



Strategic Regional Policy Analysis in Western Balkans and Turkey

Secondary, Tertiary Education and Employability



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Introductory Notes

This strategic report is an output of the “EU Regional Action for Roma Education: Increased Education Opportunities for Roma Students and Roma Youth in Western Balkans and Turkey” project, funded by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission and implemented by Roma Education Fund (REF) together with partners organizations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo¹, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. The strategic analyses are thus situated within the context and conceptual frame of the project, which embodies the promotion of quality education for Roma at all educational levels (preschool, primary, secondary, tertiary), the improvement of educational outcomes of Roma with a focus on reducing the gender gap, the advancement of employability among Roma youth and smooth transition between school and labor market, and advocating for desegregation and systemic durable change for Roma in the education sector. The extensive research documents were drafted by Elona Dhëmbó and Veronika Duci with the involvement and the support of REF project team.

Secondary and Tertiary Education have a strategic role for Roma Education Fund. In this area of interest, REF has also developed special intervention models that became *modus operandi* in achieving the mission of the foundation. The interventions were selected in accordance with past successful experiences and with the guidelines from the dedicated literature and the support of some important European institutions. The results inspired and stimulated the replication of intervention models at systemic level, for all vulnerable groups of the society. Three of these intervention models are the following:

- Expanding Access to Secondary Education;
- Expanding Access to Higher Education | Romaversitas;
- Second Chance Programs for Adult Functional Literacy and Formal School Completion.

The Secondary Education Model aims to improve the academic performance of students and to increase the retention and graduation rate of Roma secondary school students, and their transition to tertiary level through better outreach, provision of scholarships, school-based mentorship support and tutorship support. The model is using a balanced triangulation provision of merit-based scholarships, mentoring and tutoring school based. A combination of stipends, tutoring and mentoring for secondary school students has proven successful in greatly reducing early school leaving and raising grade averages (GPAs). Where REF scholarship programs have gone national, the graduation rates for young Roma from high schools continues to rise.

The Romaversitas Model targets the improvement of retention, performance, and graduation levels of Roma full-time tertiary education students by providing them with individual and group academic tutoring and mentoring and to help strengthen their Roma identity and community

¹ 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

participation. This model consists of mandatory and optional/ elective components and it serves as a bridge for young Roma scholars towards employment and active citizenship, by providing tailored needs training in professional development, IT, foreign language competences – academic support, foreign language courses and IT skills, provision of book allowance learning materials support and student initiatives/ research small grants, building-up a network of active Roma intellectuals in the Roma student community.

REF's Adult Education and Training Model works towards the raise of the education attainment levels of young adults with incomplete primary and/or secondary education attainment. It provides those with incomplete primary and/or secondary education with tutoring and financial support for completing formal primary and/or secondary education. This model also aims to improve the literacy and social communication skills of illiterate and semi-literate parents (mainly mothers) of preschool- and school-aged children and enhance parents' involvement in their children's education through provision of non-formal literacy and social communication skills trainings.

The geographical area covered by the interventions carried out by REF – i.e., 16 countries from Central and South - Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans - triggered specific implementation challenges and finding of opportunities and conditions that can ensure the success thereof. In this way, REF has become, in this area, the main driver of stimulating initiatives aimed at ensuring equal opportunities in education and the educational inclusion of the Roma population. An argument for this conclusion is even this report supported by Roma Education Fund. Our hope is that the conclusions and recommendations advanced here are going to become a source of inspiration and a call to action for policymakers in all the countries covered by the research.

About the Authors

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Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and a Master and a PhD from University of Tirana in Social Work and Social Policy. Prof. Duci has a rich experience as both international and national expert on the issues of inclusive education, child protection, social policies for children and social protection, migration and mobility, school dropout, etc. Prof. Duci has a strong research background and has been a lead researcher in several national and regional studies. Also, she has numerous records of academic publishing in distinguished journals. Roma inclusion and education issues has been part of Duci's research interest for several years.

Acronyms

ALMP	– Active Labor Market Policies
BiH	– Bosnia and Herzegovina
CSO	– Civil Society Organization
EC	– European Council
ECD	– Early Childhood Development
ECRI	– European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ERRC	– European Roma Right Center
EU	– European Union
FGD	– Focus Group Discussion
FRA	– European Agency for Fundamental Rights
KESP	– Kosovo Education Strategic Plan
MICS	– Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey
NER	– Net Enrolment Rate
NGO	– Non-Governmental Organization
NMC	– National Minority Councils
OECD	– Organization for the Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	– Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PISA	– Programme for International Student Assessment
RCC	– Regional Cooperation Council
REF	– Roma Education Fund
SDG	– Sustainable Development Goals
SWOT	– Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UN	– United Nations
UNDP	– United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	– United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VET	– Vocational Education and Training

Executive Summary

Roma communities form one of Western Balkans' and Turkey's largest ethnic minority groups. Regardless of a strong international commitment to foster the inclusion of Roma communities from 2005 onwards, Roma remain one of the most marginalized groups and facing mostly similar challenges in all countries, including discrimination, poverty, precarious housing, underemployment and low educational attainment. This document presents a strategic policy analysis on secondary and tertiary education and transition to employment issues based on the evidence from and a comparative perspective on six Western Balkans countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) and Turkey. It scrutinizes policy logic and legal framework in the area, as well as explores factors that facilitate and block the effective development and implementation of these policies. For this, a thorough literature review was followed by analysis of primary and secondary data from each of the targeted countries to provide country specific analysis and a comparative perspective on the region. Secondary data from official sources and primary qualitative data, collected via in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions with stakeholders and key informants, were utilised.

Beyond country-based specificities, findings show that most of the problems, challenges, good practices and lessons learned in the efforts to advance Roma secondary and tertiary education and enable transition to employment are shared at a large scale. At the policy level, need for a more holistic approach that follows the life cycle of the beneficiaries starting from an early and sure start in ECD, to primary, secondary, tertiary education and then transition to employment was found relevant to all countries.

When planning and implementing policies, principles of inclusiveness need to be considered not only with reference to inter-sectorial approach but also in their scope and coverage, be it geographically or thematically, regardless if the implementation is centralized or decentralized. Policies for Roma education and employment should grow from targeting the immediate beneficiaries (e.g. Roma children, Roma youth) to working in tandem with Roma parents, Roma families and Roma communities, as essential components for sustainable results.

In education and employment, problems of discrimination and segregation (direct or indirect/hidden) persist and call for an urgency of addressing issues of antigypsyism at all levels. Policy/legal frameworks need to be complete in terms of content (including bylaws that make them operational) as well as in including dedicated budget lines. Roma budgeting needs to advance at both central and local level agendas and action plans providing the opportunity for Roma responsive budgeting and a more complete monitoring and evaluation frame.

Monitoring and evaluation component which has been typically missing, fragmented or incomplete, much be strengthened and sustained. This will require improved data-collection processes to improve evidence-based policymaking processes in the area. Policymaking in the area of Roma education must foster a participatory and inclusive approach. Participation needs to become more meaningful and not just a “tick the box” procedural practice.

Migration and return migration issues should be addressed with greater responsiveness to Roma specific needs. Policies and measures which target the root causes of migration such as unemployment or the working poor, working conditions and decent employment, poor reintegration upon return etc. would benefit Roma in all targeted countries.

More hands-on immediate measures and actions per each of the identified challenges and bottlenecks include: creating national and/or regional web sources on “What works for Roma” for easy access to learn from best practices; measures that result in desegregation/exclusion and/or poor education outcomes for Roma children must be abolished; measures that provide follow-up and support to Roma graduates in their efforts to enter the labour market (through partnerships with civil society, international organizations and private sector, through schemes of internships, wage – subsidies and other incentives for the private sector) shall be prioritised; measures that support Roma VET students in job placements and apprenticeships and inclusion in labour market through school to job transition tailored programs are strongly encouraged; immediate actions should be taken to ensure access to employment in public administration (e.g. through quotas for Roma graduates and other high skilled Roma students and adults) and increase number of Romani teachers and Romani staff of VET centers; provision of scholarships to vulnerable Roma need to be revisited in terms of a more effective combination of criteria of vulnerability, Roma identity

and academic performance, particularly in secondary education and success stories must be promoted to inspire other.

1. Background and Context

Roma communities form one of Western Balkans' and Turkey's largest ethnic minority groups. However, they are one of the most marginalized groups and face mostly similar challenges in all countries, including discrimination and negative stereotypes, poverty, precarious housing, underemployment, and low educational attainment. Although a strong international commitment to foster the inclusion of Roma communities has been observed from 2005 onwards, the overall situation has not significantly changed. This applies to the education area too. Although, some important achievements have been reached, mainly in terms of literacy rates, yet Roma students still lag behind and are often the most excluded group².

Across the region of Western Balkans and Turkey, the coverage of education among Roma is narrow, and ethnic gaps are wide. Thus far, transnational and national policies have failed to ensure Roma inclusion and education equality, even though some progress is visible³. A recent evaluation of a multi – country program in Western Balkan showed that though there was some improvement in enrolment and completion rates of Roma students, gaps between Roma and their non-Roma neighbors remain substantial, especially in upper-secondary and tertiary education. According to the same report, inequalities between Roma and non-Roma become apparent early in life and continue throughout tertiary education. Although governments include measures to raise enrollment and attendance in their National Action Plans for Roma Inclusion there are still significant gaps in enrollments in schools, mostly driven by discrimination and restrictive social norms. Completion rates in secondary education among Roma are generally low, and the gender

² Rutigliano, A. (2020). Inclusion of Roma Students in Europe: A literature review and examples of policy initiatives. OECD Education Working Paper No. 228. Available at

[https://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=EDU/WKP\(2020\)16&docLanguage=En](https://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=EDU/WKP(2020)16&docLanguage=En)

³ Alexiadou, N. (2019). Framing education policies and transitions of Roma students in Europe. Comparative education <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2019.1619334>

gaps are often large⁴. Transition to employment remains an even more challenging issue, for several reasons. In many countries Roma children show low academic performance due to their social and family context – poverty, discrimination, segregation, low quality of teaching staff employed in Roma neighborhoods, to name a few – whereas Roma adults encounter difficulties to enter the labor market, due to overall discrimination towards Roma. Affirmative measures for employment are poorly implemented.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledges to leave no one behind, envisaging “a socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met” and endeavoring to reach the furthest behind first (United Nations, 2015). Both the global 2030 Agenda and the Europe 2020 strategy recognize that poverty, inequalities, and exclusion are among the greatest challenges that need to be addressed in order to achieve inclusive and sustainable development⁵. There are several SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) relevant to Roma inclusion and integration in education, like SDG 4 on quality education, but also SDG 1 on ending poverty, SDG 2 on ending hunger, SDG 3 on healthy lives, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 6 on availability of water and sanitation, SDG 7 on affordable energy, SDG 8 on inclusive growth and employment, SDG 10 on reducing inequalities, SDG 11 on safe human settlements, and SDG 17 underlining the importance of data collection and monitoring, including disaggregated by ethnicity, gender and age. These goals reflect the need for holistic and inter-sectorial approaches for Roma inclusion and integration of Roma children in educational systems.

Besides UN Sustainable Development Goals Agenda for 2030, there are important policy frames of reference for Roma inclusion in Europe. Firstly, the Decade for Roma Inclusion, a policy initiative of cooperation amongst governments, NGOs and intergovernmental organizations, launched by the World Bank and UNDP, and aimed at combating discrimination against Roma in Europe. The Decade operated during 2005– 2015, and it is several years since its work was concluded. Major regional responses to the challenges of Roma inclusion can be traced back to the

⁴ World Bank Group (2018). Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans. Retrieved from <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/642861552321695392/pdf/Breaking-the-Cycle-of-Roma-Exclusion-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf> accessed in April 2021

⁵ Dugarova, E., Slay, B., Papa, J., & Marnie, S., (2017). Leaving No One Behind in Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Roma Inclusion in Europe. UNDP

establishment of this initiative. Second, the European Union has taken on board the commitments of the Decade, but also the four priority areas of education, employment, health, and housing as the focus for policy, practice and funding projects. The operating elements of the Decade are similar to the governance measures that the EU has adopted in areas of social and education policy, such as the creation of National Action Plans, exchange of knowledge, policy coordination, and the attempt to bring together governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and Romani civil society⁶.

Recently, EU has launched the EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020 – 2030, which sets more ambitious, measurable targets focusing on inclusion, Antigypsyism and negative effect of COVID - 19. The Framework package includes a Portfolio of indicators coordinated by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and an Analytical Document where use of funds is highly recommended to support and add value to Member States Policies on equality for Roma population. Education, employment, health and housing, remain core areas to be targeted by Member States through their National Roma Strategies, but three capital objectives are now included to be monitored and taken into action by Member States: effective equality, Roma people effective and meaningful participation, and socio-economic inclusion fighting persisting poverty rates⁷.

An important event for the Western Balkans took place in July 2019. Declaration of Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process was adopted within the Berlin Process. Unlike previous documents dealing with the Roma, this is the first time that leaders of Western Balkan societies have set clear goals that their governments intend to achieve by their EU accession. By adopting the Declaration, the economies committed themselves to continue and further enhance efforts to achieve equality and full inclusion of the Roma, as part of regional cooperation and the accession process to the European Union. In relation to education, the Poznan Declaration requests countries to make a commitment to *“Increase the enrolment and completion*

⁶ Alexiadou, N. (2019). Framing education policies and transitions of Roma students in Europe. Comparative education <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2019.1619334>

⁷ EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020 – 2030. Available at <https://www.euromanet.eu/news/the-ec-launches-a-new-eu-roma-framework-for-equality-inclusion-and-participation-2020-2030/>

*rate of Roma in primary education to 90 per cent and the enrolment and completion rate of Roma in secondary education to 50 per cent*⁸.

Still, despite the progress achieved and considerable efforts of the national governments and relevant actors, Roma continue to experience multiple deprivations and face discrimination, with persistent segregation in education and housing and exclusion from the labor market. Many projects and practices have been rather limited in scope and scaling them up remains a major challenge.

1.1. Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this strategic policy analysis is to research and report on evidence from six countries of Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) and Turkey on the level of quality of policies related to the Roma secondary and tertiary education and transition to employment, as well as on the factors that facilitate and block the effective development and implementation of these policies i.e. their specific objectives. Also, both, country focus as well as common enablers and bottlenecks to policy implementation are examined, learning from successful practices and providing recommendations for strengthening policy development and implementation in the future.

The main research questions for this strategic policy analysis are:

- What is the legal and policy state of art for Roma children education in Western Balkans and Turkey? To what extent they address issues of employability?
- What are the main challenges and bottlenecks faced by Roma children and youth in accessing and receiving quality secondary and tertiary education? What barriers do they face for further qualifications and employability?
- What are the best practices in the region and what can be learnt in respect to access, quality education, and employability?

⁸ Western-Balkans-Declaration-on-Roma-Integration-and-EU-enlargement. Available at <https://www.romaeducationfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Western-Balkans-Declaration-on-Roma-Integration-and-EU-enlargement.pdf>

2. Methods

A qualitative methodological approach was employed for the development of this paper, consisting in a comprehensive literature review of relevant reports, articles and statistical indicators related to Roma children inclusion in education and primary data collection in the seven countries through interviews and focus groups discussions.

2.1. Sample

Key stakeholders that participated in the process of primary data collection were selected from each country based on their experience in Roma inclusion in education and employability issues. They were representatives from REF (Roma Education Fund) project implementing partner organizations, representatives from central and local government, CSOs working in the field of Roma children and youth education and transition to employment, and international organizations/donors that prioritize Roma children and youth education/employability. Besides them, REF project team members participated in a focus group discussion.

At least two interviews and one focus group discussion were conducted per country with the participation of the above-mentioned stakeholders, as well as one focus group discussion with REF project team to discuss the regional perspective of these issues.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

Besides the initial literature review, primary data collection tools were developed and employed. Data collection was led by three main topics and layers of analysis: (a) policies and legal framework, (b) interventions and approaches that shape them, and (c) outcomes. A special emphasis was put in best practices and lessons learnt. Gender and geographical differences were also explored as cross – cutting issues for all three layers of analysis. The following is an elaboration on each of the tools utilized for the purpose of this analysis:

- **Literature review** – included a thorough examination of the current body of research on Roma Education and Employment Policies in Western Balkans, including REF documents. Legal and policy framework analysis was part of this process, during which National Roma and non – Roma policies and legislation on education and employability was reviewed

based on pre – defined criteria. Additionally, secondary data collection of statistical indicators was conducted by the experts focused on enrolment and completion rates of Roma students in the respective countries at all levels of education indicating the effectiveness and efficiency of Roma Education Policies and current state of the art.

- **Primary data collection, in – depth interviews and FGDs** with key stakeholders. The major areas that were explored and analyzed from a policy analysis perspective were: legal and policy framework, operational structures/governance and funding, accountability, learning and teaching environment and support measures, besides the indicators already mentioned above. A particular focus was paid to exploring challenges, bottlenecks as well as opportunities and recommendations for future improvements. A SWOT analysis exercise was integrated as part of these primary data collection tools.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted on a thematical analysis approach, for which the pre – selected criteria served as a basis, comprising: (a) policies and legal framework, (b) interventions and approaches that shape them, and (c) outcomes. The process of data analysis included inputs from literature review, interviews and FGDs, as well as statistical indicators. During data collection through interviews and FGDs notes were kept and/or recorded, upon granted consent from the participants. These interviews and FGDs were transcribed and processed for data analysis. All data gathered was processed and treated confidentially. The qualitative data were coded and organized around the main themes of primary data collection. Sub - codes will were further developed, merged and rearranged based on the variations and new insights emerging during narrations.

