

Roma Early Childhood Inclusion

Macedonian Report



RECI Roma
Early
Childhood
Inclusion

A joint initiative of the Open Society Foundations
the Roma Education Fund and UNICEF

Roma Early Childhood Inclusion

Macedonian Report

Authors

Enisa Eminova

Nadica Janeva

Violeta Petroska-Beška

Lead researcher

John Bennett

The country designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the sponsoring agencies concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

As per the United Nations Security Council Resolution 817, the UN adopted the provisional reference name “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.” Most international organizations, including the EU have adopted the same convention. In line with the UN resolution, UNICEF refers to the country as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Open Society Foundations refer to it by its constitutional name, Republic of Macedonia. Given that this publication is supported by EU, it was resolved by the three sponsoring agencies REF, Open Society Foundations and UNICEF to use the name “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.”

For further information, please contact:

Sarah Klaus, Open Society Foundations: sarah.klaus@osf-eu.org

Mihai Surdu, REF: msurdu@romaeducationfund.org

Deepa Grover, UNICEF: degrover@unicef.org

© UNICEF photos/SWZ/2011/John McConnico

Design and layout/Judit Kovacs/Createch Ltd.

Printed in Hungary/2011



This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

Contents

The Sponsoring Agencies	5
Acknowledgements	6
A Note on Terminology	6
Preface	7
List of Abbreviations	9

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	11
-------------------------	----

INTRODUCTION	15
--------------------	----

Section 1: Making the Case for Early Childhood Development for all Children, Including Roma	15
1.1. The Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Reports	15
1.2. Rationale for the Reports	17
1.3. Structure of the RECI Reports	19
1.4. Research Methodology	20
Section 2: Early Childhood Services for Excluded and Minority Children: Lessons from International Research	21
2.1. The Particular Importance of the Years Before Preschool	21
2.2. Early Education for 'At-Risk' Children	23
2.3. Early Childhood Services for Socially Excluded Children – Theoretical Frameworks	23

CHAPTER 1. The Country Context and the Situation of the Roma Population in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	31
---	----

Demographic Data	31
Demographic Data About Roma	32
The History, Culture and Present Situation of Roma	33
Roma in the Ottoman Empire	33
Roma in the Early Twentieth Century	33
Roma in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	34
The Romani Language	35
The Romani Culture	36
Gender Relations in Roma Communities	36
The Present Situation of Macedonian Roma Communities	37
Contemporary Mainstream Perceptions of Roma and Their Child-Rearing Patterns	40
Roma Perceptions of Mainstream Society and Its Institutions, Including Early Childhood Education	41
The Legal Protection of Minorities	42
The Current Economic and Labour Market Situation	43
Current Cultural and Diversity Policy	44
How the Macedonian Roma View Education	44
Civil Society and NGO Activation in Favour of Roma	45

CHAPTER 2. Assessment of Health, Social and Educational Institutions and Their Impact on the Roma Ethnic Community	47
---	----

Overview of the Health Institutions and Health Services for Families with Preschool Age Children	47
Access to Health Services for Roma Families with Small Children	51
Housing and Social Assistance Policies	57

European and Other International Agencies' Initiatives for Improving Education Among Roma Students.....	62
The Responsibility and Role of Local Self-Government in Provision of Social, Health and Educational Services for the Macedonian Population.....	64

CHAPTER 3. The Early Childhood Development System and the Place of Roma Children and Parents Within This System67

Outline of Early Development Services for Children 0-6 Years.....	67
Specific Policies or Strategies for the Early Development and Education of Roma Children	70
The Causes of Low Roma Enrolment	70
Kindergarten Teacher and Assistant Qualifications, Training and Representation.....	72
Curriculum and Teaching Methods Used.....	75
Parental Involvement in Early Development and Education.....	77
Comprehensive Services, Parenting Education and Community Outreach.....	77
Segregation and De-Segregation With Respect to Early Childhood Services and Transitions.....	78
Transition of Roma Children from Kindergarten to School	80

CHAPTER 4. Key Challenges in the Process of Inclusion of the Roma Population in Early Childhood Development Programmes81

Cultural Challenges	81
Economic and Social Challenges Faced by Roma Parents with Young Children	81
Challenges to the Health and Well-Being of Young Children Aged 0-3 Years.....	82
The Broader Education Challenge, and in Particular, the Early Education Challenge	83
The Data Collection Challenge	84
Transition and Segregation of Roma Children	85

CHAPTER 5. Conclusions and Recommendations87

Introduction.....	87
Access	87
Financing	88
Quality	89
Research	89

Bibliography91

Annex 1. The World Bank Argument for Investing in Roma Children.....	97
Roma Inclusion: An Economic Opportunity for Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania and Serbia, World Bank, 2010.....	97

Annex 2. Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Programmes	98
Early Childhood Programming for Minority Groups	98
1. The Contribution of Jacqueline Jordan Irvine	98
2. The Contribution of John Ogbu	100
3. The Contribution of Michel Vandenbroeck.....	101
4. The Contribution of Jessica Ball	104

The Sponsoring Agencies

The *Open Society Foundations* work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. To achieve this mission, the Foundations seek to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal, and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. On a local level, the Open Society Foundations implement a range of initiatives to advance justice, education, public health, and independent media. The Foundations place a high priority on protecting and improving the lives of people in marginalized communities. The Open Society Foundations are key drivers of the Roma Decade. The Open Society Foundations have considerable experiences in working in partnership with and strengthening Roma civil society organisations, but also in collecting and analysing data and the evaluation of projects and programmes. The Early Childhood Program (ECP) promotes healthy development and wellbeing of young children, through initiatives that emphasize parent and community engagement, professional development and government accountability. The ECP's rights-based approach and social justice framework give particular attention to minorities; children with developmental delays, malnutrition and disabilities; and children living in poverty. In Central Eastern Europe/Eurasia, large ECP initiatives focus on addressing the situation of Roma children, children with disabilities and children who do not have access to services. The ECP continues to support and collaborate with the national and regional early childhood NGOs, established through its flagship Step by Step Program, including the International Step by Step Association (ISSA).

The *Roma Education Fund (REF)* was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005. Its mission and ultimate goal is to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. In order to achieve this goal, the organization supports policies and programmes which ensure quality education for Roma, including the desegregation of education systems. Through its activities, the REF promotes Roma inclusion in all aspects of the national education systems of countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion, as well as other countries that wish to join in this effort. The objectives of REF include ensuring access to compulsory education, improving the quality of education, implementing integration and desegregation of Roma students, expanding access to pre-school education, and increasing access to secondary, post secondary and adult education, for example through scholarships, adult literacy courses and career advice for secondary school students. REF is currently engaged in an early childhood initiative funded by the European Union. The project supports more than 4,000 children from ages zero to six to access early childhood education and care services in 16 locations across four countries (Hungary, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia).

UNICEF has been working in the CEECIS region since the 1990s with the objective of protecting and promoting the rights of children, especially those from the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. UNICEF is a member of the Steering Committee of the Roma Decade. UNICEF is engaged in developing a systematic and coherent engagement with Roma issues through the key entry points of early childhood development and basic education. UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children. UNICEF insists that the survival, protection and development of children are universal development imperatives that are integral to human progress. UNICEF mobilizes political will and material resources to help countries, particularly developing countries, ensure a "first call for children" and to build their capacity to form appropriate policies and deliver services for children and their families. UNICEF is committed to ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged children – victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, all forms of violence and exploitation and those with disabilities.

Acknowledgements

The Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Project was carried out under the leadership of John Bennett, who developed the common format for, and oversaw drafting of the national Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Reports for the Czech Republic, Romania, Serbia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. John Bennett also produced a Synthesis Report which serves as an interpretative summary of the four national reports.

The main authors of the Macedonian Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Report are Enisa Eminova, Nadica Janeva and Violeta Petroska-Beška. John Bennett provided overall guidance for finalizing the report. Eben Friedman assisted in editing and finalizing the report.

Contributions were also received from the participants at the National Consultation held in Skopje on 15 February 2010, as well as from the representatives from the three sponsoring agencies.

A Note on Terminology

The text seeks to comply with the European Union and the Council of Europe's adopted usage of the term 'Roma'. The term includes – as in recent official EU, Council of Europe and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) documents – Roma, Traveller, Sinti and other groups commonly (though inaccurately) described as 'Gypsies'.¹ Readers should note that the usage of the term is not intended to deny the diversity that exists across both Roma and Traveller groups. A significant and growing Roma middle class exists, which participates fully as citizens in the countries and societies in which they live, without sacrificing their ethnic and cultural identity.

For readability purposes, the adjective 'Roma' will generally be used, in particular when referring to the Roma people as a whole or to groups or individuals, e.g. Roma children, Roma families. The adjective 'Romani' will generally refer to languages and culture.

1 "Gypsies" is a term that is highly contested and can only be used with the greatest caution, as many groups described as such in the press and media would refute the term. Among the groups that accept the term, albeit capitalised, are English Gypsies or Romany people in the UK; see Hancock (2002), *We Are The Romani People/Ames sam e Rromane Dzene*, Interface Collection, Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, xvi–xxii.

Preface

Every European nation has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and therefore has an obligation to protect and promote, with equity and without discrimination, the rights of all children. Yet, across Europe, the majority of poor Roma children face a challenging present and a difficult future. Their possibilities to succeed in life are severely constrained by prevailing negative attitudes towards their families and communities. From the very start of life, Roma children have reduced opportunities to develop to their full potential.

The *Open Society Foundations' Early Childhood Program*, the *Roma Education Fund* and *UNICEF* are committed to tackling the pervasive violation of rights experienced by Roma children in the region. We believe that early childhood development is one of the most important keys to breaking the cycle of poverty and exclusion, a cycle that has proven so difficult to counter with sporadic and short-term measures.

Some of the most persuasive arguments about the critical importance of early childhood are those proposed by Nobel laureate economist James Heckman, who notes that investing in disadvantaged young children is a rare public policy that not only promotes productivity but also fairness and social justice. Investments in high quality services for young children and their families, particularly those who are poor and disadvantaged, lead not only to the protection of children's rights, but also to later savings in public expenditure. These savings are achieved because early interventions help families to improve their children's health and well-being and to make the most of subsequent educational opportunities. Children are therefore more likely to succeed in later life, and are less likely to require social welfare and other benefits. And yet, in spite of a growing body of evidence that establishes early childhood as the most significant period for human capital formation, most governments invest inversely, prioritising programmes that target older children and adults.

The Open Society Foundations, REF and UNICEF have collaborated successfully to develop the series of *Roma Early Childhood Inclusion (RECI) Reports*. The research partnership was initiated in response to the commitment of each organisation to the rights of Roma children. All three organisations are committed to enabling young Roma children to access and benefit from appropriate, inclusive and effective early childhood development services.

The RECI Reports build a detailed picture of early childhood policy and provision frameworks, highlighting the barriers and opportunities for improving the access of Roma children to appropriate and high-quality early childhood services. The principal objective of the Reports was to make information and data on young Roma children's exclusion available to decision makers and key stakeholders with a view to advocate for equitable early childhood policies and programmes. This exercise was a first attempt in the Central and Eastern European region to capture and present systematically the situation of young Roma children. Four such Reports have been prepared, one for each country: the Czech Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Romania. Through examining available data, each *RECI Report* identifies priority early childhood policy issues and concerns in respect of Roma families and children. The views of Roma communities and families, and Roma women and men, gathered through focus group discussions and interviews, have been incorporated in the country reports. Technical experts, representatives of ministries of health, education, and social welfare, academics as well as members of civil society organisations, had the opportunity to read draft versions of the reports and to contribute from their respective points of view to the articulation of policy reforms and practical steps required to improve the situation of young and disadvantaged Roma children.

A final RECI *Overview Report*, based on the country reports, compares and contrasts respective policy contexts and service delivery models. It proposes a series of recommendations for more comprehensive and inclusive early childhood services and provides a clear agenda for action by governments. The findings and recommendations of the *Overview Report* are particularly relevant at this point in time as the recent Europe 2020 strategy requires member states and those seeking accession to the European Union, to develop national strategies for Roma inclusion. Moreover, two years of pre-school education for all Roma children has been one of the targets of the Roma Decade, since its inception. It is the belief of the collaborating agencies that the time is right for governments to act. Comprehensive early childhood services for all children, starting with the prenatal period and extending through the early years of primary education, must be expanded, with an explicit focus on the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups such as the Roma, so that the reality of Roma inclusion is realised for this generation of young Roma children and beyond.

