainers" for the project management team.

Background

The Roma Education Fund's (REF) mission and goal is to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. To achieve this goal, the organization supports policies and programs which ensure access to quality education for Roma through scholarships, grant making, research and advocacy activities. The objectives of REF include:

- Expanding Romani children's access to quality early childhood education and care;

- Improving primary education outcomes for Romani children aged six to fourteen;

- Boosting academic performance and graduation rates from secondary education for Romani pupils;

- Supporting access to tertiary education, improving graduation levels and strengthening identity of Romani university students;

- Expanding employment opportunities for young Romani adults

The **overall objective of the project** (May 1, 2020-December 31, 2022) is to contribute to social inclusion and poverty reduction of Roma in Albania and Kosovo through support of vocational education and training, facilitation to labor market and empowering stakeholders to take measures to support transition of Roma to employment.

The activities and outputs are clustered into two main areas:

1. Education - increased access to vocational education for Roma youth and young adults, through scholarships, mentoring and tutoring and improving access to education and employment for Roma girls, boys, women and men;

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[91] This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

2. Employability - improved employability for Roma youth and young adults, through job placements, professional development and partnerships of civil society, public and private sector institutions for Roma workforce inclusion aimed at influencing policy changes.

The project will focus on strengthening professional skills of REF scholars and other beneficiaries - vocational training, internships, professional skills development, cooperation and partnerships with employers. Wide range of vocational training (VET within the education institutions, such as high schools) and obtaining recognized certificates, paid professional internships in the public or private sector, additional education (conducted by accredited institutes, such as vocational courses), which includes scholarship and mentoring support will be provided.

Description of consultancy responsibilities

Research, development and delivery of analysis for Albania and analysis for Kosovo

Though there is disaggregated data on female participation in preschool, primary, secondary and university education levels, there is a lack of official gender-related data specifically for VET education. A gender consultant will be engaged to conduct a gender analysis of Roma women and girls in VET with the aim to identify obstacles faced, but also opportunities available, and also to properly assess the needs of women and men/girls and boys and the impact of project activities on them. This will be done in the beginning of the project in order for project staff to monitor adequately and ensure gender-mainstreaming throughout the project.

Development of training manual

Based on the findings from the gender analysis, a manual will be developed and used for the delivery of a tailor-made, country- and context-specific gender equality training, including but not limited to: identifying gender inequalities, defining gender equality objectives, accounting for gender when planning and implementing policies, monitoring progress, monitoring progress, evaluate programs from a gender perspective.

Delivery of training - Training of Trainers

The gender consultant will use the manual to lead 2 ½ day ToT training for the project management team and local staff of the project partners who will be working with the primary and indirect target groups. These project teams will then use the knowledge and tools gained by the gender training session to raising the level of awareness, sensitivity and adherence to the project's gender equality outcome among the primary and indirect target groups.

Assist in the development of "Lessons Learned" on the prospect of Roma women and girls in VET and employability publication to indirect target groups

The publication will be used as an advocacy and visibility tool for indirect target groups (schools, employers, public institutions) with the aim to promote success stories for employers and also to encourage role models for girls and women in the Roma communities.

The Gender Consultant will work under the guidance of the Project Manager based in Belgrade, Serbia.

Deliverables:

Gender analysis

Training manual for gender equality for VET.

"ToT" training

Lessons Learned publication on the prospect of Roma women and girls in VET and employability

Required Education and Experience

- Postgraduate university degree in social sciences or other relevant discipline, preferably with a specialization in gender and project cycle management.
- Previous experience in conducting gender analysis, preferably in working on mainstreaming gender into project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Previous experience in working with Roma and/or Roma CSOs.

Skills required

- In-depth knowledge and understanding of the gender context in the project's countries
- Familiarity with gender analysis tools and methodologies in the specific area of intervention, i.e. education and employment (of Roma);
- Ability to communicate ideas in a manner conducive to their practical application;
- Excellent organizational, analytical, communication and interpersonal skills;
- Fluency in written and spoken English (knowledge of project languages – Serbian and/or Albanian preferred);
- Knowledge of Romanes will be an advantage).

Planned duration of the engagement: 30 consultancy days

Timeline: August (starting as soon as possible)

Application Process

A complete application includes:

1. Curriculum vitae or resume
2. Statement of interest, that should include:
    a. Your academic background / education in the field of gender;
    b. Previous experience in conducting gender analysis and/or work on gender mainstreaming into project interventions;

c. Previous experience working with Roma communities and civil society organizations (CSOs) or other relevant stakeholders;

d. Experience in gender training and delivering Training of Trainer workshops

3. Brief methodology clearly describing Consultant's understanding of the assignment and challenges (max. 2 pages);

4. Financial offer expressed as consultancy fee per number of anticipated working days in EUR. In case of traveling for the purposes of the assignment, REF will cover eligible travel and accommodation costs.