3. Findings

3.1. Albania

In Albania, the most recent available official source reporting on the overall population of Roma and Egyptian minorities in the country is that of the Census 2011. The data for Albania show it to be a predominantly ethnic homogeneous country where 83% of the population self-identify as Albanians (and 14% preferred not to answer) and less than 2% of the population was self-identified as belonging to an ethnic minority among which, the Roma population counts some 8,301 individuals and the Egyptians, around 3,368 individuals – less than 0,5% of the 2,8 million of inhabitants of the country. However, this data is often taken with caution given that the census drew a lot of criticism in terms of drastically undercounting the number of Romani in the country. The European Roma Right Center (ERRC) estimates for a population of 120,000 Roma in Albania⁹, whereas the recent European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) report says that NGOs working in this area estimate that they are 30.000 to 40.000 persons from Roma and Egyptian minority¹⁰. But beyond figures, both Roma and Egyptian communities are officially recognized as minorities and Roma and Egyptians live all over the country. Some of the biggest communities can be found around the capital, Tirana, as well as in some other major cities and their surroundings such as in Fier, Berat, Gjirodat, and Korça.

National education system in Albania is as shown below. The compulsory education is from grades I to IX (ages 6 to 15 years).

- Preschool education system (from 0 to 6 years) which is not obligatory;
- Primary (grades I to V, from age 6 to 11 years)
- Lower secondary (grades VI to IX, ages 11 to 15 years)
- Upper secondary (grades X to XII, ages 15 to 18 years)
- Tertiary education (typically a 3-years bachelor's degree, followed by a Professional Master or a Master of Science)

⁹ See also Simons, Galanxhi, and Dhono (2015) Roma and Egyptians in Albania: a socio-demographic and economic profile based on the 2011 census April 2015, UNDP Albania

¹⁰ European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, ECRI (2020). Albania report. Available at <https://rm.coe.int/report-on-albania-6th-monitoring-cycle-/16809e8241>

Net Enrolment Rate (NER) in secondary education for 2019 was 85.7%, with a slight difference for girls¹¹.

3.1.1. Policy and Legal Framework

Particularly during the last 10 years, the Albanian Government has intensified its efforts to improve the living conditions of the Roma and Egyptian minorities, and to enable their inclusion in Albanian society. In addition to the ratification of international conventions for the protection of fundamental human rights, the national legal framework has also been developed in line with European standards, dictated by the acquisition of EU candidate status.

Policy logic targeting the Roma and Egyptian minorities prioritizes education, mostly focusing on enrolment of children rather than supportive policies for completion of at least compulsory education or full inclusion of Roma children¹². This is materialized in the main strategic document, the Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in Albania 2016-2020, which proposes a number of measures in the area of education, expected to be followed by the new Action Plan 2020-2025, currently being designed through a participatory process and including for the first time Antigypsyism as a standalone priority area.

Education of Roma and Egyptian children is affected, explicitly or implicitly, by a number of other strategic and legal documents, including:

- Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in Albania 2016 – 2020¹³
- Strategy on Pre – University Education 2014 – 2020¹⁴
- National Strategy on Social Protection 2019 – 2022
- Action Plan for Children in Street Situation 2019 – 2021
- National Strategy on Justice for Children 2017 – 2020

¹¹ UNESCO UIS Albania. Available at <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/al?theme=education-and-literacy>

¹² Regional Cooperation Council (2021). Mainstream policies targeting Roma integration in the Western Balkans. p.8

¹³ Currently the new strategy is drafted

¹⁴ Currently the new strategy is drafted and at the process of public consultation

The most relevant laws that affect the integration of Roma in different educational levels are:

- Law on the Protection of National Minorities in Albania (2018)
- Law on Pre – University Education (2013)
- Law on Social Housing (2018)
- Law on Child Rights and Protection (2017)

In relation to employability the National Strategy on Employment and Skills (2019 - 2022) identifies the inadequate education system as the main problem in accessing the labor market in general and in particular for the Roma minority, which is exposed to social exclusion. The strategy stresses that Roma and Egyptians require tailored strategies that match their particular needs in terms of education, professional qualifications and employment.¹⁵

Besides these advances in policy and legal provisions, the framework is still fairly generic, it does not provide concrete measures for Roma and Egyptian minorities in particular and fails to provide an adequate response to their needs, which is reflected in the relative slow progress in terms of achievements in this area.

The main institution responsible for implementation of education reform and the majority of measures aimed at the inclusion of minorities is the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Other institutions play a crucial role in particular activities, such as the Ministry of Finance and Economy (under which the National Employment and Skills Agency is positioned), Ministry of Interior in the registration of all school age children into the system and other line ministries, such as the Ministry of Health and Social Protection when the economic status of the person is in question (which in most cases is of crucial importance to Roma and Egyptian parents and children).

¹⁵ Regional Cooperation Council (2021). Mainstream policies targeting Roma integration in the Western Balkans. <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/bc683d69caea951b0ba571874161cc27.pdf>

3.1.2. Roma Education - Achievements and Challenges

Based on the latest EU progress report there is a positive trend in relation to the participation of Roma and Egyptian children in mainstream education, with 14,515 students in the pre-university education system¹⁶. Primary data collected in the frame of this assessment also confirm an overall positive trend perceived by most of the relevant stakeholders. According to the data of the draft strategy for education 2021 – 2026 for the school year 2018 – 19 approximately 5000 Roma children and 11,1000 Egyptian were enrolled in Albanian schools, for all school levels – a threefold increase for the last decade. Participation of children in compulsory education has increased from 48 per cent in 2011 to 66 per cent in 2017, however the gap between Roma and non – Roma children that live in the same area remains concerning. Disaggregated data about enrolment and completion of secondary and higher education are not found for this report, however the same strategy emphasized that only a symbolic number of Roma children continue towards secondary education.¹⁷

Growing efforts have resulted in a more integrated approach in tackling issues of Roma education in the country. Nevertheless, there is a perceived tendency of the policy logic to operate in a more implicit way rather than an explicit one. Roma and Egyptian children are typically targeted as part of the general category of the vulnerable groups. Primary data collection showed that the reasons for this disparity among advances in legal/policy framework and slow progress are: (a) lack of dedicated budgets for Roma inclusion, (b) non – prioritization of Roma education among other social issues (c) poor inter-institutional coordination, (d) lack of human resources / high turnover rates of qualified staff working for Roma issues, (e) lack of or poor transparency. Nevertheless, the new Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptian Minorities 2020-2025, is appreciated as an opportunity to address issues and challenges faced in the implementation of the previous action plan. Furthermore, including Antigypsyism as a standalone area in the new action plan, adds more to the optimism for the future policy interventions. Some of the specific objectives related to Antigypsyism are: understanding and including it in public policies, awareness raising for the rights of Roma and Egyptians as part of the Albanian society, reduction of discrimination

¹⁶ EU (2021). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/albania_report_2020.pdf

¹⁷ Draft Strategy on Education 2021 – 2026, Available at <https://www.konsultimipublik.gov.al/Konsultime/Detaje/349>

and improvement of access in justice, minimization/elimination of hate speech and/or hate crimes against Roma and Egyptians and increasing the empowerment and meaningful participation of Roma Civil Society.

When it comes to the level of measures implemented and actions taken, the provision of free textbooks, transportation for children living in a distance greater than 2km are singled out as impactful in improving the enrolment and attendance of Roma children in compulsory education, from grade 1 to 9. However, as mentioned above, the gap between Roma/Egyptians and other non-Roma children living in the same areas remains significant. Dropout levels jump after grade 6, which may be connected, among other things, to the low investment of school/teachers to Roma children during the previous years, and consequently their low performance. The draft strategy on education showcases the results of Roma children at the National Test for Skills and Knowledge Assessment of the 5th grade: the average result for Roma children are 29 points, much lower than the average 45 points. According to key stakeholders' estimations only 14 per cent of Roma children attend upper secondary education and only 3 per cent apply for tertiary education. Some of the reasons for this are poverty, insufficient financial support for parents that obliges them to engage their children in informal work, poor parental engagement since the early years of schooling, discrimination and bullying in schools that makes them disengage much earlier and contribute to their low achievements. Lack of role-models (who are willing to serve as such for their communities) adds to the picture, because Roma children cannot envision a different future for themselves. Sustainability of the programs and interventions remains a challenge, as the majority of them are donor funded and not included in the system. However, long – term projects like REF implemented by local partner CSOs, have contributed to the increase in attendance and completion of primary and secondary education and transition to higher education or employment, according to primary data collection.

Scholarships for attendance of Vocational Education and Training (VET) brought positive developments for Roma and Egyptian students¹⁸. On the other hand, key stakeholders reported that these scholarships were very difficult to reach, with many bureaucracies. Last year only a low number of children managed to get the scholarships at the end of the year. Also, Roma are not included in the categories that benefit from the reimbursement of the cost of purchasing scholar

¹⁸ Report on the Implementation of Roma Integration Public Policy in Albania for 2019, www.romalb.org

textbooks for grades ten to twelve, like in compulsory education. However, they could benefit free textbooks if their families receive state financial assistance. Career counselling programs in four pilot areas aiming to increase their skills and capacities to enter the labor market have declined.

Studies related to attendance and graduation from universities for Roma students are scarce. Affirmative measures in this process include dedicated quota for Roma students at higher education and exclusion from school fees (100 per cent exclusion for Bachelor's degree and 50 per cent for Master's degree). RomAlb system does not have a database for them, but REF project reports that for the academic year 2019-2020 (which was more problematic due to COVID – 19), based on its scholarships system there were 43 applications, of which 33 were eligible and 19 benefitted from a scholarship¹⁹ However, according to the 2019 EU progress report, the gap for Roma participation in higher education remains, no progress was noted between 2011 and 2017.²⁰ Recent changes for entrance criteria in higher education for degrees in Education (average combined grade should be above 7) puts further barriers for Roma applicants, which typically have lower average grades. Gender differences, favoring boys are more present in lower and upper secondary education. According to the participants, if girls continue and complete upper secondary education, then chances are that they will pursue higher education.

Segregation seems to be somehow an overcome concern, particularly in secondary education. In the recent years, wherever there has been a red flag of segregation, there has been a strong reaction and immediate measures to address the case, like the case of “Naim Frasheri” school in Korca city, where the reaction from civil society and media was strong. Schools dominated by Roma children are rarely featuring in areas with homogenous Roma community. However, in class segregation and bullying are still present, with Roma children sitting separately from the other children.

3.1.3. Roma Youth and Employability

In the current active employment programs, there are very few of affirmative measures to promote Roma employment. Measures like subsidized employment in the private sector, affirmative measures in the public sector, or others that aim to prevent discrimination in employment are not in place. Although the Law on Social Entrepreneurship has been approved since 2016 little is done

¹⁹ Roma Education Fund Annual Report 2019, Available at: <https://www.romaeducationfund.org/>

²⁰ Report on the Implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies, 2019. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4ff1ac7f-3749-11ea-ba6e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

for its implementation, including here the potential benefits for Roma²¹. Based on primary data collection Roma graduates overall are employed, mostly in CSOs, not in their own profession and qualification. Projects on transition to employment usually target low – skilled Roma and not the ones that have graduated from a university.

In relation to VET, which are preferred by Roma minority, the previous Action Plan 2016 – 2020 foresaw free VET courses for Roma students. However, often it happens that they often lack information about the advantages of registering as an unemployed person, which means that they lack access to Vocational Education and Training (VET) and active employment promotion programs. Most of the VET centers do not have Roma and Egyptian employees and this makes communication with beneficiaries difficult²².

3.1.4. Best Practice

At the institutional level, RomAlb system of data collection on Roma and Egyptian minorities is listed as a best practice. The system is operational since 2016, systemically collecting and reporting on Roma and Egyptian inclusion indicators, hence boosting the monitoring and evaluation of progress as well as enabling a more evidence-based approach in policymaking in the area.

In terms of more tailor-made and explicit interventions targeting Roma children, participant in the primary data-collection process reported the following to have proven efficient:

- Tutoring and extra/additional classes: for most children particularly at lower secondary education it has proven very effective to have tutoring and/or extra classes in order to cover for language difficulties, gaps from previous education experiences, and/or lack of parental guidance/support.
- Scholarships: when combined with other provisions such as mentoring/tutoring, scholarships have proven very effective, enabling education of children from deprived economic settings. However, it is important that such types of support are sustainable for the child to progress and climb up the education levels. (If discontinued they might dropout and the investment done that far is lost).

²¹ Regional Cooperation Council (2021). Mainstream policies targeting Roma integration in the Western Balkans. Available at: <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/bc683d69caea951b0ba571874161cc27.pdf>

²² Ibid

In the list of things that could have worker better and/or that would help if practiced in the future, interviewed stakeholders identified the following:

- Plans at the local level for the inclusion of Roma have generally failed to be successfully implemented, due to a lack of dedicated budget at local level, lack of willingness and engagement for their implementation, poor monitoring of activities etc.;
- A still high level of dependency on donors' funds combined with an overall lack of political willingness to push forward the agenda for Roma issues, continues to be a serious threat to sustainability;
- Poor inter-institutional coordination, restructuring and reassigning of duties and responsibilities without due information, a tendency for centralization (for example scholarship scheme is administered by the National Agency Children's Rights and Protection), and high turnover of the specialized staff in relevant institutions/positions.

3.1.5. SWOT Analysis of Roma Education and Employability in Albania

In a nutshell, stakeholders that participated in the primary data-collection process were invited to a SWOT analysis and the results are summarized in the table below.

SWOT Analysis on Roma Education and Employability in Albania	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Satisfying national policy and legal framework; - Lower level of explicit and direct discrimination compared to other countries in the legal and policy framework; - Inclusive education movement and respective legal/policy framework and interventions; - Roma civil society has raised capacities, broad awareness of R&E needs and advocacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of in – depth analysis and accurate data on R&E; - Not so inclusive settings in schools, presence of in – class segregation and bullying; - Lack of a well – coordinated intersectoral cooperation between different sectors, e.g. education, health etc. and among central and local government; - Lack of human and financial capacities in public institutions working with vulnerable groups; - Lack of dedicated policies and budgets
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EU negotiation and accession process that managed to put Roma issues higher in the national agenda and put pressure to the government; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High turnover of public officials that are experts in the field; - Lack of awareness among public opinion for Roma issues;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional best practices that can be replicated in Albania; - Albania has signed Poznan Declaration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - COVID – 19 pandemics: Roma children were not supported sufficiently.
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3.2. Bosnia and Herzegovina

The 2013 census in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) registered 12,583 Roma in the country. However, the Roma led civil society organizations and Roma leaders claim that the average estimate on the number of Roma living in Bosnia and Herzegovina is at 76,000 Roma²³. As in other countries of the region, a large number of Romani individuals are undocumented²⁴. As a result, they are unable to enjoy the full scope of citizenship or receive any governmental assistance.²⁵ This has a direct impact also in the areas of education and employment/employability be it in terms of enabling Roma inclusion as well as in monitoring the processes, outcomes and impact in the area.

In an overview, the education system in BiH is structured as follows:

- **Primary education** is compulsory, and it lasts 9 years. Public primary education is free, and the only admission criterion is the age – all children have to be enrolled in primary school between 5 ½ and 6 ½ years old.
- **Secondary education** is not compulsory but is available to everyone under equal conditions. Secondary education is available primarily in forms of general secondary education schools (grammar schools), vocational secondary education schools, and art schools. General secondary education lasts 4 years and vocational secondary education lasts 3 or 4 years. Students are usually 15 years old when they enter secondary education,

²³ Regional Cooperation Council Roma Integration 2020 Action Team (2018) Potentials for Roma Employment in The Enlargement Region

<https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/456df932ca6433b78cfb328d31d76035.pdf> Page 15

²⁴ See for instance <http://www.errc.org/press-releases/lack-of-birth-certificates-leaves-romani-children-in-balkans-at-risk-of-statelessness-and-without-healthcare-or-education>

²⁵ In Romani Poverty in Bosnia and Herzegovina

<https://borgenproject.org/romani-poverty-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/>

and they are admitted to schools on the basis of primary school achievements and final exam results.

- **Higher education** is organized in three cycles. The first cycle leads to the academic title of completed undergraduate studies (Bachelor) or equivalent, obtained after a minimum of three and a maximum of four years of full-time study. The second cycle leads to the academic title of Master or equivalent, obtained after completing undergraduate studies, lasting one or two years. The third cycle leads to a doctoral degree or equivalent.
- **Youth and adult education** can be formal, non-formal and informal learning and aims at: achieving the least basic education; training for the employment of adults who have not completed formal education; facilitating education and training, or the possibility of additional qualification, pre-qualification and continuing vocational training throughout the service and enabling education and acquisition of knowledge and skills that correspond to personal abilities, affinity, and the life of an individual²⁶.

The most comprehensive data on Roma education in BiH are those provided by the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey - Roma Settlements which, although getting old (2011), they portray one of the cores, persisting issues in Roma education that is the discrepancy of Roma participation in primary versus higher levels of education²⁷.

3.2.1. Policy and Legal Framework

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a strategic platform for Roma integration endorsed by the Council of Ministers in 2005 and valid until the completion of the integration of Roma and fulfilment of all objectives²⁸. Action plans are prepared for the period of 3 to 4 years, with the most recent one covering the period 2017-2020. A dedicated Framework Action Plan on Education Needs of Roma

²⁶ See also https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/bosnia-and-herzegovina_en

²⁷ Secondary school attendance was found to rate much lower than primary school attendance. Twenty-three per cent of children of secondary school age were attending secondary school, while nine per cent of children of secondary school age were attending primary school. The highest proportion of children attending secondary school was found amongst those aged 16 (26 per cent), while the lowest percentage was amongst children aged 18 (18 per cent) UNICEF (2011) Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2011 - Roma Settlements, p.80

²⁸ Meliha Kozaric Fanning (2017) Analysis of The Priorities and Budget of The Official Roma Integration Policies in The Areas of Employment and Housing in The Western Balkans and Turkey

in Bosnia and Herzegovina is to be completed next year (2018-2022)²⁹. Action plans are also being developed and implemented at the entity or municipal level³⁰.