The country reports were prepared by local researchers. Dr. John Bennett, an eminent international expert on early childhood development, designed the research framework, guided the local researchers and authored the RECI *Overview Report*. For more information on the RECI Reports, copies of the reports and for additional resources on early childhood and Roma inclusion please visit the Roma Children website: www.romachildren.com.

Open Society Foundations

Early Childhood Program
London

Roma Education Fund

Budapest

UNICEF

Regional Office CEECIS
Geneva

2011

List of Abbreviations

ABC	Arkansas Better Chance Programme
BDE	Bureau for the Development of Education
CEECIS	Central and Eastern European Commonwealth of Independent States
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPRC	Centre for Regional Policy Research and Cooperation
DECET	Diversity in early childhood education and training
EACD	European Academy of Childhood disabilities
EACEA	Education, Audio-visual and Cultural Executive Agency
ECD	Early childhood development
ECE	Early childhood education
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
ECS	Early childhood services
ELCC	e-Learning Competence Centre
ELDS	Early Learning Development Standard
EU	European Union
EUMC	European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia
FOSIM	Foundation Open Society Institute – Macedonia
GTZ	German Agency for International Development, (Now GIZ)
HERA	Health, Education and Research Association
IBE	International Bureau of Education (UNESCO)
IMR	Infant mortality rate
ISSA	International Step by Step Association
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MICS	Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
RECI	Roma early childhood inclusion
REF	Roma Education Fund
REP	Roma Education Programme
UNCRC	United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – The United Nations Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Macedonian Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Report attempts to build a detailed picture of early childhood policy and provision frameworks, highlighting the barriers and opportunities for improving the access of Roma children to appropriate and high-quality early childhood services. The principal objective of the Report is to make information and data on young Roma children's exclusion available to decision makers and key stakeholders with a view to advocate for equitable early childhood policies and programmes.

Roma constitute 2.66 per cent of the overall Macedonian population according to the 2002 census, or 53,879 people, which makes Roma the fourth largest group in the country (after Macedonians, Albanians and Turks). Whereas informed estimates from Romani NGOs suggest that Roma constitute closer to 6 per cent of the total population, at least one expert source estimates a figure of 260,000 Roma in the country. Discrepancies between official and unofficial figures derive from a combination of civil registration issues and the tendency of different Roma communities in the country to identify as something else, most commonly due to prejudices and stereotypes. A number of Macedonian Roma are Muslim, although some of them practice other religions as well. According to the 2002 census, Roma live in 64 out of 85 municipalities across the country. The majority of the Roma population in the country (about 45 per cent) lives in 10 municipalities. Very often, Roma live together in settlements or so-called mahalas separated from the rest of the population, sometimes by choice and sometimes as their only alternative. The preamble of the Macedonian Constitution explicitly recognizes Roma as an ethnic community on the same level as the Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, Serbian, and Bosniak communities. While this particular formulation reflects changes to the Constitution made following the August 2001 signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the explicit recognition of Roma was a feature also of the previous version of the Preamble. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in 1995 and signed and ratified the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 1996 and 1997 respectively.

Observations between 2006 and 2009 show the gaps between Roma and non-Roma: only 60 per cent of Roma women aged 15–24 are literate, compared with 99 per cent of those in the Macedonian and Albanian populations. Roma also have the highest rate of unemployment: 73 per cent as compared with 31 per cent amongst Macedonians and 27 per cent amongst Albanians. Income inequalities amongst Roma are similarly extreme, with the Gini coefficient for equalised income at 0.46 for Roma, 0.37 among Macedonians and 0.38 amongst Albanians. Additionally, 27 per cent of Macedonian households and 29 per cent of Albanian households live on less than 60 per cent of the median monthly income of approximately 94 euros; the corresponding figure for

Romani households is 63 per cent. Roma women are less likely to receive antenatal care from professional health care workers, with only 78.5 per cent of Roma women receiving professional antenatal care during their last pregnancy, compared with 98 per cent of Macedonian women and 99 per cent of Albanian women. Where children are concerned, Roma are slightly less likely than Macedonians (92 per cent versus 96 per cent) to register their children at birth. The most frequent reasons cited by parents for not registering their children at birth are parents' lack of personal documents (106 cases), lack of finances (92 cases) and unregistered marriage of parents (35 cases). Although current legislation stipulates that unregulated marital status shall not be a reason to prevent parents from registering their children at birth, the findings suggest that additional research is needed to understand the link between the two.

Statistics from the Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS3) show differences in the health indicators in Roma children, compared with children from the majority population. There is a higher hospitalization rate due to pneumonia among Roma children, and they use outpatient services to a lesser degree. The infant mortality rate among Roma is higher than within the majority population, although the rate declined between 2004 and 2009. Roma parents are less likely to immunize their children: 34 per cent of Roma children did not receive all of the eight recommended vaccines compared with 12 per cent of Macedonian children and 33 per cent of Albanian children. It is reported that 8.7 per cent of children below the age of 5 years show signs of stunting, with significantly higher prevalence in the Roma population than in the Macedonian population (i.e., 16.6 per cent versus 7.8 per cent).

According to a 2004 UNICEF survey on the educational values of Macedonian Roma, Roma equate success almost exclusively with having an employment that provides regular income. In this equation, education is valued primarily as a means to better employment prospects, with more than half of the parents participating in the survey indicating that they consider secondary education sufficient for their children, one third that primary education is sufficient and a small proportion expressing the view that their children should earn a university degree. According to the National Programme for the Development of Education (2005–2015) and the Law on Primary Education, the goals of primary education are to ensure access to all children regardless of their age, sex, religious or ethnic affiliation, health condition and financial circumstances, as well as to ensure additional help for all students with special needs. There is no special legislation for children with special educational needs, but there are certain educational plans and programmes for provision of services in special schools, and for special classes in standard schools. While the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has identified the inclusion of children with disabilities in kindergarten-based early childhood development programmes as a special priority, this initiative is still at an early phase. Different sources confirm that Roma children are disproportionately represented in special schools. The data from one study show that in over 50 per cent of the special schools and special classes visited in Skopje, Roma children make up a disproportionate amount of the student body. The Social Protection Law stipulates a right to housing for children and youth without parents, and for children deprived of parental care. During 2007, from a total of 280 children accommodated in institutions for children without parental care, 43.6 per cent were children aged 0–6. Whilst there are no data available on the ethnicity of these children, a May 2009 field observation of the orphanage in Bitola revealed that, 36 of the 98 children (36.8 per cent) between the ages of 0–3 years were Roma.

National legislation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia defines early childhood development (ECD), as preschool education that integrates care and education, specifically including measures and activities for the promotion of health and the advancement of the intellectual, emotional, physical and social development of the child. The main providers of ECD services are public kindergartens, with 52 such institutions

located in 41 municipalities, and an additional 181 dispersed facilities located mainly in urban areas. The final year of preschool education, which was incorporated into compulsory education in 2005–2006, was called the “zero year” in 2006–2007, becoming the first grade beginning in 2007–2008. Available information suggests that the overall coverage of Roma by the Macedonian education system is relatively high. Data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy indicate that 709 Roma completed primary education and 310 completed secondary education in the 2008/2009 school year. However, an estimate of the primary education completion rate generated for the purpose of this study, found that the completion rates in primary education are approximately half as high among Roma as among Macedonians.

There have been some notable initiatives in the country to support Roma children’s education. The Roma Education Programme (REP) is a project by the Foundation Open Society Institute of Macedonia (FOSIM) supported by USAID, Pestalozzi Children’s Foundation and the Roma Education Fund. REP aims to provide comprehensive education support for increasing school retention and academic achievement of Roma children and youth. It has been implemented through positive interventions on all educational levels, from preschool through to university. Every project year, REP prepares over 200 preschool age children for primary education and provides additional out-of-school support in homework, writing and subject-based tutoring to over 900 Roma enrolled in the 1st to 8th grade in five primary schools.

The Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools project is implemented as a result of increased awareness about the importance of early childhood education and development, especially for children from vulnerable groups. It was initiated and managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and was financially supported by the Roma Education Fund. The UNICEF Office in Skopje procured didactical materials for the project and trained the staff. Initially implemented in 15 municipalities in the country, as of early 2011, the project covered 22 municipalities, with costs shared among the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the participating municipalities, and the Roma Education Fund.

Most young Macedonian children are taken care of in home settings, by either the immediate or extended family. This especially applies to Roma children, whose parents are unlikely to be able to pay for private childcare; available information suggests that Roma children whose mothers are engaged in informal work activities outside the home are looked after by relatives or neighbours, but there are no documented initiatives for organized “community” forms of care, even in cases where Roma families live in a homogenous Roma environment. The key reason for the low inclusion of Roma children in public kindergartens is the low social and economic status of the Roma. No in-depth analysis has been done on the reasons why Roma families are not prepared to send their children to kindergarten or on the causes of high drop-out rates. Still, it can be reasonably assumed that unemployment and poverty are important factors, as are the segregation of students and the parents’ lack of education, which contribute to their under-valuing of early childhood development. However, there may also be other specific reasons, which have not been sufficiently researched. Given that most Roma children speak Romani and do not attend kindergartens, they tend to arrive in primary school with little knowledge of the language of instruction. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the national curriculum does not take into account the need for the investment of systematic efforts to ensure that children master the language of instruction. Teachers are also not trained on how to assist the children in mastering the language of instruction. This is despite the fact that the Law on Primary Education prescribes that the schools should organize additional teaching hours for all students who do not show satisfactory results.

Beyond the stated recognition of the need for services to optimize child care in the first three years of life, in the light of the importance of this period for brain development, to

date there has been no systematic response to this need. Health care institutions are focused on the assessment of physical health with no national system for recording and monitoring health problems and development delays. Roma mothers are generally poorly equipped, educationally, to provide for all the needs of their early-age children and there is weak institutional support for this. Additionally, Roma families are generally excluded from social support packages because they are unemployed or in the informal sector.

Preschool education has not been targeted by national initiatives for inclusive education because inclusion in the country is related to compulsory education. In addition, the disproportionately low rate of enrollment of Roma children in preschool institutions effectively fosters the social exclusion of Roma in early childhood. The absence of an official monitoring system is a key issue, with most data coming from NGOs, so there is no ethnically-selective data about access to services, enrolment in schooling or educational outcomes for Roma children. The educational system lacks cultural sensitivity and offers no training in multicultural teaching or how to combat prejudice and stereotyping. Few Roma teachers means that these issues go unchallenged. In order to protect the Roma community from the risks of reinforcing segregation through language, culture and behaviour, greater efforts are required. Similarly, extra effort is needed to prepare the ethnic majority (Macedonians and Albanians) for greater inclusion of minority-groups (Turks; Roma) and to value diversity in society.

The report concludes that in seeking the inclusion of Roma in early childhood development programmes some key challenges remain to be met. Delays in developing appropriate legislation or policy changes coupled with inconsistencies in child-protection and social protection laws make for avoidable hurdles in this complex area. Overall there is a shortage of affordable and accessible early childhood education options for preschool children in the country. This shortage is compounded by the concentration of public preschool institutions in urban settings. As a result, Roma families often face barriers of cost and distance. Public funding must be substantial enough to finance capital costs and to cover all or most of the costs of programme operation such that any costs to parents are affordable for families across the income spectrum. Expenses to be covered by parents must be kept at a level proportionate to the parents' level of income. Parents should have access to the information, tools, and support they need to get their children off to a good start in life.