Application must be made in English and must be submitted at the latest by August 11 to the following address: recruitment@romaeducationfund.org. Please include in the subject line "Gender Consultant".

Individuals identifying themselves as Roma, Roma Education Fund scholarship recipients, and fulfilling the above-mentioned profile and requirements are particularly encouraged to apply. Qualified female candidates are particularly encouraged to apply.

Annex 2: List of Reviewed WinForVET Project and REF Documents

WinForVET Project documents

Community Assessment, 2018, REF, Unpublished

Albania Country assessments on Roma in VET, Ina Kokedhima, REF, 2020, Unpublished

Gender analysis and recommendations for gender mainstreaming for the implementation of the EU Regional Action for Roma Education funded initiative "Increased education opportunities for Roma students and Roma youth in Western Balkans and Turkey", REF, 2018

Annex 3 List of Interviewed Persons

1. REF project team (Project Manager, Project Assistant, Fundraising and Communications Officer)
2. REF Country Facilitator for Albania
3. Roma Versitas Albania project team (Executive Director, Project Manager)

Annex 4 Indicative List of Interview Questions

On Gender Norms and Expectations for Roma Girls and Women

- What are the women's/girls' and men's/boys' different **needs, priorities and strengths** (strategic and practical) regarding VET and employment?

- What are the complex **gender relations, beliefs, perceptions, knowledge and social norms**, and about women, men, girls and boys relevant for VET and employment?

- What is the typical/desired **educational trajectory** for Roma girls in Roma communities?

- How much can girls **digress** from this prescribed path before community starts to protest? What are their **options** regarding education?

- What is the typical/desired **employment trajectory** for Roma girls/women in Roma communities?

- How much can girls **digress** from this prescribed path before community starts to protest? What are their **options** regarding employment?

- Who is the guardian and **enforcer** of these gender norms in Roma communities?

- How do Roma girls/women **feel** about VET and employment for themselves and how does that differ from Roma boys/men?

- What are the **motivators and possibilities** for women and men participating and benefiting equally from the VET and employment programs?

- What are the **barriers and constraints** for women and men participating and benefiting equally from the VET and employment programs?

- Are there any **harmful traditional practices** pertinent to VET and employment of girls and women? Early marriages?

- How the gender **division of labor** and patterns of **decision-making** affects the VET and employment of Roma girls and women, and how the VET and employment affects the gender division of labor (productive, reproductive, community work) and decision making.

  o Who decides about education?

  o Who decides about marriage?

  o Who decides on child-care issues?

  o Who decides about family size?

  o Who decides on domestic work?

  o Who controls the daily budget?

  o Who decides on investments?

- Who has the **access to and control over resources**, assets and benefits, including VET and employment benefits in Roma communities?

- Are there any **differences between Roma communities** in the different settlements covered by the project in terms of the questions asked?

On Roma Women and Girls in VET

- What are the **prospects** of Roma women and girls in VET and their employability?
- **Access** to quality VET for Roma girls and boys, men and women:
  - What **opportunities** are available for quality VET for Roma girls and boys, men and women?
  - What **obstacles** are they facing in access to quality VET?
  - What **interventions increased access** to vocational education for Roma girls and boys, men and women?
  - **How many** need it and how many can get it?
- **Gap in VET outcomes** between Roma and non-Roma;
- **Gap in VET outcomes** between Roma girls and boys;
- What is the **impact** of VET on them, what has changed in their lives;
- What are the **unforeseen effects**, even **negative** of VET on them;
- **Employment opportunities** for young Romani men and women;
- What **enables transition** of Roma men and women to employment?
- What **hinders transition** of Roma men and women to employment?
- What **measures supported transition** of Roma men and women to employment?
- What are the **gaps** in data collection on Roma women and girls in VET and why?

On VET Service Providers:

- What program(s) did they have/had for Roma?
- With what scope?
  - Territory they have covered with service
  - No of beneficiaries
    - Gender segregated data, if available
  - What groups of beneficiaries
    - Gender segregated data, if available
  - What services did they provide
    - Gender segregated data, if available
  - By which program/instructions/model/manual
- What activities
  - Did they have any gender sensitive interventions

- What results
    - Gender segregated data, if available
- What impacts
    - Gender segregated data, if available
- Challenges/Lessons learned/recommendations for future work
    - Gender segregated data, if available
- Do they have any reports, evaluation results, needs assessments, etc.
    - Gender segregated data, if available
- What are the **gaps** in data collection (on Roma women and girls in VET) and why

Annex 5 List of Focus Groups Participants

Single boys

1. Ilia Xhambasi
2. Marsel Kosturi
3. Nikolino Ademi
4. Enriko Lufta
5. Emanuele Loshi
6. Denis Kosturi
7. Florian Karimiani