The policy logic in terms of Roma integration with a focus on the area of education aims to:

- a. Improve the educational attainment by preventing early school-leaving.
- b. Encourage completion of secondary education and continuation to tertiary education.
- c. Provide tuition, financial or other support to compensate children of war veterans, invalids and the holders of war honors for material disadvantage.³¹

Several sectorial strategies are relevant to the education enrollment and achievements of Roma children and youth. The most recent ones being the “Revised Action Plan on the Educational needs of Roma” and the “Platform for the Development of Preschool Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2017–2022”. Part of the strategic frame has been the already expired document of the Strategic Directions for the Development of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina within the Implementation Plan 2008–2015.³²

Implementation of the policy framework and its monitoring were expected to improve due to the adoption of the new Framework Action Plan on Educational Needs of Roma 2018-2022³³. For the purpose of monitoring in education, Bosnia and Herzegovina prepared a monitoring template specifically for education, compliant with the regionally adopted template for reporting on Roma integration policies prepared by the Roma Integration Programme 2020. However, a recent assessment on the mainstream Roma integration policies in the BW and Turkey, finds that in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the implementation of the Revised Action Plan on the Educational Needs of Roma is fragmented, with only few steps forward and limited achievements³⁴. In particular,

²⁹ For more details, see “Framework Action Plan on Educational Needs of Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina “available at <http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/PDF/djeca/Okvirni%20Akcioni%20Plan%20fin%20verzija.pdf>

³⁰ One example is the Action Plan of the Municipality Zavidovici for Advancing Position of Roma Population in the Field of Education, Health and Social Care, Employment and Housing and Culture for the Period 2019-2023, <http://www.zavidovici.ba/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/akcioni-plan.pdf>.

³¹ Regional Cooperation Council (2021). Mainstream policies targeting Roma integration in the Western Balkans. <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/bc683d69caea951b0ba571874161cc27.pdf> Page 13

³² Ibid.

³³ Roma Regional Cooperation (2019) 2018 National Platform on Roma Integration Bosnia and Herzegovina 28 September 2018, Sarajevo <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/c6b644fd035a8fa2f2a90f4e34a3b3d3.pdf>

³⁴ Ibid. Page 13

policy differences from canton to canton shapes an uneven implementation of the foreseen measures in different areas across the country, which makes it more challenging to monitor, evaluate and trace Roma sensitive budgeting.

This uneven implementation of the policy and legal framework unfolds in an overall context which is pictured to lack adequate policies, programs that are budgeted and up to date. It is observed that adequate policies and programs with allocated funds that would effectively address the issue of Roma and other vulnerable groups do not accompany strategic developed documents at the state level. The most recent Framework Action Plan on Educational Needs of Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018-2022 is about to expire next year but monitoring reports were not available to document/report on its implementation progress.

The overall legal framework in regard to Roma and education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is composed by three framework laws:

- Law on Preschool Education³⁵;
- Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina³⁶.
- Law on Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina³⁷

All education laws mainstream respect for human rights and ban all forms of discrimination on any basis.

There are twelve responsible institutions of education in BiH:

- The Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska (Ministarstvo prosvjete i kulture Republike Srpske),
- Ten cantonal ministries of education in the Federation of BiH, and

³⁵ Framework Law on Preschool Care and Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2007)
<http://www.esteri.it/mae/doc/ba%2009%20ib%20ot%2001%20framework%20law%20on%20preschool%20educati on.pdf>

³⁶ Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2003)
<https://aposo.gov.ba/sadrzaj/uploads/Framework-Law.pdf>

³⁷ Framework Law on Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2007)
<http://www.cip.gov.ba/images/pdf/okvirni/Okvirni.eng.pdf>

- The Department for Education of the Brčko District Government (Odjeljenje za obrazovanje u Vladi Brčko Distrikta BiH)

Besides there are two ministries that play coordinating role: a. Federal Ministry of Education and Science at the level of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina that has a coordinating role over the cantonal ministries of education; b. Ministry of Civil Affairs of BiH on state level with a role to coordinate activities within all education institutions in the country.

The cantons in the Federation of BiH have the competence to adopt regulations that will ensure consistent implementation of the provisions of the Framework Law as well as to implement them in educational practice. Education institutions differ from canton to canton in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Republika Srpska.

The division of responsibilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina is such that the Board on Roma discusses questions of interest for Roma integration and provides policy proposals to the Government and has an advisory role, while the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR) are tasked with decision-making and implementation, and it is claimed that the institutional cooperation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is continuously improving³⁸. Increased support from the Ministry of Civil Affairs (responsible for education at the federal level) is required to ensure successful implementation of the Framework Action Plan.

The entities and cantons are expected to follow up by adopting entity/cantonal action plans on education. They should aim to: a. include Roma children in compulsory primary education; b. motivate Roma children to continue with secondary and tertiary education. With reference to the latter, two specific measures are expected: - providing free of charge schoolbooks and transportation for Roma high-school students, and - providing scholarships to Roma high-school students who regularly attend school. Both have only partially implemented and data on the number of scholarships and dedicated budgets are not readily available to report. A third aim refers to preserving Roma language and culture; however, no activities were reported to be implemented

³⁸ Roma Regional Cooperation (2019) 2018 National Platform on Roma Integration Bosnia and Herzegovina 28 September 2018, Sarajevo
<https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/c6b644fd035a8fa2f2a90f4e34a3b3d3.pdf>

under this aim, at least until 2018 (apart from Roma language being expected be taught at the University of Philosophy from the academic year 2018-2019)³⁹.

3.2.2. Roma Education - Achievements and Challenges

Achievements have been difficult to monitor and report. The monitoring process (particularly in reference to the implementation of the Action Plan 2017-2020) has been challenged by the fact that Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR) did not have the mandate over education policy, leading MHRR to submit requests for information to line ministries at entity levels and informed them of the obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina under the Roma Integration Strategy, but with limited success and incomplete information⁴⁰.

The official information on the number of Roma children in all levels of education is not available. While the number of Roma children enrolled in primary education is claimed to have increased, information for children enrolled in secondary education is not available⁴¹. Key informants report that, occasionally, data can be found on some of the cantons, but they are being collected due to projects being implemented by NGOs which require data for baseline and end line assessments. However, they are only partial and insufficient. Data collection and reporting is challenged by limited resources which do not match the needs for collecting disaggregated data (such as by gender, ethnicity etc.). However, the process is hindered also by conceptual issues such as the automatic enrollment and sometimes lack of willingness.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is compulsory to attend education up to 15 years of age and children are being formally and automatically enrolled in schools until they turn 15. This automatic enrollment does not make it possible to account for dropouts, making official data (even when available) not relevant to describe the reality. Likewise, the information on the exact amount of funds spent is not readily available as the MHRR does not have mechanisms to properly monitor spending of the budget allocated for Roma Integration.

The Agency for Statistics was expected to develop a methodology to improve data collection on the number of Roma beneficiaries and the collection of impact indicators. In 2018 IPA funds were

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

allocated for social mapping as well as for monitoring social inclusion of vulnerable groups through centers for social work and employment offices. The lack of support from the Ministry of Civil Affairs is considered an obstacle in funds programming. Performing social mapping and establishing an effective system for monitoring social inclusion is necessary for evidence-based policy planning and prioritization (also a condition for further access to future IPA funding).⁴²

While there is progress and good practices at some municipalities, they remain rare and insufficient and lack of a systemic approach and uniformity in implementing the legislation is the main challenge in advancing Roma integration in mainstream education in Bosnia and Herzegovina⁴³.

Education, especially in the upper levels, gets more expensive and harder to be accessed by children from vulnerable settings. Compensation is available for families in need, however, for entitled families to access this benefit, there is a chain of documentation exchange between education institutions and social welfare centers which requires information, skills, time and resources to be completed. Even when accessed, costs remain high and include bus tickets (although with reduced price), textbooks, didactic materials, extra clothes etc. Hence, biggest dropout is observed in secondary education. Increasing costs is just one of the contributing factors. Accumulated disadvantage due to lack of quality education (including lower expectations from teachers for Roma students) makes many Roma children pass through primary school years without proper preparation to enroll and succeed in the upper levels.

Tertiary education is even less accessible to Roma students as the costs continue to grow and numbers of (well-performing) Roma students have already decreased significantly since the secondary education. There is no quota dedicated to Roma student in tertiary education. Even when quotas are available, their implementation is challenged by concerns of Roma students to identify/declare themselves as such in order to become eligible.

⁴² Roma Regional Cooperation (2019) 2018 National Platform on Roma Integration Bosnia and Herzegovina 28 September 2018, Sarajevo

<https://www.rcc.int/Romaintegration2020/Files/Admin/Docs/C6b644fd035a8fa2f2a90f4e34a3b3d3.Pdf>

⁴³ Regional Cooperation Council (2021). Mainstream policies targeting Roma integration in the Western Balkans. <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/bc683d69caea951b0ba571874161cc27.pdf>

3.2.3. Roma Youth and Employability

The 2017 UNDP Roma Survey⁴⁴ shows that the employment rate of Roma⁴⁵ in Bosnia and Herzegovina stood at 11%. The employment rate of their non-Roma neighbors was 27%, while the general employment rate was 40%. About 63% of Roma are reported to be engaged in informal work, whereas only 17% of non-Roma living in their proximity work in informal sector⁴⁶. Number of unemployed Roma is estimated to be at least twice that of the Roma registered as unemployed and in need to be covered by employment programs⁴⁷. Current employment programs do not achieve desired results due to various factors that include low interest of employers to employ Roma, absence of coordination at the local level, lack of capacities to use self-employment funds, low qualifications of Roma registered as unemployed, etc.⁴⁸ Most of the employment measures as stipulated in the Action Plan are not implemented, due to inability to coordinate them at the central level⁴⁹.

In terms of education as a means for employment, vocational education and training (VET) as the most exclusive ones, are not tailored explicitly to the needs of young Roma. Typically, employment programs target employers rather than the ones searching for employment, and local communities and local civil society are rarely part of the advisory process for creating VET programs and coordinating the provision of services to young Roma. Existing training courses are not in alignment with the needs, conditions and plans for local employment and self-employment and grants for educational needs of Roma are not allocated. While the employment related objectives focus clearly on VET programs and direct incentives for employment, self-employment, social entrepreneurship and public works, the condition for participation is the registration of the

⁴⁴ 2017 Regional Roma Survey of the European Commission, United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank - Country Fact Sheet Bosnia and Herzegovina, available at:

http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/dam/rbec/docs/Factsheet_BIH_Roma.pdf

⁴⁵ In line with the terminology of the European institutions and international organizations, the term 'Roma' is used here to refer to a number of different groups (e.g. Roma, Sinti, Kale, Gypsies, Romanichel, Boyash, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal) and includes 'travellers' or 'itinerants', without denying the specificities of these groups.

⁴⁶ Blazeovski, N. M., Marnie, S. & Keskin, I. (2018). The Position of Roma Women and Men in the Labour Markets of the Western Balkans: Micronarratives Report

http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/dam/rbec/docs/Factsheet_BIH_Roma.pdf

⁴⁷ 2018 National Platform on Roma Integration Bosnia and Herzegovina 28 September 2018, Sarajevo

⁴⁸ Roma Regional Cooperation (2019) 2018 National Platform on Roma Integration Bosnia and Herzegovina 28 September 2018, Sarajevo

<https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/c6b644fd035a8fa2f2a90f4e34a3b3d3.pdf>

⁴⁹ Ibid

unemployed Roma at the employment offices, which limits the possibility for a number of Roma to participate. Further, most of the related information and application processes are digitalized, adding to the list of constrained for Roma access them.

The reinforced perception that in order to get employed you have to have good connections with political parties is discouraging for many young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including Roma youth. Corruption and nepotism are other spoilers of the motivation and confidence that investing in education will yield returns at some point with employment and incomes. As a result, many Roma youth turn to migration. Particularly those with higher levels of education attainment and/or graduating vocational education leave to work in the Western Europe countries. With the Covid-19 crisis, hopes for improved employability / employment of Roma youth are becoming vaguer. A clear willingness form public institution is still not readable as there are no positive records of Roma employment in public institutions. Initially the lack of qualified Roma was blamed but with the growing number of Roma graduates, results have not changed leaving an overall dim picture in terms of Roma employment.

3.2.4. Best Practice

Primary data gathered through interviews and FGD guided towards the identification of some best practices in the efforts to enhance Roma education and employability.

REF supported initiatives have documented and report on the importance of diverse forms of support which do not just target economic inhibitors. Providing merit-based scholarships has been a first initial incentive and enabler for Roma parents to continue enrolling their children in secondary education. Later, realizing the benefits and impact that mentoring and tutoring services provided for their children, demand on mentoring and tutoring forms of support grew and became a priority. Indeed, combining scholarships with mentoring and tutoring yielded measurable and sustainable results with an increase of 25% in the transition rates (starting with a transition rate of 75% in the first year of the project implementation and achieving 100% transition rate in the last academic year). This combined approach, coming as a full package, has helped to narrow the gender gap in Roma education too. Working with parents and implementing outreaching activities has also proven effective. Indeed, the REF supported secondary scholarship project is presented

as a model of good practice in the Framework Action Plan on Educational Needs of Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2018-2022⁵⁰

In terms of Roma employment, the most successful initiative is that of cooperation between Roma CSOs and private sector employers such as in the case of the chain supermarkets “Bingo” which initially encouraged and supported through Euro Rom project to employ Roma is continuing to do so and sustaining the achieved results. This is an outstanding practice which is yet to be seen replicated in the public and private sector.

3.2.5. SWOT Analysis of Roma Education and Employability in BiH

The following table summarizes the views of the stakeholders that participated in the primary data-collection process along a SWOT analysis on the situation of Roma education and employability in the country.

SWOT analysis on Roma, Education and Employability in Bosnia and Herzegovina	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overall situation of Roma education in the country has improved and the respective legal framework is quite complete; - Higher awareness level among Roma communities on the importance of education and employment (independence from social welfare schemes) is achieved; - There is less resistance /more acceptance of problem/need to tackle problems related to Roma integration and Roma education by the mainstream population and institutions; - Roma CSOs stronger and with better build capacities; they are now fully considered as partners by relevant institutions; - There exist consolidated links/relations between local and international organizations supporting advancement of Roma integration; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level of prejudice and discrimination continues to be high; - Interventions are mainly short-term, donor-supported and fragmented; - Overall complicated education system and overlapping issues of prejudice and discrimination with other ethnic divisions, gender issues etc.; - There is an uneven development of Roma CSOs and Roma in certain localities are not benefiting (at all).

⁵⁰ See <http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/PDF/djeca/Okvirni%20Akcioni%20Plan%20fin%20verzija.pdf>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is enthusiasm and optimism among Roma and their activist resulting to abundant energy and efforts. 	
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of EU funds in this field; - Education is recognized as a key/priority area; - B&H has committed to international obligations – documents have been signed and adopted; - There is a greater collaboration among Roma and non-Roma NGOs (especially on employment), leading to greater opportunities for Roma communities too; - Opportunity to learn form best practices of what NGOs have been doing so far that state/public institutions can further adopt and develop; - The potential of appointing an ombudsman for Roma at the national level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The overall legal and institutional setting in B&H, which is complicated, fragment and challenged by poor coordination; - Frequent changes in government/authorities and implementing staff; - Typically operating under the frame of “Memorandum of understanding” makes institutions in charge to officially have very few obligations.

3.3. Kosovo

The Roma community in Kosovo consists of three different ethnic groups, namely Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians. The three communities differ from each other in terms of place of origin and language. Roma in Kosovo are Muslim and speak the Roma language (Romani) as their first language and Albanian or Serbian as their second language. The Ashkali and Egyptian communities are mainly Muslim and speak Albanian. According to the 2011 census, 35,784 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (8,824 Roma, 15,436 Ashkali and 11,524 Egyptians) reside in Kosovo or 2 per cent of the total population⁵¹. Roma families are facing extreme poverty in much higher percentages than the non – Roma population, with a less than half per capita income⁵². Recently,

⁵¹ RCC (2021). Analysis of mainstream policies for Roma inclusion in Kosovo. Available at <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/605ee6ad79e481a4d47e0eca6c0ae70d.pdf>

⁵² Ibid

migration to other countries and return is common among Roma communities, adding to the challenges faced by children that have to attend two or more different educational systems.

The national education system is structured as follows:

- Preschool education (children under 6 years of age)
- Primary Education (grades 1-5, children aged 6-10 years)
- Lower Secondary Education (Grades 6-9, Children Aged 11-14)
- Upper Secondary Education (grades 10-12, children aged 15-18)
- Higher Education⁵³

Kosovo has two parallel educational systems running in its territory, one Kosovar and one Serbian. Members of communities in Kosovo enroll in schools under either education system depending on a number of factors such as their second language, geographical location, and/or political pressure/expectations. Roma pupils can be found in both school systems, based on the previous factors⁵⁴. This policy analysis refers mainly to issues of Roma children for inclusion in the Kosovo national education system.

3.3.1. Policy and Legal Framework

Kosovo has made significant efforts to improve its educational system during the last few years. The main strategy targeting Roma inclusion in Kosovo is the Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali 2017 – 2021, which puts education as a first strategic objective. The objective aims to increase inclusion in pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Education Strategic Plan 2017–2021 (KESP) is the main policy document for the development of the education system. The plan identifies seven strategic objectives relevant to the Kosovar education sector, most of which affect the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities either directly or indirectly. Strategic objective 1 aims to increase participation and ensure equal opportunities for the development, training and education of every individual in pre-university education. Kosovo also has developed a national framework for the protection of minorities, the Framework Convention for the

⁵³ Aliu, L. (2020). Analysis of Kosovo's education system. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kosovo/15185-20190220.pdf>

⁵⁴ OSCE (2018). Communities access to pre – university education in Kosovo. Available at https://www.osce.org/files/Community%20Education%20report_Eng_layout.pdf

Protection of National Minorities. In relation to employability, Kosovo has adopted the National Sectoral Strategy for Employment 2018 – 2022, aiming among others to increase employment for RAE minority, reflected also at the National Development Strategy and Action Plan⁵⁵.