The paucity of specific evidence about the quality of Macedonian kindergartens points to the need to develop monitoring and evaluation arrangements in this area. In the meantime, initiatives aimed at quality improvement should focus broadly on ensuring that all children benefit from stimulation, positive experiences, and interactions that nurture all aspects of their development. Integral to such initiatives should be provisions for realizing the right to choose, the right to play and the right to creative expression, with equal progress opportunity secured for all children. Bridging the long-standing gap between research and practice in early childhood education and care (ECEC) requires that research focuses on practice and that research findings be disseminated in a user-friendly form. Local authorities should be informed about the need for early childhood education (ECE) and encouraged to include early childhood education in local budgets. At the same time, efforts need to be undertaken to strengthen regulations relating to ECD services and supporting human capacity development in order to enable Roma children to participate in and benefit from high quality early childhood education services.

INTRODUCTION

Section 1: Making the Case for Early Childhood Development for all Children, Including Roma

1.1. The Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Reports

The *Roma Early Childhood Inclusion (RECI) Reports* are sponsored and managed by the Open Society Foundations, the Roma Education Fund and UNICEF. The purpose of the reports is to present data and information on the inclusion of young Roma children in the early childhood services of four Central and Eastern European countries: the Czech Republic, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, and Romania. Under the guidance of a senior expert in European early childhood development, each country report was researched and written by national experts in the fields of early childhood development, education and Roma inclusion. The senior expert also served as the lead researcher.

A detailed conceptual framework, a report format and a questionnaire were developed by the senior expert to guide the content and writing of all the national reports. The format clearly stipulated the baseline data to be collected in each country, indicated key themes for analysis and provided specific instructions on the presentation of information. It was anticipated that this approach would allow for valuable comparisons to be made between countries and would provide readers of the reports, as well as external evaluators and researchers, with reliable information on important early childhood policy matters. Decision makers and other important stakeholders, from the health, education and social protection sectors in each country, had the opportunity to read the respective draft reports. Their inputs and reactions were solicited through a national consultation process and incorporated in the final report. In each report, the final chapter on recommendations was prepared by the researchers after the national consultation in order to reflect the views and suggestions of the participants.

15

1.1.1. Defining early childhood services

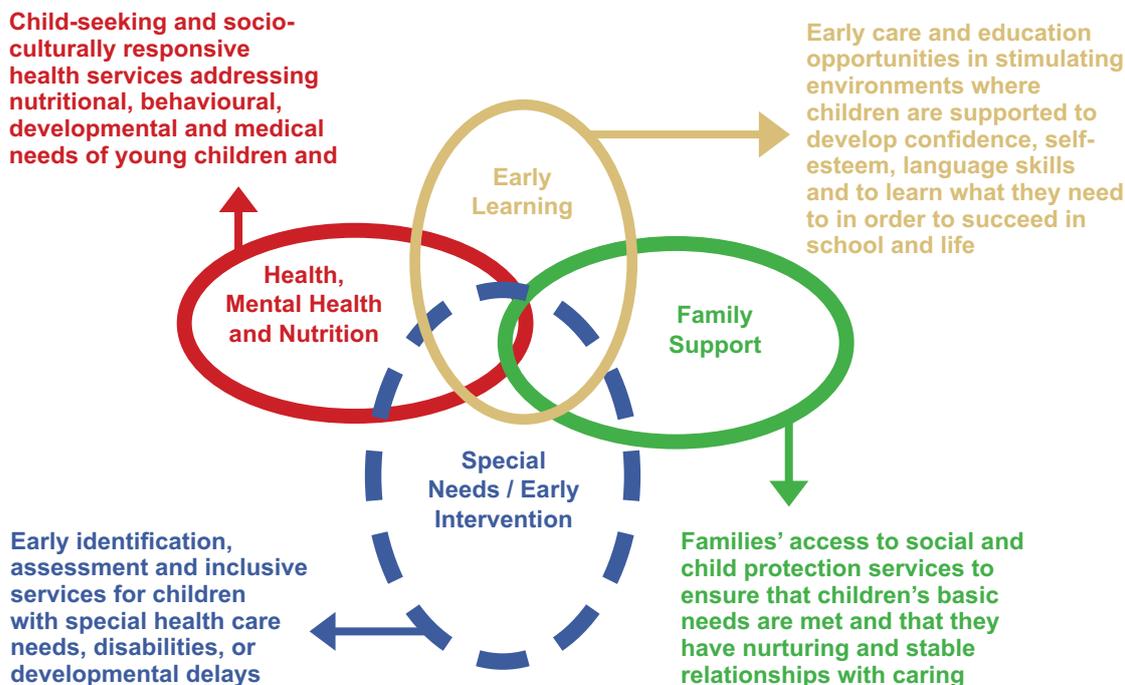
The term 'early childhood services' is used in the Reports, rather than 'early childhood education'. The reason for this choice is the danger of limiting the discussion to kindergarten service if the term 'early education' alone is used. Socially excluded children and their families need a far broader range of services than those traditionally provided in kindergartens for children aged 3–6 years.

Since it has been clearly established that the early years' period, from prenatal to 3 years, is critical for the future development of an individual, the challenge is to respond to this crucial window with the right combination of initiatives. A first step implies that governments and local authorities need to cease thinking of early childhood intervention only in terms of preschool enrolment, which is made available to children from the age of 4 years, and instead provide multifaceted, early childhood services from the earliest age, as shown in Figure 1. These services include early childhood health (including prenatal health services for mothers), and development and education initiatives that are flexible and accessible to all families, including the most marginalized. The task is daunting, but the proven returns to individual children and society are enormous.

Early childhood services include all arrangements providing health, care, development and education for children below the age for compulsory school attendance, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content. These arrangements necessarily differ according to the age of the children in question and the sector concerned. When children approach school age, early childhood services focus on their readiness for school in the broad sense, that is, readiness that includes health and emotional well-being as well as cognitive and language development. As transition into school is a particularly critical moment in the lives of Roma children, the authors of the Reports were also asked to examine the first two years in primary school, which is at 6–8 years old, to ensure that adequate policies are in place to achieve successful transitions into standard school. At the earlier end of the age spectrum, early childhood services for children under the age of three are also paid attention to, in addition to child health and development, and to family and social environments, including parental education and leave arrangements.

The diagram in Figure 1 illustrates the dimensions and interfaces of a comprehensive early childhood system

Figure 1. Critical components of an inclusive early childhood system



Source: Adapted by UNICEF from ECD Systems Working Group, Minnesota, 2007 (<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/cfh/meccs/framework.html>).

1.2. Rationale for the Reports

The need for the Reports arose from the convergence of different rationales: firstly, the unacceptable situation of Roma populations and their children in the Central Eastern Europe (CEE) countries; secondly, the growing commitment of Roma populations, governments and international agencies and organizations to end this unacceptable situation; and thirdly, the understanding that the early childhood period is the foundation stage not only of individual health, upbringing and education but also of inclusive education.

The downward spiral of the social exclusion of Roma that was evident in many countries even before the financial crisis, has recently increased.² In consequence, the situation of Roma in Europe has become more visible on the political agenda of the European Union (EU) and the Member States, and equally among international organisations and civil society. There is widespread agreement that efforts to improve social inclusion have not touched poor Roma families to the extent required. Compared with the majority populations, the living conditions of many Roma families remain extremely poor. This raises serious concerns about the nutrition, health and early development of young children. Yet, the plight of Roma children remains to a large extent outside the poverty debate. Xenophobia and anti-Gypsyism pre-date the financial crisis but appear to have been aggravated by it, leading to greater segregation of the Roma population in many countries. Strategies for child poverty reduction are still struggling to grapple successfully with the complex interactions between material deprivation, physical exclusion and the discrimination against Roma populations.

Education is one of the most critical areas of intervention for Roma children. Indeed, the Decade of Roma Inclusion, from its inception in 2005, has made education one of its four priority concerns along with employment, housing and health. There has been extensive research on the effect of early childhood education programmes in preparing children for school. Progress in making national early education programmes genuinely inclusive will be decisive both for Roma children, and for larger social inclusion goals, at both national and European levels. Inclusive early childhood education services are essential for improving readiness for school, and to give young Roma children an equal starting point as they enter primary school, as well as reducing the likelihood that their rights will be abrogated through inappropriate enrolment in 'special schools' or 'special classrooms', designed to support children with mental or cognitive challenges.

In a report adopted by the European Social Affairs Parliamentary Committee, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have asked for better inclusion of Roma in the labour market.³ The MEPs explicitly recognised that this better inclusion has to be achieved, ultimately, via better education for Roma youngsters. The report confirms that since the Eastern enlargement of the EU, the situation of Roma in new Member States has not improved. Even if the proportion of Roma children in schools has slightly increased in recent years, they are still discriminated against in their efforts to access education. Also, if Roma children are to benefit from primary education opportunities, the youngest children must first be made ready for school and schools made ready to receive Roma children.

1.2.1. Making the case for early childhood development for all children, including Roma

17

Why should Roma families and children receive special attention and support? Many cogent arguments have been put forward to justify the attention to Roma children and families in Europe.

² European Parliament, 2009.

³ EP press service, 2009.

1.2.1.1. *An ethical/human rights argument*

The current situation of many Roma children undermines Europe's authority and reputation on human rights issues and its legal commitment to uphold fundamental rights, recently reaffirmed in the Lisbon Treaty. Although varying degrees of inequality are accepted by electorates in European countries, the level of poverty experienced by many Roma is extreme, all the more so because the situation has arisen from centuries of neglect and discrimination against the group by mainstream societies. In particular, the condition of young Roma children contravenes agreed human rights texts, such as the United Nations Conventions on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the EU Directive 2000/43 on Equal treatment on grounds of racial and ethnic origin, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

1.2.1.2. *A macro-economic argument*

As noted above, some 10–12 million Roma live in Europe. The European Union cannot afford to ignore the potential of this population. It must begin now to improve basic health conditions, to educate Roma children and to provide hope to families by providing jobs and housing. If the situation is not tackled urgently – and concrete outcomes achieved – an intolerable burden will be placed on welfare, health and education services and on the next generation of Europeans. See Annex 1: The World Bank Argument for Investing in Roma Children.

1.2.1.3. *A return on investment argument*

Because of the interaction between environment and human development, the negative impact of poverty is more intense in early childhood and has a far greater impact on outcomes than poverty experienced in later life.⁴ Persistent poverty during the prenatal and postnatal period is particularly negative in relation to children's cognitive development; poor foetal growth and low birth weight are likely results, linked in turn to the development of later childhood cognitive and behavioural difficulties as well as vulnerability to disease (obesity, heart disease, diabetes, mental health problems) in adult life. In addition, as adverse economic conditions and parenting practices are linked, children living in conditions of extreme poverty may not find successful role models, or acquire in the early childhood period the fundamental skills and motivations that underlie all learning. Skills such as adequate concept and language acquisition, self-regulation, and confidence to interact or express themselves may be missing. In comparison, remedial education interventions targeting young school drop-outs or adults with poor basic skills are far more costly and of limited benefit.⁵ Thus intervention at an early age among marginalized populations is a public policy initiative that not only promotes fairness and social justice but can have a far greater impact than interventions later in life (e.g. reduced pupil-teacher ratios, public job training or tuition subsidies). By then, these deprivations have already manifested themselves in terms of diminished capacity to contribute to the community and society.⁶ See Annex 2 for a brief summary of the economic benefits of early childhood services.

1.2.1.4. *A human capital argument*

An important goal of education systems is to provide young people with the technical skills and knowledge base needed by evolving economies and societies. Early Childhood Programs set the child on the journey toward knowledge and skills, but above all, they instil important 'soft' skills that are critical for creativity and for working in teams. In high quality programmes, positive dispositions toward society and learning are absorbed and basic life skills acquired, such as autonomy, cooperation with others,

4 WHO, 2007.

5 Alakeson, 2005.

6 Heckman, 2006.

problem-solving and persistence. In turn, these skills are reinforced by good schools, or as expressed by Carneiro and Heckman (2003)⁷ *skills beget skills*, that is, learning in one life stage begets learning in the next. In sum, to ensure a well-educated workforce, governments need to invest in high quality Early Childhood Programs and in learning opportunities throughout life.

1.2.1.5. A preparation for school argument

Early Childhood Programs have been researched extensively for their effect on preparing children for school and on later school outcomes. It has been repeatedly and convincingly proven that investments in early childhood education and improving school attendance and completion are the most promising interventions to break the inter-generational transmission of social exclusion. Moreover, effects are strongest for poor children and for children whose parents have little education.⁸ Thus, appropriate ECD services are essential for improving readiness for school and to giving young Roma children an equal starting point as they enter primary school, and, at the same time, reducing the likelihood that the children will enter special schools or classrooms.