Young girls

1. Ksenja Mino
2. Kudrete Xhakosi
3. Ornela Selimaj
4. Anxhela Hamiti
5. Kristiana Selimaj
6. Denisa Sinani
7. Anisa Majko

Married women

1. Suada Macalla
2. Elisabeta Mejdani
3. Ilda Zeka
4. Elidona Maksutaj
5. Esmeralda Qazimi
6. Sidorela Dervishi
7. Hysnie Aliu

Annex 6 Indicative Lists of Focus Groups Questions

Girls/Women/Boys/Men group interview

Young Girls

Group	**<u>Young Girls</u>**
Date	
Location	
Type of location	How far are they living from the non-Roma residents? Do they live in a Roma settlement or in a mixed neighborhood? How far from the urban area are they living? Do they consider their place of residence a rural area, or the outskirt of the city?
Structure of participants	Roma - Egyptian -
General observation	
Data	1. Who is/ are your role models, the people that inspire you? 2. Are there role models in your neighborhood or district? Why do you consider them as role models, in what ways do they inspire you? 3. Who in your family is supporting you to go to school? 4. What will you get if you finish the school? 5. What is the best for you: helping your parents or going to school? 6. Do you think that school is different for girls and boys? Do they know other girls which can't go to school or study in good conditions because of any economic activity? 7. Would they like to have leisure activities together or separated with boys? Do they play with boys? Would they like to? 8. How do they consider early marriages? Do they know any girls in their community already married or about to be? Is it normal for you that parents choose the husband? 9. Are your rights respected? Fully Partially Very Little Not at all I don't know 10. In scale from 1 to 10, how much are her human rights respected? 11. Which of her/his rights are least/not respected?

NOTE: Gender based violence – GBV is understood here as any kind of violence (physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, economic) done to a girl or a woman by boy/men.

12. How present/widespread is the gender-based violence in lives of RAE girls and women?

13. Where does it occur and how often? (check all the answers you want)

- In their homes/primary families (where they live with their parents, siblings and relatives)

- In marriage

- In the school

- At work

- In the street

- In the RAE community

- In the wider non-RAE community

14. How normalized if GBV? How acceptable for women and men?

15. How can a women/girl protect herself form GBV? Can anybody help? Will anybody stop the perpetrator and punish him?

16. Do most girls want to get married early and why/why not?

17. What if a girl in this locality doesn't get married? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

18. What are her alternative options?

19. What are their expectations from marriage – positive and negative [including questions around children; family honour; economic security; emotional wellbeing; fear of gender-based violence; concerns about care/work burden; etc.)

20. Do girls get to choose their husbands?

21. Do boys choose their wives here? And has this custom been changing over time – if so, how? Why?

22. Why/why not? Who makes the choice and enforces it? Has this been changing over time?

23. What are your feelings about arranged marriages? What happens if girls don't follow arranged marriages?

24. Is an 18-year-old girl likely to be in school or married? What are the advantages/disadvantages? Have things been changing over time and, if so, how?

25. What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?

26. Are there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers continue their schooling? Should there be? What kinds?

	27. Do you think more educated girls have more problems finding husbands than less educated? Why/why not? Has this been changing?
	28. Does education have any influence on the amount of payment for brides/grooms? In what way? For the girl? For the boy? Do you think being more educated will make you a better wife, mother, daughter-in-law? Or do you think this may create problems (e.g.)?
	29. Do you think education makes boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers?
	30. If a girl/boy don't go to the school, what are their reasons? (your reasons, but also from boys and girls from your community)
	31. If a girl/boy leaves the school, what are their reasons? (your reasons, but also from boys and girls from your community)
	32. What problems do they face in pursuing education and during schooling (your reasons, but also from boys and girls from your community)
	33. How useful is the education in getting a job (your opinion, but also from boys and girls from your community)?
	34. What kinds of job do people in your close community/neighborhood mostly do?
	35. How do people in your close community, or neighborhood spend their free time?
	36. What activities are organized in your area, (social, culture, or art), if a few, do you participate in those activities?

Young Boys

Group	**Young Boys**
Date	
Location	
Type of location	How far do they live from the non-Roma residents? Do they live in a Roma settlement or in a mixed neighborhood? How far from the urban area do they live? Do they consider their place of residence a rural area, or the outskirt of the city?
No. of participants	
Age of participants	
Structure of participants	Roma - Egyptian -