Relevant laws for Roma inclusion in education are the law on Pre – University Education, law on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and law on Protection from discrimination. These laws are not directly targeting Roma, but they promote and guarantee access to quality education and the principles of equality, fair representation and interethnic tolerance.

Notwithstanding the elaborated national strategic and legal framework, its implementation is still poor, as it will be discussed in the next section. Some of the main reasons for the gap in implementation are: (a) lack of willingness and professionalism among the public structures responsible for the implementation, (b) lack of or poor coordination among public sector and civil society, (c) absence of information among policy – makers about the importance of affirmative measures, and (d) poor financial means. EU integration process seems to have a positive influence in monitoring the progress of implementation, yet many times the strategic/legal framework is being harmonized only to “tick the box” and not to bring substantial changes and impact Roma children’s life.

3.3.2. Roma Education - Achievements and Challenges

According to the latest data from Kosovo Institute for Statistics, out of the total number of children registered in grade 6 for the school year 2020 - 2021 (lower secondary education) 2 percent are from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian minority. This percentage declines when it comes to grade 10 (upper secondary education), where only 1 percent of children are from Roma Ashkali and Egyptian minority, and it declines further at the end of grade 12⁵⁶.

⁵⁵ Government of Kosovo (2017). Sectoral Strategy for Employment. Available at <https://mpms.rks-gov.net/wpdm-package/strategjia-sektoriale-2018-2022/>

⁵⁶ Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2021). Education statistics, data processed by the authors. Available at https://askdata.rks-gov.net/PXWeb/pxweb/sq/askdata/askdata_01%20Education_1%20Pupils%20in%20public%20education/edu15.px/?rxid=00f4a040-93d0-46a7-aeb3-86bd85114998

Targeted policies and interventions for Roma inclusion in the education system at all levels are being implemented with bottlenecks and challenges remaining. Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children struggle to get inside the education system and then, if fortunate enough to attend, struggle to finish their schooling.⁵⁷

According to the latest data from 2019 MICS (Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey) in Kosovo school net attendance rates for lower secondary education is 94 percent for non – Roma and only 64 percent for Roma pupils with an increasing gap heading to upper secondary education, with 87 percent for non – Roma and 31 percent for Roma pupils⁵⁸. Hence, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children have the highest dropout rates, caused by poor economic conditions, repetition of the school year, low level of education of parents and lack of parental awareness on the importance of schooling, discrimination in schools, lack of transport, the migration of families for economic reasons and the overall lack of equitable approach. These rates increase particularly after sixth grade. Key stakeholders raised their concerns over this phenomenon, that they attribute to the fact that Roma pupils are considered as “second hand” in their schools, even though they are under – achieving both parents and teachers are not investing in them. Major gaps in basic knowledge make them drop out at/after grade six, when they face major difficulties, a trend that continues in higher secondary education and tertiary.

Segregation at schools seems to be a concerning phenomenon for the parallel Serbian education system, rather than for Roma children. Even though there is not a direct discrimination at schools against Roma children, usually this happens within the classroom: in their interaction with teachers and other pupils. Based on stakeholders’ experiences, Roma children are usually put aside in the classroom, they are being asked just not to make a fuss and they pass all classes until the 5th grade. To add to the picture, teachers are not interested on school performance for Roma children, leading to cases of children attending e.g. 8th grade, and still not knowing to read and write. Sometimes segregation comes as a request from the parents of the non - Roma population because of hygiene and other reasons, as they say.

⁵⁷UNICEF Kosovo (2019). Analysis of the situation of women and children in Kosovo. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/media/1141/file/SITAN.pdf>

⁵⁸ UNICEF Kosovo (2020). Multiple indicator cluster survey 2019 – 2020 in Kosovo and in Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/media/1936/file/MICS%20Snapshots%20.pdf>

In relation to transition to higher education, very few Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children reach this level, but there has been a slow progress during the last years. A recent OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) report indicates that according to CSO RomaVersitas the number of students in tertiary education has been increasing slowly, with 42 students attending this level in 2018 – 19 and 53 during 2019 – 2020⁵⁹. Key experts indicated that these numbers are even higher.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has increased the number of scholarships for secondary education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students from 500 to 600 in the academic year 2020 – 2021 and they also apply quota for students from different minorities.

Also, the government is in the process of allocating funds for the Learning Centers, which were donor – funded so far. These centers are of particular importance, as they are established to assist this group of children to improve their inclusion and performance in the school system⁶⁰.

The situation for Roma girls and women is even worse compared to Roma boys and men. When compared with male population 86.5 percent of the males in age of 15-24 years from all three communities are literate whereas this is true only for the 72.8 percent of the females of the same age-group. Likewise, inclusion of women of the Roma and Ashkali communities in the labor market is very low⁶¹. Girls of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian minority are additionally disadvantaged for reasons that include the cultural preference for girls to stay home and the continued prevalence of early marriage.

3.3.3. Roma Youth and Employability

In relation to employability, there are measures aiming an increase in employment of Roma, but they are not targeting specifically young Roma, in the sense of affirmative action measure. Also, a program aiming to employ Roma in public administration is currently stagnated. Less activities have been implemented for the employment sector in the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and

⁵⁹ OSCE (2020). Status quo of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo. Available at: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/c/443590_2.pdf

⁶⁰ UNICEF Kosovo (2019). Analysis of the situation of women and children in Kosovo. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/media/1141/file/SITAN.pdf>

⁶¹ Midterm Evaluation of the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma and Ashkali Community into the Kosovar Society 2017 - 2021

Ashkali compared to the ones related to education (83 percent compared to 96 percent respectively).

The Law on Public Officials requires that all public institutions ensure that a minimum of 10 per cent of positions at the state level are reserved for members of minority communities. At the local level, employees should reflect the ethnic structure of a given municipality. Data show that Roma and Ashkali are underrepresented in central and local institutions comparing to the rest of the population and do not benefit from the 10 per cent quota⁶².

Poor quality of secondary education contributes to a mismatch between the demands of the labor market and outputs of the education system. Around half of all students in upper secondary education take applied courses, with just a few being accredited by the National Qualifications Authority and only limited relevance to employment opportunities. Regarding university graduates, it looks like there is no interest in applying the quota for Roma, as there is an overall perception of being low – qualified. They usually join CSOs and activism to find their way to the labor market. Roma civil society organizations have contributed substantially to advance to higher levels of education and ultimately to better chances to employment for Roma children, through information sessions, career counseling, mentoring etc.

3.3.4. Best Practice

A promising practice, which looks like it is going to be sustainable in Kosovo is the Community – based Learning Centers, established to improve school performance, preventing early school-leaving, providing education on sexual and reproductive health as well as other measures. These centers were initially supported by CSOs. They target children from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, but they are open to any other children that fulfill the criteria. They have a great impact across the country, where more than 50 learning centers are functioning. Even though it started as a CSO project, both the Ministry of Education has seen value in them and in 2018 it issued an Administrative Instruction that clarifies the definition of criteria and procedures for the establishment and operation of Learning Centers, through which additional education is provided

⁶² RCC (2021). Analysis of mainstream policies for Roma inclusion in Kosovo. Available at <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/605ee6ad79e481a4d47e0eca6c0ae70d.pdf>

for students of communities. They are to become part of the schools and continue with the same support they were giving while supported by the donors. Currently, they are being registered and integrated inside schools and will be supported with a scheme 50-50 by donors and municipality, aiming to be fully financed and managed from municipalities in five years.

In addition, as in other Western Balkans countries, presence of affirmative measures like quota and scholarships for secondary education have had an impact in declining dropout rates, even though the numbers are still high. However, enrolment and completion of this level of education is crucial for further qualification or for entrance in the labor market, therefore it needs to be in the loop.

3.3.5. SWOT Analysis of Roma Education and Employability in Kosovo

Stakeholders that participated in the primary data-collection process provided the following input when invited to a SWOT analysis:

SWOT analysis on Roma Education and Employability in Kosovo	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good representation in the parliament of Kosovo, 4 seats for MPs reserved for MPs from RAE minority. - Active CSOs, with consolidated reputation and work in this field, well – respected among community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of political commitment; - Low awareness of the importance of education among Roma parents; - Lack of human and financial capacities in public institutions working with vulnerable groups; - Unsustainable interventions and projects, lack of systemic solutions; - Poor economic conditions of Roma families; - Frequent government changes
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EU negotiation and accession process that managed to put Roma issues higher in the national agenda and put pressure to the government; - Increase in the number of Roma graduates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overall unemployment in the society; - COVID – 19 pandemic and problems that has caused for education for all children and Roma in particular; also decline in employment opportunities - High dependence on non – formal employment

3.4. Montenegro

According to the 2011 census, the total population of Montenegro was 620,029, with 306,236 men (49.4 per cent) and 313,793 women (50.6 per cent). Children under the age of 18 numbered 145,126, or 23.4 per cent of the total population, including 75,367 boys (51.9 per cent) and 69,759 girls (48.1 per cent). The population was increasing at a rate of 1.4 per cent. According to available census data, 6,251 persons (1.01 per cent of the total population) declared of Roma nationality. Montenegro also contains a small population of Egyptians (just over 2,000) many of whom face problems similar to those of the Roma.⁶³ However, other (non-official) estimated of the Roma population in Montenegro claim for a level of Roma population of at least twice the official data, amounting to up to 3.23 per cent of the total population.⁶⁴

In Montenegro, the education system consists of preschool education, primary education, general secondary education, upper secondary vocational education, upper secondary non-tertiary education, and higher education. Adult education is part of the overall system and is being implemented for all levels of education.

- **Preschool education** is implemented in nurseries (children up to 3 years of age) and kindergarten (for children from 3 to 6 years of age). Preschool education is not a prerequisite to attend primary school.
- **Primary education** is compulsory and it's free for all children aged 6 to 15 years. It lasts for nine years divided into three cycles, which means that in Montenegro primary and lower secondary education are organized as a single structure system.
- **Secondary education** consists in general secondary education and secondary vocational education. General secondary education is performed in high schools – gymnasiums and it is not compulsory. Gymnasiums may enroll persons who have completed primary education and are younger than 17 and it lasts for four years. Secondary vocational education is also not mandatory and is implemented in periods of two three to four years.

⁶³ In Carraro A., Gavrilovic M., Novkovic M., Stanisic S., Smolovic D., (2020). Multidimensional Child Poverty in Montenegro – Understanding the complex realities of children in poverty using a mixed-methods approach, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti and UNICEF Montenegro

<https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/media/17696/file/UNICEF%20-%20MODA%20ENG%20-%20web.pdf.pdf>

⁶⁴ See Roma Regional Cooperation site under “ROMA IN THE REGION The size of the Roma community in the region” Available at <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/pages/3/roma-in-the-region>

- **Higher education** is acquired at the university level and are organized in a 3+2+3 model. From the academic year, 2017/2018 bachelor studies, at the public University of Montenegro are free of charge, while from the academic year 2020/2021 master studies, were also free of charge.

MONSTAT and UNICEF assessment (2019) on Montenegro Roma Settlements Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey reports that the percentage (adjusted net attendance ration) of children of secondary school age attending secondary school or higher in 2018 was at 7.6 percent⁶⁵. Overall findings from the same report conclude for low effective transition rates that a low percentage of Roma students are transitioning to the next level of education claiming for potential barriers such as financial burden (such as enrolment fees or the obligation to purchase textbooks); education supply and quality issues (such as a limited number of teachers or classrooms and low-quality teaching); as well as social and individual beliefs on education (such as low expectation in returns of advancing in education) (p.363).

3.4.1. Policy and Legal Framework

The policy logic in Montenegro in the area of Roma education, focuses on two main targets:

- Improvement of overall education and literacy of the population;
- Protection of minority language and culture in the education system⁶⁶

The Constitution of the Republic of Montenegro guarantees the right to education. Article 75 guarantees the right to education under same conditions, elementary education is sanctioned to be obligatory and free of charge, and the autonomy of universities, higher education and scientific institutions is guaranteed⁶⁷. The education system is defined through a set of laws, which range from early preschool education to adults' education, including a separate law that regulates university education. All policy documents, strategic document, laws and regulations in the area

⁶⁵ Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT) and UNICEF (2019). *2018 Montenegro Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and 2018 Montenegro Roma Settlements Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Survey Findings Report*. Podgorica, Montenegro: MONSTAT and UNICEF.

⁶⁶ Žerjav, B. and Nikolić, P. (2020) Mainstream Policies targeting Roma Integration in the Western Balkans <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/bc683d69caea951b0ba571874161cc27.pdf> Page 18.

⁶⁷ Republic of Montenegro (2007) Constitution of Montenegro, <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/me/me004en.pdf>

of education are in line with international conventions and European policies related to the Roma community.

The strategic framework shaping efforts in Roma inclusion in mainstream education in the country includes a series of strategies:

- The Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro defines the measures for the education sector;
- The Inclusive Education Strategy (2019–2025) sets out directions for the development of education for children with special education needs.
- The Strategy for Early and Preschool Education 2016–2020 highlights the key areas, tasks and activities and suggests combining services and activities with a focus on making them actionable and measurable for short and long-term implementation.
- The Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Montenegro (2016–2020) defines measures related to the provision of scholarships for students.
- The National Youth Strategy defines measures for the prevention and reduction of early school-leaving at community level.

Finally, the Strategy for Development of Vocational Education in Montenegro 2015–2020 highlights the need for a chain cooperation between primary and secondary schools, and secondary schools and the labor market, in order to monitor continuously students with special education needs and their professional orientation and enable their employability.

The policy logic and strategic approach is completed by a legal framework with a set of laws, in line with international standards regarding the inclusion of minorities. They include:

- General Law on Education;
- Law on Preschool Education;
- Law on Primary Education;
- Law on Education of Children with Special Educational Needs;
- Law on Gymnasium;
- Law on Higher Education;

- Law on Vocational Education;
- Law on Adult Education.

In particular, Article 2 of the Law on General Education states that education is intended to provide the possibility for complete individual development regardless of sex, age, social and cultural background, national and religious affiliations and of physical and psychological structure⁶⁸. It further states that it is intended to develop awareness on the need and the capabilities to maintain and improve human rights, the legal state of the natural and social environment and multi-ethnicity and diversity. Article 6 of the Law on Higher Education⁶⁹ stipulates the creation of the conditions for unrestricted access to higher education as one of the main objectives of higher education.

Further, the Law on Adult Education regulates adult education and learning with a clear aim on learning for integrating. According to Article 3⁷⁰, adult education is aimed at the attainment of at least primary education and the first qualification for all citizens, raising the level of education, i.e. the functional literacy of citizens; inclusion of the most vulnerable groups of the population through different forms of education and learning. According to this law, an adult shall not have to pay for the acquisition of primary education or training for the first qualification. Other relevant provisions are also included in the Minority Rights and Freedoms⁷¹.

⁶⁸ Law on General Education, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 064/02, dated 28 November 2002, No. 031/05, dated 18 May 2005, No. 049/07, dated 10 August 2007, No. 004/08, dated 17 January 2008, No. 021/09, dated 20 March 2009, No. 045/10, dated 04 August 2010, No. 073/10, dated 10 December 2010, No. 040/11, dated 08 August 2011, No. 045/11, dated 09 September 2011, No. 036/13, dated 26 July 2013, No. 039/13, dated 07 August 2013, No. 044/13, dated 20 September 2013 and No. 047/17, dated 19 July 2017. Available from www.mps.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=200926&rType=2&file=Op%C5%A1ti%20zakon%20o%20vaspitanju%20i%20obrazovanju.docx.

⁶⁹ It specifies that Higher education shall be available to all persons and must not be restricted directly or indirectly on the basis of gender, race, marital status, skin colour, language, religion, political or other affiliation, national, ethnic or other aspect of origin, financial status, disability or any other similar grounds, position or circumstances, in compliance with the specifics of the Law. Law on Higher Education, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 044/14, dated 21 October 2014, No. 052/14, dated 16 December 2014, No. 047/15, dated 18 August 2015, No. 040/16, dated 30 June 2016, No. 042/17, dated 30 June 2017, No. 071/17, dated 31 October 2017, No. 055/18, dated 01 August 2018 and No. 003/19, dated 15 January 2019. Available from www.mps.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=282638&rType=2&file=Zakon%20o%20visokom%20obrazovanju%20-%20jul%202017.pdf.

⁷⁰ Decree promulgating the Law on Adult Education, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 20/11 from 2011. Available from www.mps.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=282602&rType=2&file=Zakon%20odrasli.pdf.

⁷¹ Elezovic, S. (2020) Analysis Of Mainstream Policies Targeting Roma And Egyptians Integration In Montenegro, Roma Integration: Regional Cooperation Council <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/8cd6f98954f4a53d9b5f25932adc2a8d.pdf>

The implementation of the policy and legal framework is a responsibility of the key institutions of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and schools, and the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights (MHMR). In their efforts they are continuously supported by the relevant civil society organizations operating in the area.