The Europe 2020 Strategy contains an explicit target for the reduction of early school leaving, down to only 10 per cent. With the current figure for school leaving during secondary education standing at 80 per cent for Roma, there is clearly a long way to go to meet this target. As long as young adults fail to gain the competences and work attitudes that employers need, this has direct consequences for the national workforce and its ability to compete. Appropriate access to early childhood development programmes is necessary if Roma children are to enter school with any chance of success and completion.

1.3. Structure of the RECI Reports

Each Report is organized into five chapters which are as follows:

Chapter 1. The country context and the situation of Roma populations

This chapter contains an introduction to the country: the demographic situation with a special focus on Roma demography and location patterns; the history, culture and present situation of Roma within the country; the general socio-economic status of the Roma population compared with the mainstream; contemporary mainstream perceptions of Roma and their child-rearing patterns; and, the legal protection of minorities in the country.

Chapter 2. Overview of health, social and education services, and impact on Roma groups

This chapter provides an overview of health services for families with young children in the Country, including: special initiatives to improve the health and well-being of socially disadvantaged families; access to and use of these services by Roma families; the main corpus of laws protecting children with special needs; the official directives for the provision of screening and treatment; an overview of social welfare and housing policy in the country, including a note on the use of these services by Roma families; an overview of education services in the Country, including preschool organisation; major European and international agency initiatives for Roma education in the Country since 2000; and, local government responsibility for health, social affairs, and education.

7 Carneiro and Heckman 2003.

8 Brooks-Gunn, 2003a.

Chapter 3. The early childhood system and the place of Roma children and parents within it

This chapter outlines the early development services of public kindergartens for young children aged 0–3 years, and other educational services for children aged 3–6 years. It explains the systems of management at local level and describes specific policies or strategies for the early development and education of Roma children aged 0 to 6 years. It analyses the causes of low Roma enrolment and answers questions regarding desegregation as well as the availability of incentives for participation in educational programmes. It also examines qualifications for kindergarten teachers and assistants, training and representativeness while also describing the curriculum, teaching methods and parental involvement in early development and education.

Chapter 4. Key challenges in the process of inclusion of the Roma population in early childhood development processes

This chapter is based on data and evidence presented in the previous chapters and identifies cultural, economic and social challenges faced by Roma parents with young children; challenges to the health and well-being of very young children (aged 0 to 3 years); the broader education challenge, with a focus on the early education challenge; and, the data collection challenge.

Chapter 5. Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter, which was written following a national consultation in each country, addresses issues that were raised in Chapter 4. The purpose of writing this chapter after the consultation was to enable experts and stakeholders who have experience of the organisation of services in a country, and of the cultural and other barriers, to be able to provide a much more realistic analysis of what is needed to improve significantly the access by Roma children to basic services and participation in education.

1.4. Research Methodology

The Reports are grounded in normative values (e.g. the basic rights of children and minority groups as outlined in the United Nations Conventions and EU Directive 2000/73 of 29 June 2007), agreed early childhood research positions on the strategies to be adopted (e.g. the need to provide strong leadership and funding to achieve inclusive education; the need to involve all the major stakeholders, especially the target group etc.); and, evidence-based investigation (based on extensive and reliable quantitative data). In parallel, they include qualitative analyses of the issues in the different countries and they place a strong emphasis on the progress achieved and those innovative programmes that can be generalised to benefit all countries.

In addition to detailed desk reviews, the Report authors were encouraged to make field observations, that is, targeted field visits to places where particularly successful approaches were identified, and to support their observations with interviews and elements of project evaluation.

Each Report was validated in the following way:

- During the writing of the report, through interviews with selected decision makers, education professionals, etc.; through consultations with stakeholder groups; and, through visits to successful initiatives that support the development of young Roma children and their inclusion in standard early education and primary schools.

- After the completion of the first four chapters, through a consultation at national level with principal stakeholders, including government counterparts at national and sub-national levels, managers and programme staff from partner project implementers, Roma and non-Roma NGOs, international organizations, education specialists, etc.
- Through validation by expert peer reviewers, the management committee and senior consultant for its conformity to the agreed national format sent to the authors before the country research was undertaken.

Section 2: Early Childhood Services for Excluded and Minority Children: Lessons from International Research

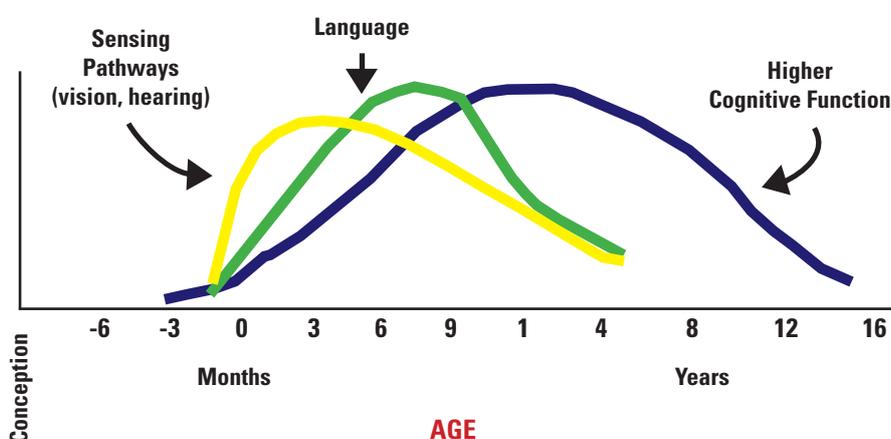
2.1. The Particular Importance of the Years Before Preschool

Neurological research over the past decade confirms that critical brain and biological development occurs in the first years of a child's life. The period from 0 to 3 years (including pregnancy) is an optimal – indeed a critical moment to support infant health, and sensory, social and language development. In the following chart, Professor Charles A. Nelson of the University of Minnesota, outlines the wiring (synapse formation) and sculpting of the brain in the early months and years, with respect to sensing pathways, language and cognition. The timing of these developments is important: problems in the development of sensing pathways influence later language development, which in turn influences cognitive development. The research underlines the need for countries to invest as much as possible in prenatal and postnatal health services, making them available in particular to families from disadvantaged backgrounds. The diagram in Figure 2 summarizes the brain development in the early months and years. The left-hand side of the diagram deals with the months of the prenatal and postnatal period and the right-hand side with the childhood years up to the age of 16.

Figure 2. Brain development in the early months and years

0-6 years – the years of golden opportunity

Early childhood is an optimal moment to support sensory, cognitive, social and language development



Source: C. Nelson in *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*, Shonkoff and Phillips, 2000.

In spite of this growing corpus of research showing the importance of the earliest months and years for health, language and cognitive development, investment in these years lags far behind investment in other educational cycles. Although 85 per cent of a child's core brain structure is formed by the age of three, in the United States of America (US), less than 4 per cent of public investment in developmental programmes for young children has occurred by that time.⁹ The investment situation in most European countries is not very different, although perhaps not quite as extreme because access to immunisation, prenatal and postnatal services and, early childhood services are generally better in European countries, but the evidence would suggest that this is not the case for Roma groups.

In the CEE countries, child care services, in particular, suffer from lack of funding, particularly in two-tier systems divided into 'childcare' for the younger children followed by 'pre-primary education' for 3-, 4- or 5- year-olds. This is the case in several of the countries being examined. The result is often a fragmentation of services and a lack of coherence for children and families as care and early education institutions differ greatly in their funding requirements, operational procedures, regulatory frameworks, staff-training and qualifications.¹⁰ As a result, childcare services tend to be less developed in terms of coverage, and in some countries, the childcare field is a patchwork of private providers and individual family day carers. Affordability to parents is often an issue, and in consequence, low- and middle-income groups can be excluded from access to centre-based services, unless government financed, targeted services are available.¹¹ Frequently, staff – almost exclusively female – have low educational qualifications and wages, and may not be given employment contracts or insurance. In the area of private provision, a current trend is for smaller services to be bought up by larger commercial companies, some of which lobby for greater deregulation of the field.

Various analyses, including the OECD reviews, show the advantages that can flow from bringing policymaking under one agency:

- greater consistency and higher quality across the sectors (in terms of regulation, funding and staffing regimes, curriculum and assessment, costs and opening hours), in contrast to high fragmentation of policy and services;
- enhanced continuity of children's early childhood experiences as variations in access and quality are lessened under one ministry, and links at the level of services – across age groups and settings – are more easily created;
- improved public management of services, leading to better quality and greater access by parents.

In order to enhance the integration of early childhood services for children from birth to 6 years of age, the OECD's Starting Strong reviews recommended to governments, the establishment of a coordinated policy framework for all young children, at both centralised and decentralised levels, and the nomination of a lead ministry for young children, which would be responsible for overall policy, while working in cooperation with other departments and sectors. This recommendation is not just a matter of which department takes charge. It aims to stress the developmental value of all programmes, to strengthen accountability and to impose the responsibility on the selected ministry of comprehensive policymaking; funding; regulation; personnel profiling; training; certification and professional development.

9 Child and Family Policy Centre, 2004.

10 OECD, (2001), Starting Strong.

11 When means testing is the practice for admission to targeted services, mid-low income groups are often excluded.

2.2. Early Education for 'At-Risk' Children

At a presentation to the United States Congress in 2003 Jeanne Brooks-Gunn¹² confirmed that mainstream research on early childhood indicates that:

- high quality centre-based programmes enhance the school-related achievement and behaviour of young children;
- these effects are strongest for poor children and for children whose parents have little education;
- positive benefits continue into late elementary school and high school years, although effects are smaller than they were at the beginning of elementary school;
- programmes that are continued into primary school, and that offer intensive early intervention, have the most sustained long-term effects.

The research position as summarised here is further confirmed by the practice of the OECD countries, where over 80 per cent of children are enrolled in preschool programmes. However, as Brooks-Gunn points out in another paper,¹³ the effects of early education programmes are mediated significantly by three factors: the developmental state of the child entering early education programmes; the on-going effects of family (and community) processes on child competencies and learning; and, the quality and comprehensiveness of the actual early childhood intervention programme. These conditions draw attention to the need to support more actively the family environment of the child, from pregnancy to 3 years of age, and as outlined in the conceptual framework, to identify the features of early education programmes that have proven to be effective for children and families from excluded groups.

2.3. Early Childhood Services for Socially Excluded Children – Theoretical Frameworks

2.3.1. The normative framework

The responsibility of governments to look after the welfare and education of children is laid out comprehensively in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education; the United Nations Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; and, in the EU directive 2000/73. In summary, some of the salient points emerging from these founding documents are the following:

Equal treatment on grounds of racial and ethnic origin: The United Nations CRC provides the normative, human rights foundation for inclusion in all the participating countries, each of which has ratified the Convention. The Committee on the Rights of the Child further spells out in General Comment No.7, how countries should interpret the Convention with regard to young children.¹⁴ It urges countries that have ratified the Convention to become actively involved with families and young children. If chance or market laws are allowed to govern early childhood and family policy, then societal divisions and exclusion will emerge, grow and become entrenched.

12 Professor of Child Development at the Teachers College and at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University.

13 Brooks-Gunn, 2003b.

14 United Nations, Geneva, CRC, 2006.

The economic rights of children, that is the child's right (and hence the family's right) to an adequate standard of living. The research evidence shows that in most OECD countries, children from low-income groups tend to access health services and early childhood services less than children from more affluent backgrounds, and to succeed less well in school.¹⁵ Due attention needs to be given to the link between poverty and poor educational outcomes. Countries that fail to reduce child poverty will have reduced access to early childhood services and have education systems marked by early school leaving and/or the chronic failure of children from excluded or minority groups.