General observation	
Data	1. Who is/are your role models, the people that inspire you?
	2. Are there role models in your neighborhood or district? Why do you consider them as role models, in what ways do they inspire you?
	3. Who in your family is supporting you to go to school?
	4. What will you get if you finish the school?
	5. What is the best for you: helping your parents or going to school?
	6. Do you think that school is different for girls and boys? Do you know other girls which can't go to school or study in good conditions because of any economic activity?
	7. Would you like to have leisure activities together or separated with girls? Do you play with girls? Would you like to?
	8. How do you consider early marriages? Do you know any girls in your community already married or about to be? Is it normal for you that parents choose the husband?
	9. Are your rights respected?
	a. Fully
	b. Partially
	c. Very Little
	d. Not at all
	e. I don't know
	10. On scale from 1 to 10, how much are her human rights respected?
	11. Which of her/his rights are least/not respected?
	12. Do most girls want to get married early why/why not?
	13. What if a girl in this locality doesn't get married? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
	14. What are her alternative options?
	15. What are their expectations from marriage – positive and negative [including probes around children; family honour; economic security; emotional wellbeing; concerns about work burden; etc.?)
	16. Do girls get to choose their husbands?
	17. Why/why not? Who makes the choice and enforces it? Has this been changing over time?
	18. What are your feelings about arranged marriages? What happens if girls don't follow arranged marriages?
	19. Do boys choose their wives here? And has this custom been changing over time – if so, how? Why?

20. Is an 18-year-old girl likely to be in school or married? What are the advantages/disadvantages? Have things been changing over time and, if so, how?

21. What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?

22. Do you think more educated girls have more problems finding husbands than less educated? Why/why not? Has this been changing?

23. Does education have any influence in the marriage payments? In what way? For the girl? For the boy? Do you think being more educated will make girl a better wife, mother, daughter-in-law? Or do you think this may create problems (e.g.)?

24. Do you think education makes boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers?

25. If a girl/boy don't go to the school what are their reasons? (your reasons, but also from boys and girls from your community)

26. If a girl/boy leaves the school what are their reasons? (your reasons, but also from boys and girls from your community)

27. What problems do they face in pursuing education and during schooling (your reasons, but also from boys and girls from your community)

28. How useful is the education in getting a job (your opinion, but also from boys and girls from your community)

29. What kinds of job do people in your close community/neighborhood mostly do?

30. How do people in your close community, or neighborhood spend their free time?

31. What activities are organized in your area, (social, culture, or art), if a few, do you participate in those activities?

Married Women

Group	**Married Women**
Date	
Location	
Type of location	How far are they living from the non-Roma residents?
	Do they live in a Roma settlement or in a mixed neighborhood?
	How far from the urban area do they live?
	Do they consider their place of residence a rural area, or the outskirt of the city?
No. of participants	

Age of participants	
Structure of participants	Roma - Egyptian -
General observation	

Data	1. Who was/ were your role models, the people that inspired you while you were growing up?
	
	 2. Were there role models in your neighborhood or district? Why did you consider them as role models, in what ways did they inspire you?
	
	 3. Do you think that school is different for girls and boys? Do they know girls which can't go to school or study in good conditions because of any economic activity?
	
	 4. How do they consider early marriages? Do they know any girls in their community already married or about to be? Is it normal for you that parents choose the husband?
	
	 5. Are your rights respected?
	
	     a. Fully
	
	     b. Partially
	
	     c. Very Little
	
	     d. Not at all
	
	     e. I don't know
	
	 6. On scale from 1 to 10, how much are her human rights respected?
	
	 7. Which of her/his rights are least/not respected?
	
	 8. Do most girls want to get married early why/why not?
	
	 9. What if a girl in this locality doesn't get married? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
	
	 10. What are her alternative options?
	
	 11. What expectations should girls have from marriage – positive and negative (including questions around children; family honour; economic security; emotional wellbeing; fear of gender-based violence; concerns about care work burden; etc.)?
	
	 12. Do girls get to choose their husbands?
	
	 13. Why/why not? Who makes the choice and enforces it? Has this been changing over time?
	
	 14. What are your feelings about arranged marriages? What happens in your community if girls don't follow arranged marriages?
	
	 15. Do boys choose their wives here? And has this custom been changing over time – if so, how? Why?

16. What happens if there are problems in the couple? Who can you turn to? How do they help you?

17. Do you think there could be any programme that could help you in married life?

18. Is an 18-year-old girl likely to be in school or married? What are the advantages/disadvantages? Have things been changing over time and if so how?

19. What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?

20. Are there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers continue their schooling? Should there be? What kinds?

21. Do you think more educated girls have more problems finding husbands than less educated? Why/why not? Has this been changing?

22. Does education have any influence on the amount of payment for brides/grooms? In what way? For the girl? For the boy?

23. Do you think being more educated will make you a better wife, mother, daughter-in-law? Or do you think this may create problems (e.g.)?

24. Do you think education makes boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers?

25. If a man/woman don't go to the VET what are their reasons? (your reasons, but also from boys and girls from your community)?

26. If a man/woman leaves the VET what are their reasons? (your reasons, but also from boys and girls from your community)?

27. What problems do they face in pursuing VET and during VET (your reasons, but also from boys and girls from your community)?

28. How useful is the education/VET in getting a job (your opinion, but also from man/woman from your community)?

29. Which VET courses are the most preferred ones for man/woman (your preferences, but also from man/woman from your community)?