3.4.2. Roma Education - Achievements and Challenges

Data from the last couple of years demonstrate a significant progress in terms of the overall Roma integration in education in Montenegro. However, this is more the case for the preschool and primary education level rather than the more advanced levels of education. The figure of just 11 Roma graduating tertiary education in the last 15 years speaks clearly to the poor results in advancing Roma education in the country⁷². In 2018, The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey reported for a documented level of only 7 per cent of children of secondary school age (as of the beginning of school year) from Roma settlements attending secondary school or higher, while the rate of completion for secondary school was just 3 per cent⁷³. The last two years, 2019 and 2020, indicate for a positive trend in inclusion of Roma and Egyptian children in education. The number of enrolled Roma students in high-schools increased from 135 in the academic year 2018/19, to 142 in the academic year 2019/20. With regards to graduations for the ninth grade, out of a total of 97 students, 88 of them successfully completed the grade (about 90%), and out of that number, 55 enrolled in the first grade of high school (more than 62%). During the same academic year, out of 135 students enrolled in a high school class, 105 of them successfully completed the class (about 77%) and 19 students graduated from high school.⁷⁴

Regardless of these increases in numbers of enrolled/graduated Roma students, there are still several major issues/challenges hindering further progress. Poor results in secondary and tertiary level are rooted in the poor access on quality education of Roma children early on. Most Roma children enroll in the education system with no basic language skills and this barrier is not properly

⁷² Primary data provided by key informant.

⁷³ UNICEF Montenegro and the Montenegrin Statistical Bureau (MONSTAT) developed the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in 2018. Available from www.unicef.org/montenegro/en/statistical-snapshot-roma-population.

⁷⁴ Data from MEIS application of Ministry of Education, as reported in Elezovic, S. (2020) Analysis of Mainstream Policies Targeting Roma and Egyptians Integration in Montenegro, Roma Integration: Regional Cooperation Council <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/8cd6f98954f4a53d9b5f25932adc2a8d.pdf>

addressed and persists throughout the school levels. Support for children with learning difficulties is lacking and teachers are overloaded and can't cater for their needs or work on individualized plans. Accumulated disadvantages and the passing from one grade to the other without gaining the minimum knowledge and skills peaks around the 7th grade. As a result, the number of Roma students by the end of the 9th grade is reduced significantly. According to participants in the FGD, migration and internal mobility (particularly during summer) further contribute to widening the gaps. It follows that these students typically head to vocational schools (currently there is no Roma students enrolled in a gymnasium). Even among the ones that attend vocational schools, majority (estimated to about 60-70 per cent) sign to for the 3-year program which does not permit to further proceed with university education and (only about 30% sign in for the 4-year program which has the potential to lead to university studies).

Free textbooks, availability of scholarships (of 60 EUR per month for secondary level and 150 EUR per month on tertiary level), and free of charge housing for Roma students (dormitories) are important incentives. However, the prolongation of the development of criteria for the award of scholarships is reported to add to the challenges in mainstreaming Roma in upper levels of education. Covid-19 crisis has amplified barriers and undone some of the progress in terms of enrollment and access to (quality) education. Accounting for all these, it becomes evident that much more needs to be done not only in terms of specific measures in the area of education. An integrated approach which tackles issues of discrimination and Antigypsyism – a common denominator in hindering Roma integration, including enhancement of Roma education, must become part of the policy approach and the delayed new national strategy for Roma integration is a very good opportunity in this respect.

3.4.3. Roma Youth and Employability

Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Employment Agency of Montenegro, and Centre for Vocational Education are the three key institutions responsible for stimulating employment in Montenegro. However, as stated above, progress in the area of Roma employment is very poor. Transition from education to labor market remain very challenging for Roma youth in Montenegro. It is reported that only half of the secondary school Roma graduates, managed to transition to

employment and while the rate is higher for the tertiary level graduates, their numbers are very low to infer any meaning in terms of chances/employability. Employability is extremely low for Roma youth that has attended only primary education. Secondary education is a must for almost any employment opportunity and the limited language and math skills of Roma youth with primary education only makes it difficult for them to benefit from vocational training opportunities too.

Reasons for the poor achievements in the area of employability range from the persistent high levels of discrimination and exclusion of Roma from the formal employment to the poor coordination among the responsible institutions⁷⁵. Grant schemes intended to encourage the employment of Roma and Egyptians and other hard-to-employ categories that stimulate employers to organize programs for beneficiaries to obtain qualifications are not sustainable and therefore members of the Roma and Egyptians have only limited options for finding employment through these schemes. Further, inadequate level of transparency is reported, including issues of timing of open calls and the length of employment for associates within education and the mandatory Montenegrin citizenship as a condition of employment. Abolition of the Decree on Subsidies for Employment of Certain Categories of Unemployed Persons in 2018 removed the stimulus for legal entities and entrepreneurs to employ certain categories of unemployed persons, including Roma and Egyptians registered at the employment bureaus as employment seekers. However, such explicit measures are still much needed and diversification of measures and additional mechanism such as community mediators have the potential to enable a better implementation and results⁷⁶.

3.4.4. Best Practices

Measures that helped in bridging communities and school are the ones that top the list of best practices in Montenegro. According to interviewed stakeholders, mentoring is the key to such process. Mentoring has proved to be effective, and the good practices established by REF. So has the practice of mediators who are now being endorsed and supported by the line ministry – for the

⁷⁵ Žerjav, B. and Nikolić, P. (2020) Mainstream Policies targeting Roma Integration in the Western Balkans <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/bc683d69caea951b0ba571874161cc27.pdf> Page 68.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

current academic year, a total of 22 mediators has been supported through state budget. However, this needs to be further institutionalized and guarantees for sustainability need to be put in place.

Scholarships account for another pillar in the best and fruitful practices. They have served as an instrument of support but also to incentivize and motivate Roma children and youth in the education path. Still, it is important to underline that scholarships need to be sustainable throughout the school cycles and that scholarships as a stand-alone measure are not sufficient. Mentoring, tutoring and psychosocial support are necessary for a successful formula. In this frame, there is room also for more creativity in utilizing such mechanisms and practices not only in terms of achieving quantity targets (i.e. enrollment, attainment etc.), but also in improving access to quality education and better performance outcomes.

5.4.5. SWOT Analysis of Roma Education and Employability in Montenegro

Reviewing the overall situation and context, the following resulted as main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Roma education and employability in Montenegro.

SWOT analysis on Roma, Education and Employability in Montenegro	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public institutions, particularly Ministry of Education, have become more proactive and with stronger willingness to cooperate with Roma CSOs and advance the agenda of Roma education and Roma integration; • There is political will and commitment on Roma issues at the Prime Minister level; • Strong human capital – human resources are there, be it among educated staff in education institutions or among Roma activist and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is still a high level of discrimination against Roma in Montenegrin society; • Negative attitudes towards Roma; • Low level of awareness on the general population to help address issues of discrimination/racism; • Overall poor economic status of Roma families; • Very low Roma employment rate; • Issue of persistent high illiteracy rates.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is international funding available to support further efforts; • There is an overall tendency for more fruitful cooperation and better 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor or absent budgets in supporting and enabling implementation of policies and laws in place; • Political instability.

<p>coordination among institutions at large;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an overall tendency for more fruitful cooperation and better coordination among Roma CSOs. 	
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3.5. North Macedonia

As per the 2002 Census of the Republic of North Macedonia, a population of 2,022,547 inhabitants is reported. The Roma account for around 2.66 per cent of the total population (or a total of 53,879 citizens). However, informal sources estimate and claim a total number of Roma population which is almost 4 times that of the best official estimate. It is claimed that Roma make up to 9.74 per cent of the population (with a total of 197,000 Roma individuals).⁷⁷

In the Republic of North Macedonia, education is compulsory between the ages of six to 19 for general secondary education, or from six to 17, 18 or 19 for vocational education and training depending on the selected VET track. The educational system consists of three sub-systems⁷⁸:

- **Primary education** with a duration of nine years is free of charge and compulsory for all children aged 6 to 15, regardless of their gender, religion and nationality.
- **Secondary education** which includes general secondary education (Gymnasium) with a duration of four years and vocational education (Vocational Schools) with a duration of two (vocational education of two years), three (vocational education for professions) or four years (vocational technical education). The secondary education is also compulsory and comprises all children in the age cohort 15 to 19 years for the general secondary education, and for the age cohort 15 to 17, 18 or 19 in the VET depending on the selected track.
- **Higher education** includes under-graduate, master and doctoral studies in the higher educational institutions and institutes which are autonomous and independent.

⁷⁷ See Roma Regional Cooperation site under “ROMA IN THE REGION The size of the Roma community in the region” Available at <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/pages/3/roma-in-the-region>

⁷⁸ For more information visit https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/former-yugoslav-republic-macedonia_en

A mandatory secondary education has significantly impacted the attendance rates in higher levels of education for Roma children and youth in the Republic of North Macedonia. Data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2018-2019⁷⁹ report a net attendance ratio of Roma children of 98.2% for the lower secondary school and 90.6% for the upper secondary school (pp.186-189). Nevertheless, issues of barriers to effective transition from one level to the other persist.

3.5.1. Policy and Legal Framework

The policy logic with regards to Roma and education in the Republic of North Macedonia is focused on the improvement of access to education and the improvement of the quality of education. Special attention is paid to the returnees, street children, and to the reduction of dropout levels for Roma children. Two key strategic documents frame the strategic approach in North Macedonia, and they include the Education Strategy 2018–2025 and the Strategy for the Roma.

- The Macedonian Government adopted the new Education Strategy 2018–2025 in 2018 as the key document for improving the quality and conditions in education.
- The Strategy for the Roma, on the other hand, provides the framework for the development of mainstream policies within the education sector.

Key relevant laws include:

- The Law on Education
- The new Law on primary education
- The Law on Prevention of and Protection from Discrimination classifies segregation as a form of discrimination
- Law on Secondary Education

Several processes for increasing the quality of primary education in the Republic of North Macedonia have been initiated among others the amendments to the Law on Secondary Education,

⁷⁹ State Statistical Office and UNICEF. 2020. 2018-2019 North Macedonia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and 2018-2019 North Macedonia Roma Settlements Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Survey Findings Report. Skopje, North Macedonia: State Statistical Office and UNICEF.

which introduced compulsory secondary education that are claimed to have a positive effect on increasing the number of pupils in secondary education. Article 14 of the new Law on education stipulates that the children that were not included in education and are over the age limit shall be included in primary school and be entitled to primary education under the same conditions as other children. The Bureau for Public Education is charged with preparing an education program that will enable inclusion in an appropriate grade for the beneficiaries. Further the Law on Secondary Education⁸⁰ envisions that the Ministry of Education and Science should provide additional classes for pupils in secondary education on subjects that are part of the curriculum in the school year in which the pupil is enrolled for those subjects for which he/she scored less than excellent (five) in the previous year.

In the Republic of Macedonia, issues of segregation have been explicitly targeted in the new legislative developments. The new legal changes to the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination classify segregation as a form of discrimination. With these changes, civil society organizations and individuals have the bases for submitting lawsuits against schools for segregation, which was not possible before these new legal provisions.

For the implantation and monitoring of the policy and legal framework, the Republic of Macedonia charges with responsibility the Ministry of Education and Science. However, the responsibilities are extended to the local level too⁸¹ and issues of good coordination arise.

3.5.2. Roma Education - Achievements and Challenges

The Law on Secondary Education envisages that the Ministry of Education and Science can provide for pupils in secondary education additional classes on subjects that are part of the curriculum in the school year in which a pupil is enrolled when he/she scored less than excellent

⁸⁰ https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/republic-north-macedonia/6-secondary-education-or-upper-secondary-education-and-post-secondary-non_en

⁸¹ For example, The Government Decision, on 28 December 2019, recommends municipalities to consider the possibility to exempt 450 Roma children, age three to six years, from financial participation in kindergarten for the period from 1 December 2018 to 31 December 2019.

(5) in the previous year for such subjects. Tutoring classes are organized by students in higher education levels, and secondary level students are entitled too. In general, Roma pupils in secondary education need tutoring in subjects for which they experience difficulty during the current school year. The advantage of this measure is that the quality of education for Roma pupils will increase through the support of tutoring⁸². This is referred to as a well-thought policy; however, representatives of the civil society sector stressed that its implementation is yet to unfold.

With the aim of improving mobility and success of Roma students, each year the Ministry of Education and Science provides scholarships for Roma pupils in secondary education⁸³. There are different types of categories of scholarship ranging from talented pupils to pupils in special education and motivational scholarship for pupils that demonstrate poor results in school. Scholarships are financed under the Law on Student Standards. Scholarship for tertiary education can be awarded to all Roma students, but priority is given to those studying at the faculties of pedagogy. Besides this targeted measure, Roma students are also eligible to apply for mainstream calls for scholarships. In the last academic year (2020-21) around 1000 scholarships were awarded and transition rate of Roma students to secondary education was at about 97-98 per cent⁸⁴.

The affirmative action of enrolling Roma pupils with 10 per cent less than the required score for entry into public secondary schools is a measure which is suggested to be revisited as many issues have been faced in its implementation. Unless a pupil refers to it directly and claims it, the measure is rarely considered by the secondary schools a priori, thus calling for some change in making it an automatically assigned benefit. Likewise, there are concerns on the functionality of the university level enrolment quota for Roma. There is no clarity in how this is being implemented and monitored.

⁸² See for a summary: Institute for Research and Policy Analysis Romalitico (2020) Analysis of mainstream policies targeting Roma integration in the Republic of North Macedonia, Regional Cooperation Council Roma Integration Action team <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/1cec0646e274595200f5b2abefc5f0be.pdf>

⁸³ For example, in 2018, the Ministry provided 736 scholarships in secondary education and 90 scholarships for university students

⁸⁴ Institute for Research and Policy Analysis Romalitico (2020) Analysis of mainstream policies targeting Roma integration in the Republic of North Macedonia, Regional Cooperation Council Roma Integration Action team <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/1cec0646e274595200f5b2abefc5f0be.pdf> P.18.

Besides these measures and affirmative actions, Roma pupils still face social stigma, discrimination and segregation. The segregation is based on language, culture and birthplace in certain localities, and it is present both at the school level but also class level. Overall, the quality of education in these schools is reported to be poorer, with limited resources and less qualified teaching staff (usually coming from the same community). There is also a lack of qualified Roma teaching staff in primary and secondary schools, while qualified Roma teachers with university education cannot find employment in primary and secondary schools⁸⁵. While the support through REF projects has been consistent in more than 15 years and government has recently been taking on more responsibilities in providing support via scholarships and mentoring, but readiness and engagement of teaching staff has not been of similar pace, blaming most of the passive role on the work overload and “lack of interest” from students.

3.5.3. Roma Youth and Employability

With reference to education and employment, in 2017, the Ministry of Education and Science officially launched the Dual Vocational Education pilot project in the Republic of North Macedonia, a three-year pilot project, supported by German expertise. It is a relatively new concept based on the principle of learning based on work and expected to help with Roma youth employability. While there is a firm support from the government, implementation has shown to be challenging within the vocational secondary education. Companies are expected to provide scholarships for secondary school pupils and will be required to hire them immediately after their graduation. Considering the high number of Roma students in vocational schools, their inclusion in this program is expected to enhance their employability immediately after graduation. However, the implementation of the project to date has been primarily happening in schools and cities where there are either no or a very low number of Roma students.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement (2001)⁸⁶ has given way to measures that would ensure employment rates that are at least proportional to population in public administration sector.

⁸⁵ Žerjav, B. and Nikolić, P. (2020) Mainstream Policies targeting Roma Integration in the Western Balkans <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/bc683d69caea951b0ba571874161cc27.pdf> pages 22-23.

⁸⁶ <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/8/100622.pdf>

However, when it comes to Roma employment, achieving such targets is yet a distant reality for the public administration too. Even in cases when Roma are employed in public administration positions, they are typically low ranked and non-decision-making ones. Nevertheless, Roma employment is positively impacted by the agreement and especially due to a political engagement and representation of Roma minority and stakeholders interviewed report for almost 100 percent of all Roma university graduates being employed. What is still pretty challenging is related to employability of Roma youth that have secondary education or less. Efforts are being centered on supporting and facilitating employment of 19-40 years old Roma with secondary education or less. Although the Ohrid Framework Agreement and other legal and regulatory provision are essential and help, there is still much to be done in fighting discrimination and Antigypsyism. Public institutions and administration should be the first to lead by example in meeting the agreed targets of employment for the Roma also for the private sector.

3.5.4. Best Practice

In North Macedonia, more interventions and practices endorsed by governmental bodies make it to the list of best practices. Participants in the primary data-collection activities could not stress enough the importance of formalizing and institutionalizing what has shown to work well. Making secondary education compulsory, universal provision of scholarships by state budget for Roma students, sanctioning quota in education and employment, and taking over on good practices tested and established by CSOs have all been pointed as evidence of political willingness to advance Roma education. Actively addressing accumulated issues of segregation and eliminating (formal) segregation (such as by reassessing students, providing transportation etc.) were identified as positive practices by responsible institutions.

As in other countries targeted in this report, all interviewed stakeholders in North Macedonia referred to REF supported initiatives as best practices. Consistency, follow-up, sustainability and a holistic approach are the criteria that these initiatives have met to be granted the status of best practices. For more than 15 years, combining financial support with tutoring and mentoring services has proven to work. Currently, 30 Roma mediators in 20 localities work only on education issues are helping schools and Roma parents to link between them, on full-time and contract basis

paid by the MoEs. From 2009-2016, this was an institutionalized practice, where tutors/mentors for secondary education, organizing classed of 2-4, work on an evidence-based approach under a close collaboration between experienced partners such as REF and the responsible public institutions such as MoEs. This integrated and endorsed approach has led to less segregation and gender differences (currently having more girls in schools).

Finally, achievements and best practices need to be sustained and UNDP programs were brought as best examples of long-term and sustainable interventions.

3.5.5. SWOT Analysis of Roma Education and Employability in North Macedonia

Discussions on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Roma education and employability in North Macedonia led the results summarized in the table below.