The social rights of children, that is, the child's right to the highest available standards of health care, social security and education. In its Report Card 7 and 8,¹⁶ UNICEF measured the health care available to infants and toddlers in rich countries across three indicators: IMR or infant mortality rate (the number of children dying before becoming one-year-old); the percentage of children from 12 months to two years immunised against measles, diphtheria and polio; and the percentage of infants born with low birth weight (less than 2,500g.). The performance of the CEE countries is generally poor on the combination of these measures, which further suggests that prenatal and postnatal services may be weak. Rates for Roma populations in these countries are difficult to estimate, but it may be assumed that access by Roma mothers to maternity services is relatively low and that the nutritional and primary health status of Roma infants and toddlers is far from ideal.

The cultural rights of children, that is, the right of children and their families to be respected for their particular language, culture or religion. Socio-cultural researchers argue¹⁷ that the presence of large immigrant and ethnic minority families in a country requires the dominant national culture and its early childhood institutions to reconsider their approaches and to change their mono-cultural practices. Dialogue with the minority population's parents of young children is necessary as well as the negotiated use of minority languages, cultural practices and symbols. Educationalists need to be aware of this opportunity and to respond sensitively to diversity.

2.3.2. The policy analysis framework

Analyses of country policy and approaches to programming¹⁸ suggest that effective Early Childhood Programs for at-risk children include features that are additional to the mainstream programming. At the same time, programmes for excluded children should not be set apart. If targeted programmes are to avoid stigma, poor outcomes and weak majority support, they gain in efficacy if they are part of national universal programming.¹⁹ Such programmes are most effective when additional attention and funding to excluded children is provided *within* standard schools and kindergartens, and when national policy as a whole is marked by high levels of access, quality and equity.

Though not exhaustive, the following list is derived from the analysis of a broad range of policies aiming to succeed in including socially deprived children within mainstream early childhood services. The policies are listed along two broad axes: ensuring the readiness of services for Roma children and ensuring the developmental readiness of Roma children for services and schools.

15 OECD, *Starting Strong*, 2001; PISA, 2004.

16 UNICEF, Innocenti Centre, 2006 and 2008.

17 see, for example, Tobin 2006 and Vandenbroeck, 2006 and 2007.

18 OECD, 2001 and 2006.

19 OECD, 2006.

2.3.2.1. Ensuring the readiness of services for Roma children

Framework and governance issues

- a. *Government acknowledgement, through national law and active programming, that excluded children have a special right to early childhood services*, in particular in racialised and prejudiced contexts. General Comment No. 7 calls on States parties “to ensure that all young children (and those with primary responsibility for their well-being) are guaranteed access to appropriate and effective services...Particular attention should be paid to the most vulnerable groups of young children, and to those at risk of discrimination.”²⁰ Inclusive education is more likely to ensure that all children develop as people who are fit for life in contemporary societies, which are generally diverse and multifaceted. There is an economic justification too as it is less costly to establish and maintain schools that educate all children together. Inclusive education makes children with a disability or with additional learning needs less dependent and therefore less in need of care.
- b. *If necessary, active and on-going education of the majority population*. The practice of democratic principles – such as respect for diversity within national societies, the principle of equity, and the principle of participation – are necessary aspirations for all European countries within the Union. Respect for diversity implies majority assent to the coexistence of different cultures within the state and to funding proactive policies for disadvantaged minorities – including in national education systems. The principle of equity promotes equal opportunities for all children, while advocating for an inclusive and intercultural paradigm of education. The participation principle encourages a shift towards involvement, dialogue, cooperation and shared responsibility.
- c. *To give due attention to the links between central government policy, funding and local authority practice*. Although national frameworks and policies may have high inclusive aspirations, experience shows that these may never be implemented because governments devolve responsibility to local authorities who may not be able to allocate adequate funding, resources or personnel to the task. This is not to suggest a withdrawal from local government, but rather the strengthening of it. The issue is critically important for Roma inclusion: the local level is often the level at which prejudice is strongest.
- d. *To move away from ‘deficiency’ programming*. New thinking about diversity refuses to diagnose young children in terms of what they lack, or on the grounds of race, religion, second language, etc. All individuals have multiple identities and qualities that cannot be captured by broad labels. Successful programmes do not categorise particular groups as being ‘problematic’ or children as being less than normal, but believe that these children will learn and develop quickly if given a supportive, learning environment.
- e. *To differentiate between Roma groups*. There are significant differences in the status of Roma in different countries; within Roma groups and families, between the generations; in the extent and forms of discrimination practised; between typical government responses and above all, on the attitudes of the majorities in the participating countries toward ethnic and cultural diversity. It is important to consider the particular situation and challenges faced by Roma groups in the different countries to ensure appropriate policy responses.

Service issues

- a. *A first task is to ensure that a national network of services is available across the country, particularly in excluded neighbourhoods where families need them most*. The OECD Starting Strong reviews²¹ showed clearly that although excellent services may be present in a country, such services (including infant and primary health) were much less available in the poorer rural and municipal neighbourhoods than in middle-class and affluent areas. Reports on the CEE countries suggest a similar weakness in service mapping.²²

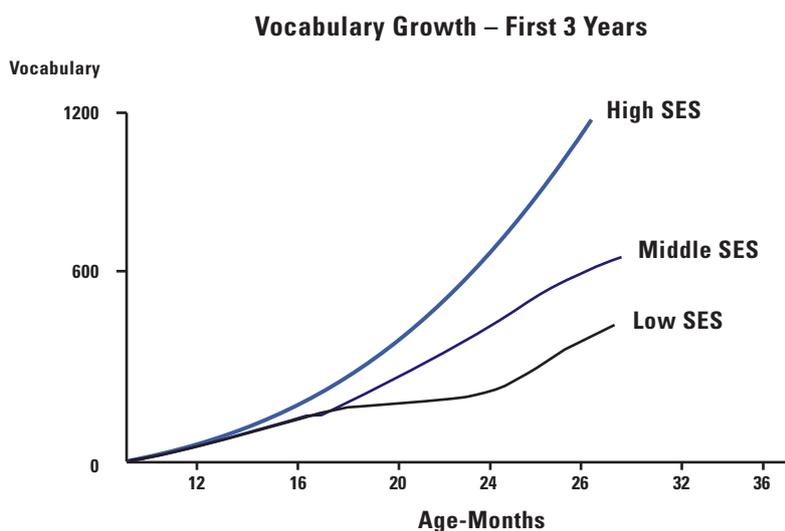
20 CRC/C7GC/7/Rev.

21 OECD, 2006.

22 REI, 2006.

- b. *To organise and fund comprehensive services whenever they are needed.* Comprehensive services go beyond curriculum and activities for children and pay attention to out-of-school issues, such as the social, community and home environments. Typically, a comprehensive services centre works in cooperation with other community services and pays particular attention to parents and out-of-school care. This approach is particularly useful in early childhood services and schools situated in poor neighbourhoods, and the success of children's education and care can often depend on the capacity of educators to practice family and community outreach.
- c. *To avoid distortion in staffing, curriculum and teaching methods for excluded children – and indeed for all children of preschool age (3–6 years).* That is, services should aim for holistic goals and avoid focussing resources on pre-literacy and pre-maths areas only. Holistic goals include primary health and development assessments; good eating habits and physical fitness; citizenship education (living together), cooperative action and social solidarity; play; science; art; music and movement; and, personal character development and creativity. Respect for minority cultures should also be reflected in curricula; this requires the training and employment of more teachers and assistants from minority backgrounds.
- d. *In parallel, a special focus on language acquisition is needed, even in circumstances where a second language is not in use.* Recent research on literacy development indicates that attention to language development in infancy and beyond contributes significantly to long-term literacy and reading skills in third and fourth grades. A study of the development of the vocabulary of children aged between 12 to 36 months²³ estimated that children from advantaged homes had productive vocabularies of 766 words at 30 months, while the figure was 357 for children from low-income homes (see Figure 3). More significant for schooling was their finding that between 30 to 36 months, the productive vocabularies of each group of children would grow by about 50 per cent, giving children with larger vocabularies roughly 350 new words, and children with smaller vocabularies an increase of only 168 words. As James Heckman remarks in a similar context: "skill begets skill".

Figure 3. Vocabulary Growth in the early years



Source: B. Hart and T. Risley (1995) Meaningful Differences in Everyday Experiences of Young American Children.

23 Hart and Risely, 1995.

Additional challenges exist for children who do not belong to the majority language group. A child judged to be non-communicative (perhaps language poor) by adults in a confident majority culture may, in an excluded minority culture, be considered an ideal child who can be relied on to observe quietly and keep his/her own counsel.²⁴ In addition, where second-language children are concerned, there are practical organisational questions to decide, e.g. what is the best age for minority children to begin learning the majority language; how to safeguard the minority language and culture within mainstream provision;²⁵ how to recruit and train staff for language acquisition purposes; and so on.

- e. *To formulate particular standards for the learning environment of excluded and/or second language children and families.* Successful early childhood systems are generally governed by clear regulations and standards.²⁶ Early childhood services for excluded children and families may need additional emphases, such as the following:
- *To place primary importance on building and maintaining trusting relationships with minority children and parents.* Many early childhood institutions, established and staffed by the majority culture, have still not come to terms with societal diversity and the basic rights of minorities. In early childhood services in particular (as child-rearing is intimately linked to culture), minority parents and children need to be reassured in word and practice, that they are fully entitled to keep their culture, language and cultural practices and that these will be respected within services by majority educators and children.
 - *To focus strongly on the process features of programmes,* that is, on the quality of the social and instructional interactions that children experience in early childhood settings. Children learn best when responsive teachers encourage their autonomy; organise interesting experiences and projects; encourage questions and understanding, extend meanings and offer feedback to children on their learning.
 - *Within mainstream universal services, to create flexible groupings, individual support and learning plans for children with special learning needs.* Inclusive education for children with special needs has to be appropriate and flexible. Individual learning plans agreed with the child and parents are not only useful for measuring outcomes but also for encouraging child and family responsibility for learning.
 - *To develop agreed outcomes for all young children approaching school age across different developmental domains.* While avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach to child development, a focus on equitable outcomes and key competencies is necessary if accountability is to be ensured.
 - *To practise continuous and intensive outreach from early childhood services to families.* As the first educators of their children, parents provide the environment in which primary human traits can develop: emotional stability, self-regulation, sociability and the motivation to learn. Early childhood services can provide a unique support and information resource for parents to successfully take on this role.
 - *To provide extra funding to ensure that the highest quality possible is offered to excluded children, with low child: staff ratios and experienced, well-trained teachers.* If the disadvantages of home and neighbourhood for child health, language, socio-emotional development and learning are to be overcome,

24 Research on First Nations children in Canada shows, for example, that in some tribes, an ideal child is one who has the ability to be quiet and to learn by observing a whole sequence of behaviours with minimal verbal mediation (Balls, 2002).

25 Several factors enter into 'appropriateness' in deciding where tuition in a second language is required: the actual proportion of parents demanding minority language tuition: the means of a country, ministry or municipality to finance such a scheme; the degree of devolution of educational responsibility to local regions or districts; the availability and training of appropriate staff etc. In all cases, it should be possible, however, to show respect for minority languages and culture, if not through teaching these languages, at least through celebrations and respectful attitudes toward children when they speak in their mother tongue.

26 See, for example, the International Step by Step Association (ISSA) pedagogical standards, 2008.

kindergarten programmes for excluded children need to be of the highest quality. In other words, equal funding is not enough (See Box 1).