30. Reasons for deciding to get a job/look for a job - (your reasons, but also from man/woman from your community)?

31. Reasons for deciding NOT to get a job/ NOT look for a job - (your reasons, but also from man/woman from your community)?

32. What problems do they face in looking for a job and in the workplace (your challenges, but also from man/woman from your community)?

33. How satisfied are those who find the job (your satisfaction, but also from man/woman from your community)?

34. How sure are they that they can find the job in the next six months (your opinion, but also from boys and girls from your community)?

35. Which jobs are the most preferred ones for girls and boys (your preferences,

but also from boys and girls from your community)?

36. What kinds of job do people in your close community/neighborhood mostly do?

37. How do people in your close community, or neighborhood spend their free time?

38. What activities are organized in your area, (social, culture, or art), if a few, do you participate in those activities?

Married Men

Group	**Married Men**
Date	
Location	
Type of location	How far are they living from the non-Roma residents? Do they live in a Roma settlement or in a mixed neighborhood? How far from the urban area are they living? Do they consider their place of residence a rural area, or the outskirt of the city?
No. of participants	
Age of participants	
Structure of participants	Roma - Egyptian -
General observation	

Data	1. Who was/were your role models, the people that inspired you while you were growing up?
	
	 2. Were there role models in your neighborhood or district? Why did you consider them as role models, in what ways did they inspire you?
	
	 3. Do you think that school is different for girls and boys? Do they know girls which can't go to school or study in good conditions because of any economic activity?
	
	 4. How do they consider early marriages? Do they know any girls in their community already married or about to be? Is it normal for you that parents choose the husband?
	
	 5. Are your rights respected?
	     a. Fully
	     b. Partially
	     c. Very Little

		d. Not at all
		e. I don't know

6. On scale from 1 to 10, how much are her human rights respected?

7. Which of her/his rights are least/not respected?

8. Do most girls want to get married early why/why not?

9. What if a girl in this locality doesn't get married? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

10. What are her alternative options?

11. What expectations should girls have from marriage – positive and negative (including questions around children; family honour; economic security; emotional wellbeing; fear of gender-based violence; concerns about care work burden; etc.)?

12. Do girls get to choose their husbands?

13. Why/why not? Who makes the choice and enforces it? Has this been changing over time?

14. What are your feelings about arranged marriages? What happens in your community if girls don't follow arranged marriages?

15. Do boys choose their wives here? And has this custom been changing over time – if so, how? Why?

16. Is an 18-year-old girl likely to be in school or married? What are the advantages/disadvantages? Have things been changing over time and if so how?

17. What about unmarried girls with children and schooling? Are you aware of any laws on this? Do you have any friends or relatives who have had any experience of this?

18. Are there any special programmes that help married girls or adolescent mothers continue their schooling? Should there be? What kinds?

19. Do you think more educated girls have more problems finding husbands than less educated? Why/why not? Has this been changing?

20. Does education have any influence on the amount of payment for brides/grooms? In what way? For the girl? For the boy? Do you think being more educated will make girl a better wife, mother, daughter-in-law? Or do you think this may create problems (e.g.)?

21. Do you think education makes boys/men better husbands/son-in-laws/brothers/fathers?

22. If a man/woman don't go to the VET what are their reasons (your reasons, but also from boys and girls from your community)?

23. If a man/woman leaves the VET what are their reasons (your reasons, but also from boys and girls from your community)?

24. What problems do they face in pursuing VET and during VET (your reasons, but also from boys and girls from your community)?

25. How useful is the education/VET in getting a job (your opinion, but also from man/woman from your community)?

26. Which VET courses are the most preferred ones for man/woman (your preferences, but also from man/woman from your community)?

27. Reasons for deciding to get a job/look for a job (your reasons, but also from man/woman from your community)?

28. Reasons for deciding NOT to get a job/ NOT look for a job (your reasons, but also from man/woman from your community)?

29. What problems do they face in looking for a job and in the workplace (your challenges, but also from man/woman from your community)?

30. How satisfied are those who find the job (your satisfaction, but also from man/woman from your community)?

31. How sure are they that they can find the job in the next six months (your opinion, but also from boys and girls from your community)?

32. Which jobs are the most preferred ones for girls and boys (your preferences, but also from boys and girls from your community)?

33. What kinds of job do people in your close community/neighborhood mostly do?

34. How do people in your close community, or neighborhood spend their free time?

35. What activities are organized in your area, (social, culture, or art), if a few, do you participate in those activities?