SWOT analysis on Roma, Education and Employability in North Macedonia	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good legislation is in place; - Higher awareness among the Roma community on importance of education is achieved; - Support of donors, activism of CSOs, have boosted, are very active and cooperating well among themselves; - Good practices already established by REF and the Ministry of Education and Science. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political will is still weak; - Representation of Roma in the government/ high level positions are poor too; - Lack of financing/budget dedicated for Roma issues; - No sustainability in what has been achieved (most achievements are due to CSOs activism, what if that stops?!)
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is commitment for continuous support of donors in the future; - Higher numbers of educated Roma are accumulating a potential which is still to be untapped and used for the benefit of the cause; - A higher and more effective cooperation between Roma CSOs has the potential to make Roma agency in the country much stronger; - Roma political engagement and say in political life is among the strongest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislation changes happening under the motto “society for all” are minimizing/erasing tailor-made measures and interventions (including for those targeting Roma); - Withdrawal and/or fragmented support from donors/not long-term interventions which are necessary in supporting a student though-out the education process.

as compared to other countries in the region.	
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3.6. Serbia

In the 2011 census, there were 147,604 ethnic Roma registered in Serbia, composing 2.1 percent of the total population on the territory of Serbia. This is the reference number used in the planning of strategic measures. However, due to a legacy of poor birth registration and some other factors, this official number is likely underestimated⁸⁷. Estimates that correct for undercounting suggest that Serbia is one of the countries with the most significant populations of Roma people in Europe at 250,000-500,000. Anywhere between 46,000 to 97,000 Roma are internally displaced from Kosovo after 1999⁸⁸. According to different reports and indicators, most Roma are faced with social exclusion and poverty and are exposed to some form of open, and, even more often, covert discrimination⁸⁹.

Educational system in Serbia includes preschool, primary, secondary and higher education. The total duration of compulsory education in Serbia is 9 years. Children enter compulsory education at the age of 5½, when they start the preschool preparatory program, followed by 8 years of primary education. The leaving age in full-time compulsory education is 14½⁹⁰. The national education system of Serbia has the following structure:

- Preschool education and care: from 6 months to 5 ½ years;
- Preschool preparatory program, from 5 ½ to 6 ½ years
- Primary education
 - Cycle I: 1st to 4th grade (children from 6½ to 10½ years old);
 - Cycle II: 5th to 8th grade (children from 10½ to 14½ years old)

⁸⁷ UNICEF Serbia - Real lives - Life in a day: connecting Roma communities to health services (and more). Available at <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/en/stories/life-day-connecting-roma-communities-health-services-and-more>

⁸⁸ Relief, UN (2014). Roma IDP profiling. Available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/romaidps_desk_review_final.pdf

⁸⁹ The Strategy of Social Inclusion of Roma for the Period from 2016 To 2025. Available at <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/docs/5/mainstream-policies-targeting-roma-integration-in-the-western-balkans>

⁹⁰ Eurydice (2021). Serbia national education system. Available at https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/serbia_en

- Secondary education consists of the following:
 - four years of general education (from 14 ½ to 18 years);
 - two to four years of vocational education⁹¹.
- Tertiary education

3.6.1. Policy and Legal Framework

Serbia has a much-elaborated policy and legal framework related to education in general and Roma children inclusion to education, in particular. The two most important strategies in this field are the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in the Republic of Serbia 2016 – 2025 and the accompanying action plan for years 2017 – 2018 (this is the latest action plan) and the Strategy for Development of Education 2012 – 2020 and its accompanying action plan. Currently, a new draft of the Education Strategy is being developed. The special objective 1, detailed in 6 operational objectives, of the Strategy on Roma Inclusion aims to “*ensure full inclusion of children and youth from the Roma community in quality preschool, primary and secondary education, greater coverage of Roma men and women in the student population and provision of support to the education of youth and adults who have not attended school or have dropped out, along with the introduction of effective and efficient mechanisms to combat discrimination and creation of conditions in which Roma can exercise all minority rights in the education system*”⁹². On the other hand, lack of an updated Action Plan since 2018 makes monitoring the implementation of the strategy and its specific measures and outcomes very difficult. According to key stakeholders, some of the measures foreseen in the strategy are indeed being implemented, because they have been present for years⁹³. The Strategy on Education has described a number of tasks for the development of education for minorities, like instruction in and learning about the minority language and a number of measures for all stages of the education process.

⁹¹ OECD (2020). Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment: Serbia. Available at <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/72483fab-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/72483fab-en>

⁹² The Strategy of Roma Inclusion for the Period 2016 to 2025. Available at <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/25271eee1fb46a73d48630d6d4d63bec.pdf>

⁹³ EU (2020). Commission Staff Working Document Serbia 202:0 Report Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2020 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/serbia_report_2020.pdf

Other strategies not explicitly targeting Roma but recognizing them as a minority group subject of discrimination are Strategy on Prevention of and Protection from Discrimination and Strategy on Gender Equality 2016–2020. In relation to employment there is a National Employment Strategy and Action Plan for 2011– 2020.

In alignment with the policy framework, the legal framework in Serbia includes different laws and measures that address access and attendance to quality education for Roma children, tackling segregation and discrimination in the education system and the provision of (affirmative) measures to reach these goals. Some of the most important laws targeting Roma inclusion in secondary and tertiary education are: Law on Foundations of Educational System, Law on Textbooks, Law on Secondary Education, Law on Higher Education and Law on Student Standards. Regarding transition to employment two specific laws are of particular importance: Law on Employment and Insurance for Unemployment and Law on Employment Promotion Programs, which provides the basis for implementation of affirmative measures that could be of importance to the Roma community and prioritize hard-to-employ groups of the population.

This legal framework provides the basic rules aiming to increase access of Roma children to education and increase completion rates and employability. They regulate education on minority language and culture and the role of pedagogical assistants, the conditions for certification of knowledge of the Roma language, minority education and participation of representatives in the National Minority Councils (NMCs), mandatory preschool and primary education for all and the publication of textbooks on minority languages⁹⁴.

In addition, there are specific laws on discrimination which include Roma minority (Law on Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities and Law against Discrimination), on the regulation of the minority councils (Law on National Minority Councils) and for the support of vulnerable families with children (Law on Financial support to Families with Children). The National Roma Minority Council is one of the largest in Serbia and is fully operational. It has been

⁹⁴ Regional Cooperation Council (2021). Analysis of mainstream policies targeting Roma integration in Serbia Available at <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/48e20612f5e16bfbe37f0f61db300c0b.pdf>

involved in the process of Roma language and culture promotion through certification of Roma teachers and standardization of Romani language among other issues⁹⁵.

Notwithstanding the centralized nature of policy and legal framework, it is worth mentioning that several measures foreseen in them are implemented by the local government. This makes their implementation and monitoring sometimes not systemic and reliant on local government human and financial capacities.

3.6.2. Education - Achievements and Challenges

There is evidence of positive progress in participation to secondary and higher education in Serbia, however at a lower rate compared to overall progress in primary education. The recent MICS conducted in Serbia (2019) that included Roma settlements found that only 28 percent of children of the appropriate age (14–17 years) attend secondary school; 15 percent still attend primary school, and 57 percent of children of secondary school age do not go to school at all. The primary school completion rate among children living in Roma settlements is 64 percent and the effective transition rate to secondary school is 55 percent, while the secondary school completion rate is 61 percent. The gender parity index is 0.98 for primary school while for secondary school it drops to 0.89 (0.83 in urban compared to 0.97 in other areas), which indicates that girls living in Roma settlements face more challenges in attending and completing secondary school⁹⁶. It looks like lower and upper secondary education, and even higher education is less accessible from Roma students (only 1 percent of the population in higher education is Roma). Also, Roma children are overrepresented in special education schools (30 percent of them are Roma) due to the lack of mastery of Serbian language⁹⁷. Dropout levels usually increase at the age of 13 – 14 years old, so

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and UNICEF. 2020. Serbia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and Serbia Roma Settlements Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2019, Survey Findings Report. Belgrade, Serbia: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and UNICEF.

⁹⁷ European Commission (2020). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation and its accompanying proposal for a revised Council recommendation on national Roma strategic frameworks for equality, inclusion and participation. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/commission_staff_working_document_analytical_document_accompanying_the_eu_roma_strategic_framework_for_equality_inclusion_and_participation_en.pdf

many children don't complete compulsory education. Also, due to lack of coordination between primary education schools (under central government) and upper secondary (under local government) dropout monitoring becomes challenging: children that don't attend any high school are not traced by the system.

Without doubt, contextual barriers for children of Roma minority are persistent throughout the years. To mention only a few: poor living conditions of Roma families, low socio – economic situation, low awareness of the importance of secondary/higher education among Roma parents, financial needs of the families that make them consider children as potential “income earners”, lack of mastery of Serbian language, difficulties for transportation are some of the many complex issues that Roma families and their children face, that puts them in a vulnerable position in society and vis – a – vis inclusion to education.

Schools close to Roma settlements are scarce and segregated; and discrimination in mainstream schools is much present. These challenges are greater for Roma girls. Roma neighborhoods usually have schools populated by Roma children at 80-90 percent. Non – Roma parents are prejudiced and hesitate – to say the least – to enroll their children in these schools, adding to the experience of segregation and to a lower quality standards for the school and the academic performance of their pupils. Entrance to high school is based on the results of a national exam (Matura), that in a way pre-defines where Roma children will go - usually they attend vocational schools, because they have lower entrance criteria.

There are a series of affirmative measures undertaken in the field of secondary and tertiary education for children of Roma minority, including targeted interventions as well as others in mainstream policies, e.g. scholarships provided by state and donors for secondary and tertiary education, free textbooks, free transportation, pedagogical assistants, learning of Romani language upon demand, mentorship program etc. According to key stakeholders, scholarships have had a huge impact in attending secondary and tertiary education, as they act as a safety net for children. For the academic year 2020, a total of 1,200 scholarships were given. Still, often they are connected to academic performance, so indirectly they might be targeting Roma children already well – integrated in the educational system, whereas children coming from the poorest quintile will again

face difficulties to benefit from scholarships⁹⁸. Also, these policies are dependent on financial resources' allocation at central and local level, and reliant on donors' contribution.⁹⁹ For example, stakeholders mentioned that not all Roma children have access to free textbooks, because this depends on the local government decision.

Undermining the overall progress of Roma children inclusion in education and social inclusion when it comes to policies is that over these last 15 years, is the perception that Roma inclusion is a project activity, that is imposed by the EU and the donors. This is a dominant perception in the public opinion and in the current central/local government. Mostly, the latter are relying on IPA funding, but within national structures there is a lack of willingness and capacities to manage Roma issues.

COVID – 19 pandemics has amplified many of the previous problems in Serbia: difficulties to access IT equipment for remote learning and to respect the hygiene rules required by schools during this era adds to Roma children challenges for access and meaningful attendance of education¹⁰⁰.

3.6.3. Roma Youth and Employability

Transition from education to employment is an important step for Roma inclusion. In this area the main policy aims relate to an increase of Roma persons in the labor market, prevention of discrimination against Roma in the labor market and efforts to formalize the work of Roma currently in undeclared employment. Each policy stream is covered by one or several operational goals under the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma. However, there are no support programs for first – work experience, job placement and apprenticeships for Roma youth, besides the ones that are donor – funded by REF and other donors. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that educated Roma are not priority for donors, resulting in lack of projects and funds. Different

⁹⁸ This issue was brought for discussion from Roma mentors at Novi Sad recently.

⁹⁹ Regional Cooperation Council (2021). Analysis of mainstream policies targeting Roma integration in Serbia Available at <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/48e20612f5e16bfbe37f0f61db300c0b.pdf>

¹⁰⁰ European Commission (2020). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council

A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation and its accompanying proposal for a revised Council recommendation on national Roma strategic frameworks for equality, inclusion and participation. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/commission_staff_working_document_analytical_document_accompanying_the_eu_roma_strategic_framework_for_equality_inclusion_and_participation_en.pdf

projects target low – educated Roma and/or Roma returnees, yet not much has been done to integrate Roma graduates in the labor market.

The generally low level of education and necessary skills among the Roma minority is seen as one of the key obstacles to being employed. Considering the overall low attendance and completion rates of secondary and higher education, this situation seems to be a vicious cycle. Another serious obstacle is prejudice and discrimination, which makes access to employment for the small number of Roma that are adequately educated and trained even more difficult. According to the law of Public Administration Roma persons and people from other minorities are entitled to be employed in the public sector. However, during the last 5-6 years the government has stopped any new employments in this sector, including Roma.

Roma participation to vocational trainings and further work placement and apprenticeships is hampered by lack of mastery of mainstream language and the fact that VET centers do not have Roma and Egyptian employees, which makes communication difficult. Additionally, there is no program to support vulnerable entrepreneurs and self-employed low skilled Roma and Egyptian¹⁰¹.

3.6.4. Best Practice

A promising practice that relates to retention of Roma children in all levels of education and increase of completion rates is affirmative action and respective measures. Particularly the provision of scholarships and the mentorship program have had a great impact in this direction. Affirmative measures for many kids might not be needed, but it is a safety net if they are failing/the system is failing them, like in the case of COVID – 19. During COVID – 19 pandemic children could not attend classes, they faced difficulties to access technical equipment and internet. Provided scholarships acted as a means to safeguard their place in the education system and help them continue to upper grades, when children and families are not in their full capacities.

Also, the role of pedagogical assistant for lower secondary (as well as primary education) is very important for a better inclusion of Roma children in education. They act as mediators between school and parents, a much needed connecting bridge and support link, considering the low

¹⁰¹ Regional Cooperation Council (2021). Mainstream policies targeting Roma integration in the Western Balkans.

educational level of Roma parents¹⁰². However, their job description is not regulated, and caution should be made not to use this work position as a “justification” for employment of Roma qualified graduates. Concerns were raised here from key stakeholders that local government tends to offer this position for any unemployed Roma graduate, independently of their qualifications for this profession.

A lesson learnt from the experience of other countries that were in the process of EU integration is related to the way Roma issues are approached by central and local government. Caution should be made from Roma civil society to advocate for systemic and essential changes and engagement from the state and not only “tick the box” fragmented and unsustainable changes.

3.6.5. SWOT Analysis of Roma Education and Employability in Serbia

Discussions on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Roma education and employability in Serbia led the results summarized in the table below.

SWOT analysis on Roma Education and Employability in Serbia	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very elaborated national minority legislation and policy framework; - Roma minority is not territorially limited, it is dispersed throughout the country, so it is necessary to have broad interventions in the whole country; - Very broad, strong and competent civil society throughout Serbia; - Existence of Roma inclusion office in the autonomous province of Vojvodina, and positive models of Roma inclusion in this province; - Inclusion of Romani language and culture in the primary education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of political willingness and low level of political consciousness for Roma education; - Lack of human and financial capacities in public institutions working with vulnerable groups; - Roma is a very deprived community, hence can be easily manipulated and suffice with some fragmented and sporadic measures. - Lack of networking and joining forces/resources among NGOs working in the field of Roma education

¹⁰² ECRI (2020). ECRI Conclusions on the Implementation of the Recommendations in Respect of Serbia Subject to Interim Follow-Up. Available at <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-conclusions-on-the-implementation-of-the-recommendations-in-respe/16809e8275>

curriculum, and establishment of two cathedras for Romani language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low public participation for Roma people; - Lack of a well – coordinated intersectoral cooperation between different sectors, e.g. education, health etc. and lack of the collaboration among public sector and civil society.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EU negotiation and accession process that managed to put Roma issues higher in the national agenda and put pressure to the government; - European Roma Movement has brought lot of resources in different parts of Europe that can be used, like in Romania or Spain; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Far - right wing and rhetoric that is rising, hate crimes in rise can put threat for Roma minority; - COVID – 19 pandemics: having the experience of the economic crisis of 2008 and how much Roma suffered and scapegoated during that, COVID – 19 can bring similar discourse in public opinion, saying that “Roma are privileged”, “everything is given to them” etc. - International donor priorities and funds allocation has shifted to migrant crisis.

3.7. Turkey

Roma live all across Turkey and, in terms of absolute numbers, are not concentrated in any particular region. Various groups are included under the general heading of Roma/Gypsy. Studies indicate that the population of Roma and similar social groups in Turkey is between 2 million and 5 million, but their exact numbers remain unknown as most Roma live in overcrowded households, but also because Turkey doesn't collect data on ethnicity¹⁰³.

In March 2012 Turkey passed new legislation on primary and secondary education usually termed as "4+4+4" (4 years primary education, first level, 4 years primary education, second level and 4 years secondary education). Since then, upper secondary education in Turkey is compulsory and begins relatively early, at 13.5 years old¹⁰⁴. National education system in Turkey is composed of:

- Early childhood care and education (from 0 to 66 months)

¹⁰³ World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples. Turkey profile. Available at <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/roma-19/>

¹⁰⁴ Education in Turkey, Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Turkey

- Primary education (grades I to IV, ages from 66 months/5 ½ years to 10 years)
- Secondary education (grades V to VIII, ages from 10 to 14 years old)
- Upper secondary education (grades IX to XII, ages from 14 to 18 years old)
- Tertiary education¹⁰⁵

3.7.1. Policy & Legal Framework

The policy framework for the inclusion of Roma children in education and transition in employment is in place, as in 2016 Turkey adopted a Strategy on Roma People 2016 – 2021, which was supported by two Action Plans for its implementation: one that covered the years 2016 – 2018 and the second for 2019 – 2021¹⁰⁶. Two strategic objectives of the Strategy Paper for Roma People is “*to ensure all Roma children to access to equal opportunities for education and qualified educational services and have them complete at least the compulsory education successfully*” and to “*facilitate Roma people’s entering into labor force and to increase the employment of them in qualified and secured jobs*”¹⁰⁷.