2.3.2.2. Ensuring the developmental readiness of Roma children for services

- a. *The reduction of child and family poverty among the Roma population is a necessary precondition.* If young children are to have a fair start in life, governments will need to employ upstream policies to reduce poverty; employment discrimination; labour; health; and housing disadvantage among their parents. Improved labour force participation in paying jobs is a necessary condition for Roma inclusion – an objective that needs careful consideration and specific policies in deteriorating economies. In parallel, the establishment of high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) programmes will also likely contribute to the education and employment of Roma, particularly of women.
- b. *The mobilisation and involvement of Roma families and NGO groups to set-up and conduct pre-kindergarten programming.* It is important that Roma parents and NGOs conduct child-rearing and parenting programmes, with state support and help, if requested, from majority or Roma professionals. Research shows clearly that the influence of family on children is much greater than any outside service. Discrimination and having to rely on programmes established by majority groups who see the Roma as inferior pose a constant threat to Roma social organisation, identity and self-esteem.
- c. *To focus attention on preventive services for families and children below the age for kindergarten entry:* From the figures available, it may be assumed that the access of Roma mothers to maternity services is relatively low and that the nutritional and primary health status of Roma infants and toddlers is far from ideal. Research from the Scottish Government Health Analytical Services Division²⁷ suggests that the following programmes are critical for the health and development of young children from disadvantaged backgrounds: prenatal and postnatal health care for mothers; safety; good nutrition and cessation of smoking and alcohol intake during pregnancy; home visiting programmes by health nurses; parenting education and support; and from 3 to 8 years, early childhood education and care. For the children of 0 to 3 years, regular health visits by nurses were considered to be most effective.
- d. *To encourage Roma families and communities to establish their own pre-kindergarten educational programmes, with clear goals and assessment procedures.* The disadvantage of excluded children is greatly reinforced if they come from second-language backgrounds. To prevent that occurrence, Roma communities need to establish – with funding from the state – pre-kindergarten programmes for parents and young children focussed on play, language acquisition and parent literacy. Such play groups or parent-child groups could take place a few times per week, and could include older children during the holiday periods.

27 Hallam, 2008.

Box 1. Rules Governing the Arkansas Better Chance Programme (ABC)

In addition to defining child and provider eligibility for the programme, the rules governing the ABC programme address five key areas:

Child:staff ratios and group sizes. Child:staff ratios in the classroom shall not exceed: 4:1 for infants up to 18 months; 7:1 for toddlers 18 months to 3 years; and 10:1 for children 3 to 5 years. Maximum group sizes for these age groups are respectively: 8, 14 and 20 children.

Staff profiles, staffing patterns and professional development. Staff are divided into three categories, each being required to have minimal certification: *Lead teachers* with a Bachelor's or Master's degree in early childhood education (or other relevant degree with an emphasis on child development); *Classroom teachers* with an Associate Arts degree (2 years tertiary) in early childhood education; and *para-professional aides* with a child development associate credential. ABC staff should also reflect the ethnic diversity of the children participating in the ABC programme. Lead teachers are responsible for curriculum, programme planning and supervision of aides, and should have 30 hours annually of professional development; aides have a right to 20 hours. Each classroom should be staffed by one teacher and one aide. Centres with four classrooms must employ two lead teachers, two classroom teachers and four para-professional aides.

Programme standards and curriculum. Programmes shall be developmentally appropriate and individualised to meet the needs of each child. Centres follow the guidelines from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Arkansas ECE Framework. In addition to enriched environments (equipment and materials for children; interest areas and learning corners; appropriately planned outdoor areas), programmes will have thematic units and goals related to: cultural diversity; socio-emotional learning; creative-aesthetic learning; cognitive development; physical development and language. Teachers shall implement and maintain individual child portfolios, including samples of children's work, teacher and parent observations. The daily schedule should reflect a balance between indoor/outdoor; quiet/active; individual/small-group /large-group; gross motor/fine motor; and child initiated/teacher initiated. A meal and snacks are provided free to children in need, and mealtimes and other routines are used as opportunities for incidental learning. Attention should be given to easing transition for children from one programme or age grouping to another, with particular attention to the transition to public school kindergarten.

Child assessment, developmental and health screening. All children in ABC programmes shall receive comprehensive health and developmental screens to determine their individual needs. Health screening will cover: growth and nutrition; developmental assessment; neurological and cardiac status; vision; hearing; teeth; immunization status; blood and urine lab-tests. The developmental screen will cover the following areas: vocabulary, visual-motor integration, language and speech development, fine and gross motor skills, social skills and developmental milestones. A comprehensive longitudinal study shall also be implemented to evaluate the ABC programme over time and to ensure that it meets its goals.

Parent/community involvement. Each programme shall have a parent handbook and a plan for parental involvement that will include opportunities for parental inputs into programme operation and design. The plan will include parental reviews of programmatic plans, parent conferences and a method to involve the parent in the child's educational experience. There will also be an "open door" policy for parents, to encourage visiting and participation in classroom activities.

CHAPTER 1

The Country Context and the Situation of the Roma Population in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Demographic Data

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia covers an area of 25,713 km², thus belonging to the group of relatively small countries in Europe. Situated in the middle of the Balkan Peninsula, the country's neighbours include Serbia and Kosovo to the north, Bulgaria to the east, Albania to the west and Greece to the south.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a parliamentary democracy and a country in transition both economically and politically, striving to form closer ties with the European Union. In 1991 major economic and political reforms were initiated, including the introduction of a multi-party system, the establishment of plural and democratic governance structures, which foster professionalism in public administration, and a shift towards a market economy.

According to the latest national census held in 2002, the total population of the country amounted to 2,022,547 inhabitants, with 59.5 per cent living in urban areas. The capital city is Skopje with around 550,000 inhabitants.

The census also showed that since 1991, the year of independence, the population has grown by 5.4 per cent. Moreover, the population density has increased from 64 inhabitants per km in 1971 to 79 per km in 2002. The 2002 census showed an ethnic composition of 64.18 per cent ethnic Macedonians, 25.17 per cent Albanians, 3.85 per cent Turks, 2.66 per cent Roma, 1.78 per cent Serbs and 0.4 per cent Vlachs. Approximately 65 per cent of the population is Orthodox Christian and one third of the country's inhabitants are Muslim.

By the Macedonian Constitution, as amended in 2001, any language spoken by at least 20 per cent of the population is an official language throughout the country. This means that the country's official languages are Macedonian (written using the Cyrillic alphabet and the primary language of approximately two thirds of the population) and Albanian (written using the Roman alphabet and the primary language of approximately one quarter of the population). Other languages spoken by Macedonian inhabitants include (but are not limited to) Turkish, Romani, Serbian and Vlach. At the local level, languages spoken by at least 20 per cent of the population of a municipality may also be used in an official capacity.

Table 1: Demographic and socio-economic indicators in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and EU averages, 1991, 1995, 2000, 2004

	1991	1995	2000	2004	EU average	EU-15 average	EU-10 average
Life expectancy at birth, in years	72.1	72.2	73.4	73.5 (2003)	78.5	79.1	74.4
Life expectancy at birth, in years, male	69.9	70.0	71.2	71.1 (2003)	75.3	76.1	70.2
Life expectancy at birth, in years, female	74.5	74.5	75.7	76.1 (2003)	81.5	82	78.5
Infant deaths per 1,000 live births	28.2	22.7	11.8	11.3 (2003)	4.7	4.5	6.6
Abortions per 1,000 live births	665.1	491.5	389.2	315.5 (2001)	225.7 (2003)	227.6 (2003)	206.4
Live births per 1,000 population	18.2	16.3	14.5	13.3 (2003)	10.3	10.5	9.3
Crude death rate per 1,000 population	7.7	8.3	8.5	8.9 (2003)	9.8	9.8	10.5

Source: European Health for All database, January 2006.

Note: EU: European Union; EU-15: Member States before 1 May 2004; EU-10: Member States joining the EU on 1 May 2004.

Demographic Data About Roma

Roma constitute 2.66 per cent of the overall Macedonian population according to the 2002 census, or 53,879 people, which makes Roma the fourth largest group in the country (after Macedonians, Albanians and Turks).²⁸ Whereas informed estimates from Romani NGOs suggest that Roma constitute closer to 6 per cent of the total population; at least one expert estimate gives a maximum of 260,000.²⁹ Discrepancies between official and unofficial figures derive from a combination of civil registration issues and the tendency of different Roma communities in the country to identify as something else, most commonly due to prejudices and stereotypes. A new census is planned for 2011.

According to the 2002 census, Roma live in 64 out of 85 municipalities across the country. The majority of the Roma population in the country (about 45 per cent) lives in 10 municipalities: Bitola, Debar, Gostivar, Kičevo, Kočani, Kumanovo, Prilep, Štip, Tetovo and Vinica. Regarding the regional distribution of the population, it is important to note that 43.06 per cent of Roma live in the capital city and almost half of them in the Municipality of Šuto Orizari. Only 12 per cent of the Roma population lives in other municipalities in the country.³⁰ Very often, Roma live together in settlements or so-called mahalas separated from the rest of the population, sometimes by choice and sometimes as their only alternative.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Roma are not a homogenous group but rather a mixture of many sub-ethnic groups, including *Arli*, *Barutčia*, *Džambazi*,

28 Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office, 2002.

29 At Risk: Roma and the Displaced in Southeast Europe, UNDP, 2006.

30 Republic of Macedonia-State Statistical Office, Statistical Yearbook and Census data, 2002.

Gilanlia, Konopari, Kovači and Topaanila. Macedonian Roma communities are sedentary. The only travelling groups are beggars and seasonal workers. A number of Macedonian Roma are Muslim, although some of them practice other religions as well.³¹

Macedonian Roma communities are relatively coherent compared with Roma communities in the neighboring countries. It is most likely that Roma communities in the central part of the country would know about the Roma communities in the eastern part of the country and vice versa, which often is not the case for Romani communities in other countries in the region.

Although non-Roma Macedonians often refer to Roma as 'Cigani' (i.e., 'Gypsies'), the term 'Romi' (i.e., 'Roma') is also in common use. The term 'Cigani' is almost universally considered to be unacceptable and derogatory by Roma themselves.

The History, Culture and Present Situation of Roma

When the Roma left India they did not write chronicles about dates and reasons for their journeys. At the end of the eighteenth century, linguistic comparisons of Romani with Indo-European languages proved the Indian origin of the Roma. There is no precise data available as to the exact time of arrival of the Roma in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Different sources speculate Roma presence in the country, and the Balkans, since the fourteenth century.³² Some data suggests that Roma were already present in the Balkans even prior to the Ottoman conquest.³³

Roma in the Ottoman Empire

While Roma were enslaved in Moldavia and Wallachia, there is no evidence of such hostility against the Roma elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire. The Romani language, customs and professions were not prohibited, and the Roma had almost the same rights as others.³⁴ However, evidence from the sixteenth century suggests that Roma represented a concern for the Ottomans mostly with respect to taxation. Issued in 1530, the first law concerning the Roma in Rumelia province established a differentiated tax system for Christian and Muslim Roma and provided for the return and punishment of Roma who left the district in which they were registered.³⁵ In essence, this law was an attempt to ban nomadism among Roma in order to better serve the fiscal priorities of the Empire. Interestingly, the tax register of 1532 lists professions performed by Roma, including doctors, policemen, lawyers, monks and musicians.³⁶ The formation of Romani ghettos or malahas in the Balkans is in line with broader Ottoman principles of settlement for minority communities.³⁷

Roma in the Early Twentieth Century

Evidence concerning the status of Roma in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia from the late nineteenth century up to the Second World War is extremely sparse.

31 <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=34303>.

32 Donald Kenrick (1993:44).

33 Olga Zirojevic (1981:227), Grattan Puxon (1974:81).

34 Zirojevic (1981:244) and Mujic (1952–1953:146).

35 Marushiakova and Popov (2001:32–35) Mujic (1952–1953:146).

36 Marushiakova and Popov, 2001, pp. 41–44.

37 Petrovich, 1982, 62; Marushiakova and Popov, 2001, 38.

Nonetheless, travellers' accounts from this period suggest stable and generally peaceful relations between Roma and non-Roma³⁸ during the Second World War.