Annex 7 Report from the Focus Groups

Single boys

Group	**Single boys**
Date	2 December 2020
Location	Focus group Online – Participants come from various areas of Tirana, Korca, Elbasan, Vlora,
No. of participants	7 – Ilia Xhambasi; Marsel Kosturi; Nikolino Ademi; Enriko Lufta; Emanuele Loshi; Denis Kosturi; Florian Karimiani
Age of participants	**17 - 21**
Structure of participants	Roma and Egyptians
General observation	

The majority of the participants live in or close to the Roma **neighborhood**. Only two of them reside one or two blocks away. Also, most of them live in mixed areas.

Regarding the questions of **Role models**, until now, three of them have concrete role models, someone a father, a person in the community, a brother. Whereas others do not have or think they have role models in their life.

Nikolino Ademi, a student in VET school, says that most of the youngsters in his neighborhood have as a role model someone who is a successful person, has completed university although married. He is an example that most of them follow or would follow, and get inspired.

The attendees admit that parents and sometimes grandparents are the **ones to push them to education**. In other words, family members. It is not unknown that family members play an important role on what **career** or education will their children embrace.

All the attendees link the completion of education with employment as a guarantee for a better life. This is one of the main reasons why students in general, including those coming from the Roma or Egyptian minorities attend education. However, they are unaware, or do not think long about other **benefits education** brings in their lives. Let alone, the social responsibilities (comment of Xhenson Cella).

Also, they confirm that through education, they can contribute and make their parents proud. Three of the participants do both, work and study at the same time. Nevertheless, they admit that the better contribution in the long term is through education.

According to the young Roma boys, pursuing an **education is much more challenging for girls** due to early marriages, and outdated mentality.

Regarding participation in activities, Roma girls do not spend a lot of time with the Roma boys. Boys have freer time, whereas girls are not allowed to go out often. Most of them spend time indoors taking care of everyday chores. According to Ilia Xhambazi, a young Roma boy

from Korça, such a thing depends on the family mindset. In his locality, in Korça, boys and girls share time with each other. If families are open, girls have more space for **leisure time**.

Emanuele Loshi, a young boy from Vlora that studies in an artistic school, shares the same reality as in Ilia's case. In his village known as Llakatund, largely populated by Roma families, girls and boys within a neighbourhood share time with each other and attend the same activities. Rural areas share more bonds, he says.

Whereas Enriko Lufta, a VET student from Tirana, thinks that it depends on the level of education of the families and their openness toward **education**. For instance, if girls are educated, and attend school, thus, they are more open.

Regarding **early marriages**, attendees say that do not have a saying in such topics. Nikolino Ademi, shared a personal example/event. Although he said that it would be better for her cousin to attend school, he thinks that her parents see marriage as a natural event. If girls reach 16-18, it is time for her. Nevertheless, he could not interfere, or share his saying in such matters due to age, or based on the mentality that adult members of the family are always right.

Regarding the questions on respect for **human rights**, the attendees confess that their parents do not restrict their rights. However, some of them admit the girls are more restricted in decision making or other important matters, even if it affects them directly. I think that it depends on the families again (comment from Xhenson Cella). The boys attending this focus group come from more open families. But, in general, boys are freer, they enjoy more rights compared to girls. These attendees are more open than their parents. Somehow, the curve is changing, younger generations inherit less features from their parents and their past.

Regarding advantages and disadvantages of early marriages, or in case young people drop school to marry. Some of the attendees admit that unpleasant consequences might occur, especially towards girls, if they resist to marriage. On the other hand, they stated many of the adverse economic and social consequence if they drop out of school for marriage. For instance, financial burden due to low paid jobs, immaturity to confront responsibilities coming out of marriage, etc.

In general, the attendees do not agree with early marriages, that according to them, it brings nothing good or beneficial. Along with early marriages, there are economic constraints and early responsibilities. Lastly, they say that after education, and finding a job, it is time to step to marriage. According to them, arranged marriages are imposed more to girls than to boys. Boys have more freedom to decide upon their marriage. Marsel says that early marriages are a form to preserve family **honor**.

The attendees think that it is a common perception that if girls stay unmarried for a longer time, are considered too old for marriage, or there is something wrong with them as no one has asked for marriage. Of, if they attend high school or university, they have probably dated someone.

Well, it is uncertain if someone would go to ask an **educated girl** for marriage. Although another person said that it could be beneficial to marry an educated person, in general, they will look for someone younger.

Regarding the question on what **issues girls are faced with when pursuing education**

---- Family pressure to get married.

---- Financial issues (lack of support)

Regarding the question of how much an **education is important to find a job**. All the attendees agree that education is important, but finding a job is challenging due to their ethnicity. Nikolino Ademi, again, says that his supervisor, in the internship, offered him to work part-time, and he did not have problems in finding a job.. However, in general there are testimonies of youngsters that were refused a job without solid explanations (Comment of Xhenson Cella).

Regarding **activities organized in their communities** or areas, almost all of them admit that activities are seldom organized in their communities. People spend their leisure time in coffee shops, or doing nothing, but not in social activities.