Even though the approval of this strategy was an important step forward for inclusion of Roma in Turkey, its content and rationale were widely critiqued (ERRC, 2017)¹⁰⁸, confirmed as well by key stakeholders. While the Fundamental Implementation Principles of the strategy largely adhere to the EU’s 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion¹⁰⁹, there is divergence from Principle 6, on evidenced based policy making. The strategy seems content to blame children and their parents for experiencing inequalities and segregation¹¹⁰. Phrases like “*Roma families do not believe in the future*” are present in the document (ERRC, 2017).

¹⁰⁵ Eurydice, 2021. Turkey overview: national education system. Available at: https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/turkey_en

¹⁰⁶ Strategic Paper on Roma People 2016 – 2021 and accompanying action plans

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*

¹⁰⁸ ERRC submission to the European Commission on the enlargement component of the EU Roma Framework (May 2017). Available at http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/submission-on-roma-inclusion-in-enlargement-countries-may-2017.pdf

¹⁰⁹ EU (2010). The ten common principles on Roma inclusion. Available at <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7573706d-e7c4-4ece-ae59-2b361246a7b0>

¹¹⁰ ERRC submission to the European Commission on the enlargement component of the EU Roma Framework (May 2017). Available at http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/submission-on-roma-inclusion-in-enlargement-countries-may-2017.pdf

In the same line with the Strategy are both Action Plans for its implementation. Lacking specific budgets, earmarked funding, baseline data and targets, it looks like their implementation remains rather vague and difficult to monitor and understand the progress of the specific objectives¹¹¹. The monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the second action plan needs to become effective and more NGO inclusive and the measures in it need to be gender mainstreamed. Local authorities need to be properly involved for effective implementation of the strategy and should secure financial resources for its implementation¹¹². The new education strategy “Education Vision 2023” is a very promising strategic document, which includes issues related to disadvantaged families and children not particularly Roma, yet it doesn’t explain the roadmap to achieving the objectives¹¹³.

Vis – a – vis the legal framework, there are several laws and regulations which, although they are not designated as positive action by the legislation, stipulate positive measures in the areas of education and employment and in a number of services (social insurance, transportation etc.)¹¹⁴. National Employment Strategy 2017 – 2023 aims to increase employment among groups that require special policy and to eliminate child labor¹¹⁵. Finally, Turkey has a very centralized education system, with Ministry of National Education being the main responsible institution for the provision of education.

Some of the most relevant laws that influence Roma education are as follows:

- Law on National Education (latest amendments on 2016) (No. 1739): according to Article 7 ‘Primary education is the right of every Turkish citizen.’ Article 4 of the same law forbids discrimination, stating, ‘Institutes of education are open to everyone regardless of language, race, gender, disabilities and religious affiliation. In education, privileges shall not be accorded to an individual, family, party, or class.’ In addition, Article 8 states, ‘In

¹¹¹ Ibid

¹¹² EU (2020). Turkey 2020 Report Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/turkey_report_2020.pdf

¹¹³ Ministry of National Education (2019). Turkey’s education vision 2023. Available at https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/turkey_education_vision_2023.pdf

¹¹⁴ EU (2020). Country report on non – discrimination. Available at <https://www.equalitylaw.eu/downloads/5281-turkey-country-report-non-discrimination-2020-2-35-mb>

¹¹⁵ National Employment Strategy of Turkey. Available at <http://turkishlaborlaw.com/news/business-in-turkey/national-employment-strategy-of-turkey-issued/>

order to ensure that successful students who lack financial means can obtain the highest level of education, assistance will be provided in the form of free dormitories, scholarships, loans and other means.’ Therefore, even though the law obliges the state to take special measures targeting disadvantaged groups, what is notable is that ‘disadvantaged’ here is limited to the state of economic disadvantage. *Unfortunately, the law remains silent on the issue of other forms of disadvantage, such as those faced by Roma and similar social groups*¹¹⁶.

- Law on the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey (2016) (No. 6701), which prohibits direct and indirect discrimination; multiple discrimination; harassment; mobbing; segregation; discrimination by assumption; instruction to discriminate and compliance with such instruction; and failure to provide reasonable accommodation¹¹⁷.
- Law on Renewal (2005), the amendments of the Law on Housing Development (2004) and Law of Local Authorities (2005) gave significant powers over the regeneration of urban settlements to municipalities. During the last years Roma communities have faced forced evictions, which brought many new challenges for children education: difficulties in accessing the schools because of being in new settings, difficulties in transportation, development of new Roma neighborhoods (ghettos) that brought segregated schools etc.¹¹⁸.

3.7.2. Roma Education - Achievements and Challenges

Participation rates to secondary and tertiary education (lower and upper) for Roma children are at a lower level than the ones in primary education. Transition from primary to secondary education brings the first increase in dropout levels, which continues up to tertiary education. The latest available data from UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) statistical office indicate that in 2018 the NER in lower secondary education is 93.78 percent and

¹¹⁶ Minority Rights Group International (MRG) (2017). Ignored and Unequal: Roma Access to the Right to Housing and Education in Turkey. Available at https://socialprotection-humanrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/MRG_Rep_ENG.pdf

¹¹⁷ EU (2020). Country report on non – discrimination. Available at <https://www.equalitylaw.eu/downloads/5281-turkey-country-report-non-discrimination-2020-2-35-mb>

¹¹⁸ Oprisan, A. (2018). The Roma in Turkey: from survival mechanisms to development strategies. PhD thesis. SOAS University of London. <http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/30304>

in upper secondary 83 percent¹¹⁹. Among the mostly mentioned reasons for high levels of dropout and low attendance rate at secondary and tertiary education are:

- (a) Poor living conditions for Roma children that hampers access to education and equipment with didactic materials
- (b) Low education level of parents and awareness about the importance of education;
- (c) Low quality of primary education, which reflects in under – achievement in the following levels of education that include high – stake exams;
- (d) Parents’ mentality that children of this age need to help the family (for girls to help in house chores and for boys to work);
- (e) Lack of role models to follow within the Roma communities. When they exist, they usually follow a different trajectory, which does not always include living and working in Roma communities;
- (f) Lack of aspiration for higher education¹²⁰. Yet, statistical and disaggregated data to inform future decisions are not available, because the law prohibits data collection based on ethnicity.

Segregation of Roma in specific neighborhoods due to urban transformation processes contributes to segregation and low performance in schools. For example, in June 2020, hundreds of Roma were forcibly evicted by the municipality of Izmir from the tents and barracks they had been living in for years.¹²¹ Reportedly, public schools in Roma neighborhoods are understaffed and often poorly resourced, contributing to a high level of school dropout among Roma children. All schools may, and increasingly do, seek voluntary parental contributions for instructional resources or building maintenance. Secondary schools may also seek financial support from the private sector, which is financially incentivized by the government. Schools located in advantaged areas or serving advantaged students may therefore benefit disproportionately from such contributions. Other than some conditional cash transfer programs and some schemes to supply free educational

¹¹⁹ UNESCO Statistics. National country monitoring: Turkey. Available at <http://data.uis.unesco.org/#>

¹²⁰ Key stakeholders said that dropouts after the 8th grade are common, parents sign an agreement with school that their children will continue to professional courses, but this doesn’t happen, and it is not being monitored.

¹²¹ EC (2021). Country progress report 2020. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/turkey_report_2020.pdf

material or offer scholarships, the OECD (Organization for the Economic Cooperation and Development) (2019) has reported that redistributive approaches to school funding remain underdeveloped.¹²²

Entrance to upper secondary education in Turkey is based on high – stake exams and residence, two insurmountable criteria for Roma children. Roma segregated neighborhoods are typical in Turkey, where children attend Roma children populated primary schools, which are usually understaffed and with low performance. Low primary education quality and residence puts double boundaries for Roma children entrance to quality high – schools and hampers their further qualifications. Upon entrance to secondary education children are separated based on performance. Due to previous difficulties many Roma children are not well performing. This is the usual justification used by teacher to segregate Roma children within school. In PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) 2018, Turkey had the highest rates of school-level isolation among both high and low achievers, as well as an above-average isolation index for advantaged students, suggesting some academic and social segregation within the Turkish system. Finally, low per-student spending, underdeveloped targeted funding practices and the relatively high cost of school education to households pose challenges in effectively supporting Roma and other vulnerable students¹²³.

During the last decade Turkey has made efforts to improve its Vocational Education and Training System. These courses are often preferred by Roma children, who don't aspire to continue higher education. However, low literacy levels carried from the first 8 years of education put difficulties in getting a degree.

Higher education is divided in two-year program (Higher vocational education) and four-year program (Bachelor degrees). The former is more preferred by Roma students, as there is no requirement for university entrance exams. Some of them may not even graduate due to economic difficulties. For the ones that do graduate, they face difficulties in entering the labor market, as it is not considered a full – degree from the employers, but also because of the high unemployment rate. There is not any affirmative measure by the government to support students with complex

¹²² OECD (2020). Education policy outlook, Turkey. Available at <https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Turkey-2020.pdf>

¹²³ Ibid

difficulties, like Roma, in both secondary and higher education. To access higher education there are loans or full scholarships that are provided, but access of Roma students to them is very difficult.

Interventions to integrate Roma in the educational system are not systemic and are mainly supported by donors and project – based. Lack of willingness from central and local government and explicit/implicit discrimination of Roma among the government stakeholders were the main reasons mentioned for unsustainability of interventions and for unsatisfying outcomes in relation to education and other areas. Though sustainability of these projects is often not guaranteed, some of them have had a positive impact. For example, the REF scholarship and mentorship program was mentioned by the stakeholders as one of them. These projects have developed good models to support inclusion of Roma children in education, which need to be embraced and incorporated in the system for them to be sustainable¹²⁴.

In addition, the Syrian crisis and the large number of refugee children in Turkey have shifted state and donors' priorities to these very vulnerable groups of children and adults, shadowing Roma inclusion in education. In Turkey, there are many Roma NGOs but only ten of them are truly functional, while the others are not really engaged in the advocacy nor services for Roma. Moreover, it seems that there is a lack of cooperation among the functional NGOs, which diverges and dim their efforts for Roma inclusion and children integration in the education system. On the other hand, lack of baseline evidence and progress monitoring don't allow a better insight on the effectiveness of the current interventions.

These difficulties have become greater in the face of COVID – 19 pandemics, due to lack of access to PCs/tablets/mobiles and internet, having more than one child to attend online classes and the fact that many Roma parents became unemployed during this time. To compensate these handicaps, Roma children are in need of extra-curricular support to school attendance, for example with regard homework. However, in schools where Roma pupils make up a majority, the resources that are available for the organization of extra-curricular activities are usually small and the workload of the teaching staff allows only limited investment of time to any additional activities

¹²⁴ Ibid

outside the basic curriculum¹²⁵. In addition, often Roma parents are not aware of this information, so they don't know that they can demand for these classes to open.

3.7.3. Roma Youth and Employability

A major barrier to employment for Roma students that want to transit to labor market is explicit and implicit discrimination. There are cases where Roma are not invited to an interview, based only on their residence (as Roma neighborhoods are known in Turkey). Also, in other cases the employers find different reasons not to employ them.

Interventions to increase Roma employability are impeded by the criteria of access to these programs. Due to incomplete literacy and basic labor market skills, a large part of the Roma population in working age cannot fully benefit of active labor market policies and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) organized by the Turkish employment services (İŞKUR, *Türkiye İş Kurumu*). Effective participation in TVET presupposes, as a rule, the completion of general education and the corresponding acquisition of basic literacy skills and knowledge. It will hardly be possible to solve the employability problems of the Roma people by means of active labor market policies (ALMP) alone, since the primary objective of the ALMP is to address distortions and skills gaps in the labor market, not to compensate for the failure of large population groups to benefit to a sufficient degree of the systems of basic and secondary-level professional education¹²⁶. Another barrier keeping Roma away from TVET programs is transportation, as Roma usually live in far distance from the places where professional courses are being conducted.

3.7.4. Best Practice

One of the best practices which can be replicated in Turkey is the mentorship program implemented by Regional Education Fund. During this implementation phase the mentorship program was supported by scholarships. The latter are very important for children to have a possibility to continue education. But it is even more important to have role models for children, which are much needed, to guide them in the process of inclusion to education, to help them with homework, to facilitate different processes, to share their experiences and to be a support

¹²⁵ SIROMA (2016). Social situation of the Roma people in Turkey and public policies to support social integration

¹²⁶ RCC (2017). The first public dialogue forum in Turkey.

person/mentor for them. Also, professional development support (part of REF project) is a good practice that helps students gain soft skills and improve their employability.

One lesson learnt to be avoided from previous implemented projects, according to stakeholders, are activities that target Roma but exclude other children, which may be in the same school/neighborhood, as these may contribute to further segregation and discrimination of them.

3.7.5. SWOT Analysis of Roma Education and Employability in Turkey

To give a summarized picture of the situation of education and employment of Roma in Turkey, participants were invited to express their thoughts, which are presented below.

SWOT analysis on Roma, Education and Employability in Serbia	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roma educated youth has increased, a great potential for role models and the development of Roma Youth Civil Society. - Two MPs from Roma community in Turkey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rooted discrimination, low engagement and lack of accountability from government; - Persistence of poverty, financial difficulties and structural exclusion for Roma; - Current structure and processes for enrolment to secondary and tertiary education is a barrier for Roma access to quality education;
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young Roma educated in other countries can act as role models. - Large Roma population in Turkey (can also become a challenge as the initiatives are costly). - Donor projects and funding in the field of Roma education (like REF) bring opportunities for young Roma education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Other minorities that are stronger and taking up attention/resources; - Too many NGOs that are not effectively engaged/working and misuse of NGO status for political interests

4. Common Themes / Discussions

4.1. Contextual Factors

In designing and implementing policies and interventions for advancing Roma education and transition to employment, a set of contextual factors need to be closely considered, and they concern all targeted countries.

- *Multidimensional and complex problems* – As it has been evidenced from the primary and secondary data collection, the overall situation of Roma minority in Western Balkans and Turkey has not substantially changed over the last few years. While inclusion of Roma children in education has received particular attention over the last decades, with undeniable achievements, those efforts have failed to address the multidimensional challenges faced by Roma families and their children, like poverty, unemployment, low educational levels of Roma parents, exclusion and other vulnerabilities thus making sustainability of the achieved results difficult to endure.
- *Quality of education and VET programs in Western Balkans* – poor school conditions, overcrowded classes, uneven distribution of schools/VETs among urban/rural areas and rich/poor households, overall lack of teacher's understanding and motivation to work with Roma children, and difficult entrance exams for secondary and tertiary education (e.g. Turkey and Serbia), make transition to the next level of education a giant step for every Roma child.
- *Perception of public institutions' staff and public opinion on Roma issues and Roma education and transition to employment* – Education, employment and inclusion of Roma children and adults are perceived to be considered “least important” issues among the public institutions, which are enforced by the EU integration process to incorporate in their strategic framework. Public opinion also seems to be highly prejudiced towards Roma minorities, without even acknowledging this attitude as racism or at least discrimination. In this unfavorable context, affirmative measures for Roma students are not welcomed, to say the least. Apart of Albania which has made a step forward in addressing the area of Antigypsyism in the new Action Plan 2021-2025 (still to be approved), all countries need to embrace an integrated approach in fighting Antigypsyism.

- *Mobility and migration* – these core issues concern Roma populations but also non-Roma and most of the countries in the region. Mobility as part of life or even a lifestyle has been evidence in many Western Balkan countries. Internal ongoing mobility for employment of families for employment and/or income generating activities (e.g. Montenegro) disconnects children from their educational path. Emigration flows are present for all citizens of WB countries towards developed countries, putting greater challenges to uprooted children, like new language acquisition, different school systems etc. This phenomenon has affected Roma university graduates, who are also migrating in other countries. Return migration issues (e.g. in Albania) add to the traditional challenges Roma face in the region.
- *CS, activism and political engagement counts* – a stronger CS and stronger Roma CSOs are found to be decisive in pushing forward the advancement of Roma inclusion agenda and crucial in providing direct support with measurable result for Roma education. Roma political engagement and factorization (such as in North Macedonia) enhances the chances of more (sustainable) achievements by giving a stronger voice and say to the community.

4.2. Policy & Legal Framework and Implementation

It is widely appreciated that in most of the countries under assessment there is a clear and steady trend in advancing the legal/policy framework, also in light of EU integration processes. These make for a solid foundation where to back continuous interventions and measures in the efforts of improving Roma education in the region. However, several challenges do persist at the policy/legal level.

Non-holistic approach/interventions – it is not rare that policy/legal framework is not complete (e.g. no budgets, missing/incomplete bylaws, missing action plans and concrete measures for implementation etc.,) which hinders the implementation process and monitoring of results/impact. Fragmentation is another barrier, and it ranges from design to share of responsibilities and implementation. Educational interventions should be systematically linked to more general social interventions, e.g. community-based projects that can be at school level but take into consideration broader social issues and involve broader communities. These approaches have been implemented

in all six WB countries (less in Turkey), through with projects like REF throughout all levels of education, and they have had greater impact in completion of upper levels of education.

Policy rich – implementation poor – In spite of the rich policy and legal framework developed in WB countries, access to and provision of quality education, including support measures is not guaranteed for Roma children. Some of the common concerns in this area are: lack of willingness to implement, poor coordination among different actors, lack of / poor Roma responsive budgets, and lack of (qualified) human resources (institutions being understaffed, having high turnover of specialized staff in the area of Roma inclusion etc.).

Central government policies – local government implementation. Some WB countries (Albania, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Montenegro) have been going through a decentralization process during the last few years, aiming to a more autonomous and empowered local government. In spite of the obvious advantages of this process, there are many shortcomings for the common understanding and coherent implementation of national strategies. Different attitudes, willingness and understanding of Roma issues, and particularly education and employability account for gaps in an even and just distribution of progress and impact in children's lives. Few affirmative measures that have been incorporated in the national education system, e.g. quota for Roma students in Albania, scholarships for secondary and tertiary education in Kosovo, likewise in Montenegro and North Macedonia have had a considerable impact. So has the extension of compulsory school years such as in the case of North Macedonia.