During the course of the *Porrajmos* ('devouring'), as Roma call the Holocaust, approximately half a million Roma were killed in concentration camps. The largest losses were among Roma in Hungary, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.³⁹

Most of what is now the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was occupied by Bulgaria from 1941 to 1944. Legal measures taken by Bulgarian authorities in 1942 and in 1943 addressed Roma specifically by segregating them from non-Roma, restricting their freedom of movement and prohibiting Muslim religious practices, Romani names and the use of the Romani language.⁴⁰ In March 1943, the Bulgarian Government Commissioner for the Jewish question signed an agreement with Nazi Germany's special delegate and set a quota for 20,000 Jews to be deported from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Thrace and Bulgaria. Later that month, 12,000 Jews were deported from Bulgaria. Although written sources documenting the deportation of Roma are lacking, eyewitness accounts indicate that Roma were also among the deported.⁴¹

Although there are no statistics on the number of Macedonian Roma affected by deportations, it appears that most of them survived the war.⁴² Possible explanations for the high survival rate include the tendency of Roma to declare other ethnicities and the long tradition of relatively peaceful coexistence between Roma and the majority population.⁴³

Roma in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Yugoslavia is widely recognized as the country of Central and Eastern Europe where the position of Roma was most favorable, with Roma given more freedom and allowed to establish their own cultural and social organizations.⁴⁴ Roma were well served by the state scheme for distribution of land, which resulted in many Roma becoming farmers, especially in Serbia.⁴⁵ Despite Yugoslavia's advantages for Roma when compared with other countries in the region, a 1978 government report noted that the integration of Roma was lagging behind expectations of Yugoslav society, mostly in terms of educational achievements and living standards.⁴⁶

Within Yugoslavia, the Socialist Republic of Macedonia enjoyed a reputation as the most hospitable place for Roma.⁴⁷ After the 1963 earthquake, which destroyed much of Skopje, including the city's medieval Romani quarter, the settlement of Šuto Orizari was re-built with local, national and international support. Šuto Orizari quickly grew into the largest Romani community in Europe and operated its own local self-government structures. The Socialist Republic of Macedonia also saw the establishment in Skopje of the Romani theatre 'Phralipe', which gained international awards for its plays. A standardized Romani grammar book was published in the country in 1980.

38 See, for example, Edith Durham's 1909 *High Albania* (London: Phoenix Press, 1984), Gustav Weigand's 1924 *Ethnographie von Makedonien* (Sofia, Partizdat, 1981) and Rebecca West's 1941 *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (New York: Penguin, 1994).

39 Fraser, 1995; Lewy 2000.

40 Marushiakova and Popov, 1999, 90–91.

41 Marushiakova and Popov, 1999, 92; Petrovski, 1993, 27–281.

42 Crowe, 1996, 221.

43 Kolsti, 1991, 56; Poulton, 1995, 112; Marushiakova and Popov 1999, 92.

44 Zoltan Barany, *Politics and the Roma in state-socialist Eastern Europe*, 2000.

45 Poulton, 1993, p. 43.

46 Crowe, 1995, p. 227.

47 Barany, 1995.

The Romani Language

The Romani language is a member of the Indo-Aryan group of the Indo-European language family. Its closest living relatives other than certain Indic diaspora dialects include Hindi, Punjabi and Rajasthani. The ancestor of the Romani language separated from other Middle-Indic dialects sometime during the Middle Ages. The exact date and circumstances is the subject of much speculation.

From the core of the Romani vocabulary, it is clear that speakers of the dialects that became modern Romani were in close contact with speakers of languages such as Persian, Kurdish, Armenian and Byzantine Greek. Linguists also agree that the ancestor of the modern Romani language was in contact with the Greek of the medieval and early modern periods. At some time prior to or coinciding with the Ottoman settlement in the Balkans, groups of Romani speakers migrated all over Europe, with one group even migrating to Persia.

According to most linguists, the modern Romani language has four major dialect groups: Northern, Central, Vlax, and Balkan. Each of these groups has a major subdivision. In the case of the Northern group, the division is East-West and in the case of the other groups it is North-South.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as in most of the rest of the Balkans, speakers of the North Balkan, South Balkan and South Vlax dialects predominate. The chief South Balkan dialect in the country is Arli, which has its own sub-divisions the significance of which is more ethnographic than practical. Among the names by which the chief North Balkan dialect is called are *Kovači*, *Bugurdži* and *Kalajdži*. The South Vlax dialect is called *Džambas* in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and *Gurbet* in neighboring Kosovo.

Linguistic evidence suggests that speakers of the Balkan Romani dialects have a relatively long tradition of sedentarism. South Vlax dialects arrived in or returned to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia after some longer period of time further to the North.

Scholarly works in and about the Romani language as well as popular works and textbooks have been published in the country since 1980. In addition to state-supported programming in broadcast media, there have also been private Romani-language radio and television stations, and a newspaper. Romani is taught in 4 elementary schools in Skopje as well as at schools in other municipalities. At the university level, an optional four-semester study programme for Romanies at the Faculty of Philology of the Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje was first made available in 2010–2011 but no applications were received. Also, long-standing plans to establish an institute for Romani studies and a Romani language study group in pre-service teacher training remain unrealized.

Data from the 2002 census indicate that approximately 80 per cent of Macedonian Roma speak the Romani language as their first language. In the eastern part of the country, Roma often speak Turkish and in the west, Albanian and/or Turkish but not Romani, especially among younger generations. In the western part of the country, in particular, many Roma speak Macedonian as their first language.

The Romani Culture

Roma have for many centuries been a target of discrimination, persecution, stereotyping, forced assimilation, and violence.⁴⁸ The primary Roma strategy of survival has historically been invisibility. Roma have been able to maintain an impressive degree of cultural integrity by exclusion of the *Gadže* (non-Roma) from their private lives, their laws, their personal practices, and their values; effectively excluding non-Roma from knowledge about Romani language and social institutions. Illiteracy is often assumed to prevent Roma from entering middle-class or professional occupations, but it also prevents the cultural and intellectual values of the non-Roma from infiltrating and undermining traditional Roma society.⁴⁹

Different literature in Romani studies suggest that Roma choose to integrate with *Gadže* to a certain extent mostly for economic reasons. They offer their skills to generate income and to establish good relationships with the majority population in the host country, but do not share information about their community life.

Some of the most respected Romani researchers and scholars agree that many Roma are uneasy about education because this means that their children are thereby in contact with non-Roma children for many hours.⁵⁰ While some of these strategies are alive and used by Roma in different parts of the world today, one cannot speak with certainty about aspects of Romani culture preserved in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in relation to the non-Roma. Similarly, while there has been much discussion about the relationship between Romani culture and the health conditions of the Romani population, to date there has been no research in the country on whether specific habits or rituals expose Roma to increased health risks.⁵¹

For Macedonian Romani communities, it is very common that 3–4 generations live together in the same house. Although this is perceived as a primitive way of life, or a reflection of extreme poverty, by others in the country, Roma themselves tend to emphasize living conditions and unregulated tenure of their homes as a bigger problem than the way in which the space is divided and organized among the family members.⁵²

Gender Relations in Roma Communities

Birth of a child

In Roma communities, the success of a newly founded marriage largely depends on the birth of children. If a marriage does not produce children in the first couple of years, it could lead to the couple separating. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that today, this is less common for young Roma couples.⁵³

Marriages: harmful traditions

Child marriage occurs with some frequency in the Romani community and less frequently in the ethnic Albanian community. It is difficult to estimate the extent of underage marriage in Romani communities because Roma frequently do not register such

48 Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1993.

49 *Gypsy Law, Romani legal traditions and culture*, Walter O. Weyrauch, 2001.

50 Ian Hancock, Review, *supra* note 35 at 73,79–80, 2007.

51 Report on the condition of housing and health in Roma community in Macedonia, CRPRC Studiorum, 2008.

52 Report on the condition of housing and health in Roma community in Macedonia, CRPRC Studiorum, 2008.

53 Krune Mladenovski, *Roma in Macedonia*, 2007.

marriages.⁵⁴ Early parenthood in general deepens poverty and undermines development of both parents and children. There are neither institutional mechanisms to follow these marriages nor policies to reduce their number in the country.

Female virginity

As is also the case in other countries of the region, Macedonian Romani communities place a high value on the virginity of girls and women at the time of marriage. The virginity of a potential bride is usually a topic of discussion between the families on both sides before the marriage takes place, with various sanctions including returning the bride to her parents following the marriage if the girl or woman does not prove to be a virgin. In such cases, the girl or woman is labeled for life as a non-virgin (*phivli*), with her freedom of movement and scope for making decisions severely limited by the community.⁵⁵

Traditions related to female virginity pose barriers to women's education, career and general human development, which in turn exert a negative effect on early childhood development. Because many Roma view an unmarried virgin daughter as a risk for the family, pubescent girls may be taken out of school. Usually less educated than their husbands, these women consequently have fewer opportunities for family planning in terms of number and spacing of children and are poorly positioned to support their children's education and to create an environment in which children will fully realize their potential.

Mirroring expectations that female Roma be obedient and submissive first as girls and later as wives and mothers, Romani men are expected to prove their masculinity and exert their roles as husbands by limiting women's freedom of movement, controlling their bodies, refusing to use contraceptives, and in other ways too.⁵⁶ Whereas some of these harmful traditional practices are perceived as Romani culture by both Roma and non-Roma, among Romani women human rights activists, there is a growing consensus that these practices are not 'Roma practices' but exist in every patriarchal society and community. Although these practices are present within Romani communities, Roma do not have the sole responsibility for overcoming them. These are national laws which prevail over the use of culture as an excuse for practices which are harmful to men as well as to women.⁵⁷

The Present Situation of Macedonian Roma Communities

Although the country is broadly perceived as a success story when it comes to the Roma, the current situation for Roma, when compared with the mainstream population, reveals inequalities in almost all areas of socio-economic, public and political life. These inequalities are summarized in Table 2.

54 United States Department of State, 2008 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Macedonia*, 25 February 2009, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49a8f174b9.html>.

55 On virginity, Research publication, Macedonia 2001, Young Roma Women Leaders.

56 Shadow report on the situation of sexual rights of Romani women, children and youth beggars in Macedonia, submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the Fifth Round of the Universal Periodic Review, May 2009, Enisa Eminovska and Sexual Rights Initiative.

57 Joint Statement of European Roma women activists, EUMC round table with Romani Women May 3, 2006 Bucharest, Romania.

Table 2: Roma in comparison to Albanians and Macedonians in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Per cent	Roma	Albanian	Macedonian
Literacy rate (15–24)	60.0	99.0	99.0
Unemployment rate	73.0	27.0	31.0
Gini coefficient	0.46	0.38	0.37
Households living below the poverty line	63.0	29.0	27.0
Child birth registration	92.0	—	96.0
Incomplete child immunization	34.0	33.0	12.0
Antenatal care for women	78.5	99.0	98.0
Information about HIV/AIDS among women	30.0	28.0	66.0
Tolerance to domestic violence	47.0	36.0	13.0

Source: MICS 2005–2006.

As shown in the table, observations between 2006 and 2009 show the gaps between Roma and non-Roma: only 60 per cent of Roma women aged 15–24 are literate, compared with 99 per cent of those in the Macedonian and Albanian populations.⁵⁸ Roma also have the highest rate of unemployment: 73 per cent as compared with 31 per cent amongst Macedonians and 27 per cent amongst Albanians.⁵⁹ Income inequalities amongst Roma are similarly extreme, with the Gini coefficient for equalised income at 0.46 for Roma, 0.37 among Macedonians and 0.38 amongst Albanians.⁶⁰

Additionally, 27 per cent of Macedonian households and 29 per cent of Albanian households live on less than 60 per cent of the median monthly income of approximately 94 euros; the corresponding figure for Romani households is 63 per cent.⁶¹ Despite the measures undertaken by the Government to reduce poverty, Roma account for as much as 14 per cent of all beneficiaries, with around 90 per cent of the Roma registered with the unemployment bureau lacking more than primary education.⁶²

Roma women are less likely to receive antenatal care from professional health care workers, with only 78.5 per cent of Roma women receiving professional antenatal care during their last pregnancy, compared with 98 per cent of Macedonian women and 99 per cent of Albanian women.⁶³ Closely related to this, the level of information about HIV/AIDS among Roma women is low, with the 30 per cent of Roma women who indicated knowledge of two ways to prevent HIV transmission much lower than the 66 per cent share of Macedonian women and only slightly higher than the 28 per cent of Albanian women indicating the same level of knowledge.⁶⁴ A further problem of awareness is the high level of acceptance of violence against women: 47 per cent of Roma women believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife or partner in various

58 UNICEF, MICS, 2006.

59 UNDP, People-Centred-Analysis (PCA), 2009.

60 UNDP, People-Centred-Analysis (PCA), 2009.

61 UNDP, People-Centred-Analysis (PCA), 2009.

62 Ministry of labour and Social Policy, Revised Decade Action Plans, 2009.

63 UNICEF, MICS, 2006.

64 UNICEF, MICS, 2006.

circumstances, with 13 per cent of Macedonian and 36 per cent of Albanian women expressing similar views.⁶⁵

Where children are concerned, Roma are slightly less likely than Macedonians (92 per cent versus 96 per cent) to register their children at birth.⁶⁶ They are also less likely to immunize their children: 34 per cent of Roma children did not receive all of the eight recommended vaccines compared with 12 per cent of Macedonian children and 33 per cent of Albanian children. Moreover, Roma children are more likely to end up on the street begging, with Roma accounting for 90 per cent of all street children in the country.