Young girls

Group	**Young girls**
Date	December 3, 2020
Location	Focus group Online – Participants come from various areas of Tirana, Durres, and Lezhe, Delvine
No. of participants	7 - Ksenja Mino; Kudrete Xhakosi; Ornela Selimaj; Anxhela Hamiti; Kristiana Selimaj; Denisa Sinani; Anisa Majko
Age of participants	**18 – 25**
Structure of participants	Roma and Egyptians
General observation	

The meeting started with a presentation of each of the girls, which served to introduce the girls to each other as well. The first question that was done, was whether they lived in Roma, non-Roma or mixed neighborhoods. Some of the girls responded that they either lived in a non-Roma **neighborhood** or in a mixed neighborhood (i.e. it consisted of a Roma and a non-Roma community).

After the introduction, the focus group began with the question of whether the girls had followed an exemplary **model**, a model that has inspired them to get where they are. We took various answers, the girls were inspired by their family members, relatives or even outside positive people who have had a positive impact on them.

An issue that sparked a lot of debate and encouraged girls to talk, were **early marriages and respect for women's rights**, all girls agreed that early marriages were wrong, as in most cases they negatively affect girls. If a girl marries at an early age, the chances of being educated are very slim.

Anyhow, early and late marriages have both their advantages and disadvantages. Getting married at an early age certainly lends itself more to the disadvantages, as normally it is a huge responsibility, the care of the house and the children falls on the girls at a very young age. Regarding marriages at a young age, girls say that there it has more advantages, as this gives girls time and opportunity to pursue their studies and dreams and, in a way, to mature and choose the person they want to spend their lives with, not to be imposed by parents.

Disadvantage, if it can be called such, is a prejudice. Girls who want to get married after the age of 20 are seen as "stuck" by the community.

Lack of education is also related to the lack of **respect for the rights** of Roma girls and women because being uneducated they do not know enough about their rights. Regarding the issue of respect for rights, girls said that not all of their rights are respected, for example, in the case of family decision-making, their opinion is not always taken into consideration by using excuses such as: you are small, you are time has not come yet to decide etc.

Another issue that was discussed was living as a **single mother:** what difficulties girls and women with children face and why do they not have support from their families. What impact do these girls have in the Roma community? Are single mothers prejudiced against in the community?

The reasons were many, of course there are prejudices around being a single mother in general in Albania, but in the Roma community this seems to be more pronounced. Girls say that prejudice in the Roma community is very present, especially in cases where girls get married at an advanced age, cases when the mother is single or in cases of decision-making and freedom of speech. Raising a child alone is very difficult especially in economic terms, because usually girls who get married at an early age lack education and do not have a profession that provide sufficient income, especially for single mothers. These women have a negative reputation in the community and lack family support.

Regarding the **gender differences** that exist in the community, girls say that boys are more privileged economically, socially or academically.

Boys are not prevented from continuing their studies because they are not forced to get married at an early age like girls, they can more easily establish social contacts, have more friends and social interaction than girls. They also have the opportunity to work, as they are not obliged to take care of the children or the house, as that is seen as a job for women to do.

Married Women

Group	**Married Women**
Date	4 December 2020
Location	Focus group Online – Participants come from various areas of Tirana, Durres, and Fushe-Kruja
No. of participants	7 – Suada Macalla; Elisabeta Mejdani; Ilda Zeka; Elidona Maksutaj; Esmeralda Qazimi; Sidorela Dervishi; Hysnie Aliu
Age of participants	**21 – 28**
Structure of participants	Roma and Egyptians
General observation	Married woman come from various walks of life and education. There is Hysnie who could not complete elementary education, and Suada who had graduated medicine. Esmeralda got married at an early age, and Elidona is 18 years old, attends University and has a baby.

Most of the attendees live in urban areas. However, two of the girls live only one or two blocks away from the Roma **neighborhood**.

Regarding the access to **education** of Roma girls, most of them admit that outdated mentality plays a significant role in preventing girls from accessing education, also according to Ilda Zeka (a 24-year- old girl from Administrative Unit 11 in Tirana, mother of a baby boy, and student of foreign languages.

In comparison to boys, girls have **less freedom**, says Elidona Maksuti, (21 years old, originally from Fushe-Kruja but resident in Tirana, she studies social science). She adds that the traditional mentality, and racism, play a significant role in this aspect.

Whereas Suada Macalla, (a 26 years young mother of a child, from Tirana, graduate lab technician) says that not all girls are uneducated, however poverty plays a pivotal role in the lack of **education**. Hysnie Aliu (28 years old, mother of two children originally from Durres, but resident in Tirana, with elementary school) says that it depends on the family.

Sidorela Dervishi (21 years old from Tirana, secondary education) says that the Roma community suffers from the mindset that if the girl passes puberty, she should get **married**. Otherwise, she will end up single. Hence, the mentality is a concerning plague. However, there are also cases that the girl decides to leave with the one she loves. Elisabeta Mejdani (26 years old from Selita District in Tirana, with elementary school) is totally against early marriages. According to her, it brings only a burden and troubles.