4.3. Towards more (Sustainable) Results: Priority Issues

The overall high dropout rates, starting from secondary education and continuing to tertiary, showcase the importance of this initial transition to upper levels of education for Roma pupils. Low attainment levels in primary education, due to multiple factors discussed earlier, like poor school conditions, low teacher's quality and/or investment, poor parent's education level, coupled with segregation and bullying impact their further education trajectory. Furthermore, gender differences start to appear at this level, due to early marriages and families' needs for girls to take care of household chores. Scholarships provided by donors or state at this level have been found of paramount importance for the continuation of their studies and in closing gender gaps.

Entrance to higher education becomes even more difficult for many Roma students that have not been supported in the previous years. Practices here vary among countries. In Albania, there are explicit quotas for Roma students, but not state scholarships (besides exemption from public university fees), in Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Kosovo there are scholarships for Roma students upon certification of Roma belongingness, but sometimes criteria to benefit from them are very hard to reach, e.g., average grade above 9 (on a 0 to 10 grading scale) or students are not feeling fully comfortable/safe to openly reveal/document their Roma identity. These approaches, albeit successful and important to have in place as measures, reflect the fragmentation and donor – based approach to Roma education issues, and do not address the complexity of the vulnerabilities, e.g., poverty, low educational attainment, lack of vision about their future and of positive role models etc.

VET schools and programs attract much of Roma students at the end of lower secondary education, in all WB countries and Turkey. Vocational education has been a top priority for all these countries in the last few years, with major ongoing reforms aiming to match demand and supply and a focus on innovation. On the other hand, structural barriers for Roma students, like lack of mastery of mainstream language, or of literacy skills, inexistence of Romani teacher in VET system, uneven distribution of VET schools and long distances to access them, make them choose the least preferred/low skilled vocations, further reducing chances of transition to employment.

Transition to employment is one of the weakest links in implementation of inclusion policies for Roma graduates from secondary/VET and tertiary education. The great emphasis at national and international level and on access and provision of quality education has put aside employability. Roma graduates that have put great efforts to complete their studies face prejudice and explicit and implicit discrimination when accessing the labor market. The generic national level quotas existing in some countries – e.g., in Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia, but they are not (fully) met, and the public administration should reflect more on the composition of the population – typically target low – skilled Roma adults, and not university graduates, whereas in Albania the majority of them are employed but not in their own profession. Overall, employment of Roma students graduating from VET and even more from higher education should receive more attention funds, from both governments and donors. Their success is essential in serving as role models for other Roma children/youth.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Following the common findings and discussions, this last part of the report draws brief conclusions and proposes respective recommendation organized around policy and legal framework level and implementation level.

5.1. Recommendation Regarding Policy/Legal Frameworks

- Policy logic addressing issues of education and employment is found to be primarily focused on the sector. There is common identified need for a more holistic approach that follows the life cycle of the beneficiaries starting from an early and sure start in ECD, to primary, secondary, tertiary education and then transition to employment.
- Uneven distribution of resources, mechanisms and support across these lines lead to deeper and/or create additional inequalities, also among Roma themselves. The uneven distribution is a result of the combination of already existing differences among regions/municipalities, rural and urban areas, etc. with the uneven distribution of donor-lead and civil society actors' interventions (some areas and communities are more heavily targeted than others due to numbers or other selection criteria). In this context, it is recommended for interventions to be inclusive not only in terms of an inter-sectoral approach but also in their scope and coverage, be it geographically or thematically, regardless of if the implementation is centralized or decentralized.
- Policies for Roma education and employment are typically focusing on the immediate beneficiaries (e.g., Roma children, Roma youth) and sometimes on employers rather than the employment seeking Roma. Knowledge gained from best practices teaches that an integrated and inclusive logic is necessary in this respect too. Designing and implementing policies that target Roma parents, Roma families and Roma communities is essential as well. Working with and providing support for Roma parents is of paramount importance for the success of any interventions for Roma children education.
- Findings of persisting problems of discrimination and segregation (direct or indirect/hidden) call for an urgency of addressing issues of Antigypsyism at all levels, and

policy level must be the prioritized. Some countries have already started to work on that (such as Albania), but the recommendation is valid for all.

- Policy/legal frameworks need to be complete in terms of content (including bylaws that make them operational) as well as in including dedicated budget lines. Roma budgeting needs to advance at both central and local level agendas and action plans providing the opportunity for Roma responsive budgeting and a more complete monitoring and evaluation frame.
- Monitoring and evaluation component (which has been typically missing, fragmented or incomplete) much be strengthened and sustained. Governments at the central and local level must monitor/evaluate and regularly report on the progress of dedicated Roma plans of action and ensure a participatory approach. Monitoring and evaluation reports need to be transparent and serve to further build trust of beneficiaries. Roma CSOs can act as great resources and partners in this respect, by acting as a watchdog, but also providing expertise and quality data.
- Improved data-collection processes are a must in identifying, assessing, and documenting the problem, as well as in monitoring and evaluating success/failure. Improved evidence shall then help in better informing policymaking processes and SMART(-er) policies and interventions.
- Policymaking in the area of Roma education must foster a participatory and inclusive approach. Participation needs to become more meaningful and not just a “tick the box” procedural practice.
- Migration and return migration issues should be addressed with greater responsiveness to Roma specific needs. Policies and measures which target the root causes of migration such as unemployment or the working poor, working conditions and decent employment, poor reintegration upon return etc. would benefit Roma in all targeted countries.

5.2. Recommendations on Policy and Intervention Implementation

- Policy implementation is hindered by a number of factors, among which a lack of clarity in divisions of roles and responsibilities, as well as lack of transparency in how task and responsibilities are carried out by all relevant actors. Better and more transparent

responsibility taking by involved actors is what is expected and needed in many settings where implementation is not optimal.

- To ensure equal access to policy and legal provisions, central government bodies need to coordinate and ensure that local government bodies abide to the foreseen responsibilities and guarantee access to provisions entitlements designated for Roma children. Improved coordination between different actors is essential also to avoid overlaps and improve synergy.
- Implementation and achievements that result from implementation processes are often threatened by lack of continuation and sustainability. This could improve significantly with a higher involvement and ownership developed by the governmental institutions (central and local) that will help to guarantee continuation of good practices developed by other actors as well as help reduce the donor dependency/ donor driven attitude in the area of Roma inclusion and Roma education.
- It is highly recommended that partnerships between state structures and CSOs are further strengthened throughout the region. CSOs contribution and input in implementation of policies and interventions has proven essential in enhancing coverage and access to services and provisions targeting Roma education and employability.
- Relevant actors, in particular the responsible state institutions and structures are required to further build/strengthen their capacities of those working with and for Roma education issues. (Some initial steps include minimizing turnovers, including Roma employees/experts etc.).
- Last but not least, best practices and lessons learned nation wise and regional wise is strongly encouraged to be documented, shared and replicated.
- In the context of this assessment, some of the best practices in the area of ECD (Early Childhood Development) and primary education, which are strongly recommended to keep and scale up to higher levels of education are those on mentoring and tutoring practices which have proven to be every effective in all different setting s applied across the region. Expanding measures and support in overcoming language barriers and endorsing Romani language is another recommendation which if taken into consideration and endorsed would significantly impact enrollment and quality education for Roma children.

5.3. Recommendations and Measures and Immediate Actions

- Each country and the region as one have accumulated considerable, valuable experience and expertise during the last two decades. It is recommended for actions to be taken in creating national and/or regional web sources on “What works for Roma” which will help easy access to information and maximize the benefits of learning from best practices and lessons learnt.
- Measures that result in disaggregation/exclusion and/or poor education outcomes for Roma children must be abolished. What is recommended is more, stronger and multilevel support for Roma children with difficulties. Lowering formal/informal standards for Roma children performance in schools has proven negative for their long-term schooling and employability.
- Overall, measures addressing issues of Roma education and employability should cater also for factors that lead to irregular migration, a common challenge for all Western Balkan countries during the last decades.
- There is a need for prioritization of any measures that will provide follow-up and support to Roma graduates in their efforts to enter the labor market, through partnerships with civil society, international organizations and private sector, through schemes of internships, wage – subsidies and other incentives for the private sector.
- Likewise, measures that support Roma VET students in job placements and apprenticeships and inclusion in labor market through school to job transition tailored programs are strongly encouraged.
- Immediate actions should be taken to ensure access to employment in public administration through quotas for Roma graduates and other high skilled Roma students and adults, wherever such quotas are in place, and create this opportunity where it is still missing.
- Provision of scholarships to vulnerable Roma need to be revisited in terms of a more effective combination of criteria of vulnerability, Roma identity and academic performance, particularly in secondary education. Also, scholarships need to be an integral part of a set of services and support and not a standalone measure.

- Along the policy recommendation on Roma budgeting, it is important to take actions in developing more targeted spending measures that could help counteract inequities in the system, based on previous Roma – sensitive budgeting.
- More should be invested in building capacities, networking, and empowering of Roma civil society.
- Measures need to be taken to expand the variety of services and active employment policies in order to include Roma students that live in suburban or far away areas as well as be gender sensitive.
- Other measures should work towards increasing the number of Romani teachers as well as Romani staff of VET centers.
- Last but not least, success need to be promoted. Role models of Roma children and youth, in education or employment should be promoted and help inspire others in the communities.

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7. ANNEXES

7.1. Data Collections Tools

Here we include: 1. Letter of informed consent; 2. Template for individual interviews; 3. Template for focus group discussions.

I. Informed Consent

Introduction and Study/Data Collection Purpose

My name is [name]. Together with my colleague [name], we're working on behalf Roma Education Fund, Hungary. In the frame of the REF's regional project "EU Regional Action: Increased Education Opportunities for Roma Students in Western Balkans and Turkey", funded by European Union, we are contracted by REF to conduct the task of studying, analyzing and reporting on the state of secondary and tertiary educational policy level and achievements in terms of enhancing education and employability of Roma youth in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

In this frame, we are conducting individual in-depth interviews and FG discussions with stakeholders and key informants from seven targeted countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey. You are identified and invited to this interview as a stakeholder/key informant for your country.

Material Benefits

The study findings will directly inform the REF on the advancement of policy framework and implementation of educational policies in the region. There are no direct material benefits to individuals participating in the research.

Types of Questions

I will ask you questions about the state of art of the policy and institutional framework targeting issues of Roma education and employability of Roma youth in [country], specifically addressing the progress achieved the bottlenecks faced/addressed in the processes, the best practices and lessons learnt.

Skipping Questions or Ending Participation

You can decide not to participate in the interview, or you can tell me that you prefer not to answer a specific question, and I will skip the question. There is no need to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. If you like, you can end the interview at any time, and this will not affect your relationship with REF or the project funders.

Confidentiality

All your answers will be kept private and confidential, and the only people who will have access to this information are the researchers for the study. When we write up the results of the study, we will not connect your name to anything that you said.

Contact

If you have any questions about the research, or if problems arise, you may contact: *[contact name and details (email) of experts]*

Are you willing to participate in this study?	Yes / No
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II. In-depth individual interview

Demographic Questions

Question	Answer
What is your gender?	
What is your age?	
Please describe your educational background.	

Please describe your working experience with Roma education and/or employment.	

Semi-Structured Individual Interview Guide

General

- How would you describe the situation of Roma education in your country? Why? Is there any difference in terms of gender / region / etc.?
- What is specific on the secondary and tertiary education levels of Roma youth? Is there any difference in terms of gender / region / etc.?
- What about their employability upon graduation? What are the main opportunities and challenges Roma youth face in entering the labor market? Is there any difference in terms of gender / region / etc.?

The legal and policy framework

- To your knowledge and expertise, what is the national state of the legal and policy framework addressing issue of Roma secondary and tertiary education and their employability?
- What is the nature of the existing policies? Are there explicit policies/laws and mechanisms addressing Roma youth education and employability? What is their main target? Are there any other sensibilities such as gender sensitive approach or other?
- To what extend would you say that they are approximated / designed with reference to the EU acquis of the same area?

On interventions and processes

- With reference on what we discussed regarding the legal and policy framework, what would you say is the scale of the interventions implemented under this framework? (Policies/ projects / actions / individual activity etc.)

- What is the scope of such interventions? Geographically, thematically, target-group wise (e.g. girls, rural areas, disability etc.?)
- What is the approach employed in designing and implementing such interventions? Are they targeted intervention? Are they mainstreamed interventions? What shapes these approaches?
- Is there a gap between what is planned and what gets implemented? Why? What is influencing that? What are the bottlenecks in the process of implementing the aimed interventions?

Achievements, enablers and inhibitors, best practices and lessons learnt

- In line with what you've described so far, to what extend would you say the implementation of relevant laws and policies has been effective? To what extend have they managed to meet the set targets/objectives? Is there a variation in the range of achievements by gender or other relevant variables in your country context?
- How would you describe the level of success/achievements in this respect? To what degree is it satisfactory? Why?
- What have been the opportunities and enabling factors that have facilitated the achievement made thus far?
- What have been the main bottlenecks and barriers to success? Why?
- Are Roma girls and boys affected differently by these opportunities and barriers? How? Why?
- Could you share with us one or more cases of best practices in this respect? What do you think made them succeed?
- What are some other lessons learned (be it from best practices or failures) that you could share with us?
- What can be done differently in the near future? What about in long-term? By whom? How?

Conclusion

- Is there anything to would like to add that we haven't already spoken about today?

- Do you have any questions for me?

III. Focus Group Discussions

(following informed consent and collection of demographic questions)

General

- How would you describe the situation of Roma education in your country? Why? Is there any difference in terms of gender / region / etc.?
- What is specific about the secondary and tertiary education levels of Roma youth? Is there any difference in terms of gender / region / etc.?
- What about their employability upon graduation? What are the main opportunities and challenges Roma youth face in entering the labor market? Is there any difference in terms of gender / region / etc.?

The legal and policy framework

- To your knowledge and expertise, what is the national state of the legal and policy framework addressing issue of Roma secondary and tertiary education and their employability?
- What is the nature of the existing policies? Are there explicit policies/laws and mechanisms addressing Roma youth education and employability? What is their main target? Are there any other sensibilities such as gender sensitive approach or other?
- To what extent are education and Roma integration policies shaped by / approximated / designed with reference to the EU acquis of the same area?

On interventions and processes

- With reference on what we discussed regarding the legal and policy framework, what would you say is the scale of the interventions implemented under this framework? (Policies/ projects / actions / individual activity etc.)
- What is the scope of such interventions? Geographically, thematically, target-group wise (e.g. girls, rural areas, disability etc.?)

- What is the approach employed in designing and implementing such interventions? Are they targeted intervention? Are they mainstreamed interventions? What shapes these approaches?
- Is there a gap between what is planned and what gets implemented? Why? What is influencing that? What are the bottlenecks in the process of implementing the aimed interventions?
- Which are the main actors? How would you describe/rate their role and contribution until know? What about in the future?

Achievements, enablers and inhibitors, best practices and lessons learnt

- In line with what you've described so far, to what extend would you say the implementation of relevant laws and policies has been effective? To what extend have they managed to meet the set targets/objectives? Is there a variation in the range of achievements by gender or other relevant variables in your country context?
- How would you describe the level of success/achievements in this respect? To what degree is it satisfactory? Why?
- What have been the opportunities and enabling factors that have facilitated the achievement made thus far?
- What have been the main bottlenecks and barriers to success? Why?
- Are Roma girls and boys affected differently by these opportunities and barriers? How? Why?
- Could you share with us one or more cases of best practices in this respect? What do you think made them succeed?
- What are some other lessons learned (be it from best practices or failures) that you could share with us?
- What can be done differently in the near future? What about in long-term? By whom? How?

Conclusion

- Is there anything to would like to add that we haven't already spoken about today?
- Do you have any questions for us?

Major indicators	Specific indicators	Questions
1. The legal and policy framework in place (structural indicators);	1.1. Specific laws for anti – discrimination and/or inclusion 1.2. Explicit policies for Roma Education 1.3. Level of approximation with EU legislation/Charter of Fundamental Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the national state of legal and institutional framework for the integration of Roma? • What is nature of existing policies (implicit or explicit)? • To what extent they are approximated with EU acquis?
2. The concrete interventions to implement it (process indicators);	2.1. The scale of interventions states undertakes to address Roma education and employability issues (policy, project, individual activity), their scope (nation-wide, regional, local), and continuity (regularly implemented or one -off intervention); 2.2. The type of approaches states uses to address Roma education and employability (targeted interventions or mainstream interventions); 2.3. Specific details of the targeted interventions for which the Roma beneficiaries could be identified; 2.4. Substantive content of interventions (what was done)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the scale, scope and sustainability of the interventions in the area (i.e. Roma education)? • What type of approaches do they employ and what is their target? • What is actually being implemented?
3. The achievements, as experienced by the rights holders (outcome indicators).	3.1. Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators of discrimination/segregation/exclusion of Roma children in education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have the targets/objectives of these policies been met with a focus on education and employment?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of Roma children, 6-15 years old, attending schools where ‘all or most of schoolmates are Roma • Percentage of Roma aged who have completed tertiary education • Percentage of Roma living in households with children who have received support in schooling of children • Prevalence of hate-motivated bullying/harassment of Roma children while in school • Indicators of presence/level of support for fostering Romani language and culture in the general education system <p>3.2. Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of young persons, 16-24 years old with current main activity ‘neither in employment, education or training’ • Percentage/Indicators of Roma who felt discriminated against because of being Roma when looking for a job • Percentage of Roma who ever received help or support when looking for work because being a Roma (support in finding a job or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has enabled or inhibited the road to success? • What are the lessons learnt from the implementation of these processes?
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	training for a job / profession) from a public institution or NGO for 16 – 24 years old	
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