In general, married women disagree with practices such as **early marriages** and provide two main insights, in most cases, they are arranged married, forced by families. However, girls also fall in love and even leave with their future husband to be. All of attendees agree that outdated mentality plays a reverse role in education of girls and boys.

Regarding **human rights**, girls say that lack of freedom of expression is the least respected. They think that more **activities** organized in the community would broaden the culture and education of girls and Roma members in general.

Regarding respect to girls' human **rights**, they all think that mentality poses a significant barrier. For instance, in Elisabeta's case, she did not have the right to education. Freedom to decide by themselves and freedom of expression are the least respected rights.

Regarding early **marriages**, all the attendees are against such practices, especially when done without the youngster's consent. Suada Macalla says that parents marry their children in arranged marriages because they think it brings facilities to the family in many aspects, economic and social. Also, they think that the girl is safe now, and will not fail to keep up the family's **honour**.

Do you think that the majority of the girls agree to early **marriages**? Esmeralda disagrees. Suada, in some cases, yes, they fall in love and decide to marry. Sidorela, they do not agree or do not see the consequences at least. Hysnie, disagrees too, they are young and want to enjoy their youth. Elisabeta, in case of arranged marriages, and love: in the first case, they do not have a say and agree with their parent's choice. Whereas, when they fall in love, they are not aware of marriage responsibilities. In most of the cases, however, it is not girl's choice.

Attendees here are divided into two groups of thoughts, arranged marriages and love.

On this question, some attendees are for arranged marriages while others are for marriage out of love.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of a girl that remains unmarried?

Late marriages after 25-26 years old are the best choice according to Suada, because of full maturity. In early marriages, girls are not prepared for what comes later in their lives. Disadvantages in the other case are the public opinion mindset that thinks the girl has some serious issues. Elisabeta says that girls that stay unmarried are judged. The public opinion thinks that they will never find a husband.

As per the alternatives, if they stay unmarried, they would be attending an education. It has not a lot of alternatives. According to Elisabeta, it is very important for the girls' integration and the culture they inherit from their families. Family support is crucial.

What happens with the girls that do not agree with their parent's will?

According to Suada, if the girl disagrees, they will either marry her forcefully or she will leave with someone she loves. If the girl accepts the parents will, then there are consequences, an unhappy marriage or divorce.

Has the trend of early marriages changed during the time?

Suada says it has changed in those families that are integrated. It has changed, in many families, marriage is a matter to be decided by the girls. Moreover, she says the pressure is not the same for boys. Girls are under more pressure. Attendees agree that the trends have changed; it is not the same as before. Boys are under pressure once the future father-in-law learns about the relationship. According to Elisabeta, the mindset has changed depending on the area. She works in two areas, in Shkoza and Lana Bregas, which are less integrated because of isolation.

What happens if a couple has issues, and what kind of institutions can assist them?

Usually parents from each side. However, there are also rare solutions such as specialist and psychologist. However, usually parents and relatives.

What are the disadvantages for a girl that is not married, but has a child?

If she is not married, but has a child, then the entire burden is on her shoulders. An educated girl is appreciated by the community. However, Hysnie says, if she is more educated then her husband-to-be, such marriage will probably not work.

What are the reasons a girl does not enroll to school, and for what reasons would she drop out if once registered?

According to Suada, lack of trust in education and transition to the labour market. Waste of time, in other words. In case of drop out, would be due not to marriage, or irregular attendance. According to Hysnie, the reason is the economic situation, cannot afford to attend school. Elisabeta Mejdani admits both reasons play a significant role.

Education plays a significant role in employment. But, Elisabeta says that **non-profit organizations** are the only one that offers opportunities to employment, or support to education. On the other hand, Elisabeta thinks that even though they might have finished education, they are not given the opportunity. Elisabeta also thinks that in education and VET, Roma students face discrimination or neglect from the instructors.

What are the most favourite professions and jobs for Roma girls?

Elisabeta thinks that barber and hairdressing are the most common. Hysnie thinks that Roma girls are more driven to services, tailoring, hairdressing, and cooking, whereas boys towards technical and mechanical professions, as well as barber.

Elisabeta says that the Roma community engages more in low skilled professions. According to her, this is what they are offered, they do not have better opportunities to go out of this sphere. However, it depends on the area. In remote neighbourhoods in Tirana, they usually have lower skills and informal work such as begging.

Whereas how they **spend time** also depends on the area. In the areas where Elisabeta works, Lana Bregas and Shkoze, Roma people do not spend time in social and cultural **activities**. It is also due to a lack of organization from local municipalities. Hysnie thinks that most of the youngsters spent time in coffee shops because they do not have information on cultural and social activities, or those are seldom organized in their areas.