Citizenship, documentation and civil registration

In 2000, The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) expressed concerns that, in spite of relevant legislation and an increasing number of hospital births, there are still Macedonian children who are not registered at birth and that a large proportion of unregistered births are of Roma children.⁶⁷ A 2003 survey by the European Roma Rights Center found that 153 out of the 2,224 Romani respondents over the age of 18 did not have citizenship certificates, 749 did not possess passports, 148 did not possess ID cards, and 120 did not have birth certificates.⁶⁸ To help address these problems, amendments to the citizenship law adopted in 2004 allowed long-term residents to regularize their citizenship status, with a public information campaign following the amendments.⁶⁹ The next year, however, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reported that there was still a considerable number of Roma who had lived in the country since before Macedonian independence but who had not yet managed to secure Macedonian citizenship. Such non-citizens, often qualified as “long-term habitual residents”, are frequently individuals born in other parts of the former Yugoslavia who lived in the Socialist Republic of Macedonia for several years or longer and who, after the break-up of the country, found themselves without proper documents or clear means to acquire them.⁷⁰ Various estimates exist, and while the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has estimated that this group of Roma include some 1,000 people, based on an informal survey and census data, the actual number may be higher.

In the period December 2008 to January 2009, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution, commissioned research in 24 municipalities with sizeable Roma communities. The research discovered 840 children who at the time of the research did not possess birth certificates. The research distinguished between children not registered at birth and those who do not hold a proper official document and found that 338 children were not registered at birth, with the parents of 284 of the unregistered children holding Macedonian citizenship whilst those of 54 of the children lacked such citizenship.

The most frequent reasons cited by parents for not registering their children at birth were parents’ lack of personal documents (106 cases), lack of finances (92 cases) and unregistered marriage of parents (35 cases). Although current legislation stipulates that unregulated marital status shall not be a reason to prevent parents from registering

65 UNICEF, MICS, 2006.

66 UNICEF, MICS, 2006.

67 Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2000.

68 European Roma Rights Center, 2006, www.errc.org.

69 Refugees International, *Nationality Rights for All: A Progress Report and Global Survey on Statelessness*, 11 March 2009, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49be193f2.html>.

70 OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, Final Report, June 2005, pp. 17 and 26.

their children at birth, the research findings suggest that additional research is needed to understand the link between the two.⁷¹ A possible partial explanation of the problem is the complexity of legislation related to civil registration in general and that of children in particular, which poses a challenge not only for Roma parents but also for many civil servants. With this in mind, the UNICEF research report suggests harmonization of laws along with temporary removal of sanctions, assisted facilitation, open registration days and a public information campaign to encourage parents to register their children.

Representation and communications

In comparison with neighbouring countries, Macedonian Roma are fairly well represented in government. At the central level, prominent positions held by Roma since the parliamentary elections of 2008 include one Member of Parliament, a Minister without portfolio tasked with implementation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the Strategy for Roma in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and a Deputy Minister of Justice. At the local level, eight municipal councils include one Roma each, with Roma accounting for 9 of the 16 members of the Municipal Council in Šuto Orizari. Additionally, several municipalities employ Romani civil servants, usually for the purpose of addressing the situation of Roma or minorities in general. There are two private television stations in the country (BTR and Šutel, both based in Skopje), as well as to three community radio stations (in Gostivar, Prilep and Štip). Finally, there is a growing number of Romani internet-based media, most of which are at an early stage of development.⁷²

Contemporary Mainstream Perceptions of Roma and Their Child-Rearing Patterns

Focus group discussions facilitated by the World Bank with non-Roma in the country revealed that the majority population attributes Roma's low participation in education to the Roma life style and common practice in the Roma communities.⁷³ According to most of the participants in the focus groups, Roma are kind, peaceful, hospitable, happy, musically talented and communicative. Despite also expressing views of Roma as uncivilized, without proper upbringing, dirty, irresponsible and inclined towards small-scale theft, most of the participants showed sympathy toward the Roma. While not opposed to the integration of Roma into society at large, most attributed the failure of integration to "the Roma's practice of living within their own separate communities, even when they have the opportunity to live within Macedonian settlements, and to cease their nomadic way of life in favour of that of a more modern society."

Whereas the views expressed by participants in the World Bank focus groups find broad support in the statement by the Director of the orphanage in Bitola, interviewed in the framework of the current study, that "Roma communities have a very positive attitude towards children, but sometimes their socio-economic conditions do not provide them with opportunities to act as fully responsible parents for their children."⁷⁴ The 2009 research report: *How Inclusive is the Macedonian Society?*⁷⁵ found that the percentage of the general population who feel uncomfortable in the company of Roma is still very high. Whereas 18.5 per cent of the 1,197 respondents indicated feeling uncomfortable

71 UNICEF, Child Census for children who are not registered at birth of do not have personal documents, 2009.

72 Roma Education Fund country assessment for Macedonia, 2010.

73 Decade of the Roma, Non-Roma focus groups, Focus groups discussions, Macedonia 2005 available at: www.worldbank.org.mk.

74 Interview with Director of Orphanage for children 0–3 years old, Bitola, May 2009.

75 *How Inclusive is the Macedonian Society*, Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia, 2009 available at: www.soros.org.mk.

in the company of Roma, another 16.7 per cent were not sure how they would feel in the company of Roma on the grounds that they had never been in such company. On the question of whether they would accept Roma as their neighbours, 53 per cent of interviewees answered that they would find it acceptable; 27 per cent provided negative answers, while 20 per cent were unsure.⁷⁶

In the absence of requirements that teachers undergo pre-service or in-service training in coping with stereotypes, many members of teaching staff are not exposed to such material. Thus, teachers participating in training organized through the Roma Education Fund programme, supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in cooperation with participating municipalities, on stereotypes and prejudices: *Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools*, expressed views such as the following:

“As a Macedonian, I am afraid that we will become a minority in terms of our rights.”

“Some of the trainers were very disapproving towards us [non-Roma] and protective towards the Roma. I understand that this is a Roma decade, but you should first educate Roma how to integrate in the society.”⁷⁷

On the other hand, the Roma Education Fund’s evaluation of the same programme also found that both kindergarten teachers and Roma parents acknowledged the progress made as a result of the programme. As one teacher stated:

“At the beginning we really had a hard time with children’s regularity in attendance. Parents had all possible excuses not to bring their children every day. However, after a few meetings with the Roma assistant who is very devoted to the project, they began to behave differently.”

Roma Perceptions of Mainstream Society and Its Institutions, Including Early Childhood Education

Focus groups with Roma, facilitated by the World Bank in 2005, found that Roma see as the major threat, the integration of non-Roma’s views into those of Roma. Whereas the majority of Romani participants rejected the idea of segregation of Roma communities, others expressed the view that living separately might have a positive impact on the self-awareness of the Roma community.⁷⁸ Mirroring the views expressed by non-Roma about Roma in other focus groups, the Romani participants expressed views of Macedonians as tolerant people while pointing to persistent stereotyping and poor treatment of Roma by employees in public institutions.⁷⁹ In relation to Roma’s perceptions of early childhood education, the 2008 evaluation study of the programme *Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools* found that approximately three quarters of Romani parents acknowledged and appreciated their children’s improvement in terms of Macedonian language competence, behavior with adults, use of polite words and use of time at home. As one parent stated:

76 How Inclusive is the Macedonian Society, Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia, 2009 available at: www.soros.org.mk.

77 Evaluation study of the programme “Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools”, the Roma Education Fund, Skopje, 2008.

78 Decade of the Roma, Roma focus groups, Focus groups discussions, Macedonia, 2005 available at: www.worldbank.org.mk.

79 Decade of the Roma, Roma focus groups, Focus groups discussions, Macedonia, 2005 available at: www.worldbank.org.mk.

“There is a huge difference between our children [who attend the preschool] and the rest of the Roma children in the neighbourhood. Our children are more polite, they know how to behave with adults, they speak Macedonian, whereas the other don’t. Even my daughter teaches songs and manners to her brother, who does not go to a kindergarten, even though he is a bit older.”⁸⁰

The Legal Protection of Minorities

The Macedonian Constitution

The preamble of the Macedonian Constitution explicitly recognizes Roma as an ethnic community on the same level as the Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, Serbian, and Bosniak communities.⁸¹ While this particular formulation reflects changes to the Constitution made following the August 2001 signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement,⁸² the explicit recognition of Roma was a feature also of the previous version of the Preamble.⁸³ However, other measures adopted for the protection of minorities in the country, introduce more substantive changes on the basis of the Agreement. This agreement effectively sets a broad agenda for increasing the participation of ethnic Albanians in governance at local and national levels, while devoting some attention also to the country’s other ethnic communities. Among such measures are the Law on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Members of Communities that are Less than 20 per cent of the Macedonian Population and, the Law on the Use of a Language Spoken by at Least 20 per cent of Macedonian Citizens and in the Units of Local Government. Both laws were adopted in 2008 and include education in the areas within which minority rights apply.⁸⁴ Additionally, the 2010 Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination provides for prevention and protection against discrimination in the enjoyment of rights guaranteed by the Macedonian Constitution. It proscribes any direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex; race; colour of skin; gender; membership in a marginalized group; ethnicity; language; citizenship; social origin; religious conviction; other beliefs; education; political affiliation; personal or social status; mental or bodily disability; age; family or marital status; income status; state of health, or any other grounds proscribed by law or international treaty.⁸⁵

80 Evaluation study of the programme “Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools”, the Roma Education Fund, Skopje, 2008.

81 Ustav na Republika Makedonija [Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia], *Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija* 52/1991; Amandmani IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII i XVIII na Ustavot na Republika Makedonija [Amendments IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII and XVIII to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia], *Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija* 91/2001.

82 The Ohrid Framework Agreement was the peace deal signed by the government of the Republic of Macedonia and ethnic Albanian representatives on August 13, 2001. The agreement ended the armed conflict between the National Liberation Army and the Macedonian security forces and set the groundwork for improving the rights of ethnic Albanians.

83 See Framework Agreement, web page [accessed 23 February 2011], 2001, available at http://faq.macedonia.org/politics/framework_agreement.prf; Ustav na Republika Makedonija [Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia], *Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija* 52/1991.

84 Zakon za unapreduvanje i zaštita na pravata na pripadnicite na zaednicite koi se pomalku od 20 per cent od naselenieto vo Republika Makedonija [Law on Advancement and Protection of the Rights of the Members of the Communities Which Are Less than 20 per cent of the Population in the Republic of Macedonia], *Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija* 92/2008; Zakon za upotreba na jazik što go zboruvaat najmalku 20 per cent od gragjanite vo Republika Makedonija i vo edinicite na lokalnata samouprava [Law on the Use of a Language Spoken by at Least 20 per cent of the Citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and in the Units of Local Government], *Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija* 101/2008.

85 Zakon za sprečuvanje i zaštita od diskriminacija [Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination], *Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija* 50/2010.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 1996 and ratified it in 1997. Since then, the country has made positive steps regarding the protection of national minorities, but Roma remain of high concern in the latest reports issued by the State as well as in the comments of the Council of Europe.

European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia signed the Convention in 1995 and ratified it in 1997. Of special importance is the additional protocol on the rights of national minorities to the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Current Economic and Labour Market Situation

According to the data of the State Statistical Office, in 2009 the national unemployment rate was 31.7 per cent. Disaggregated by gender and age group, the unemployment in the country for 2009 was as shown in the Table 3.

Table 3: Unemployment rate by age groups and gender structure 2009

Age group	Men (per cent)	Women (per cent)
15–24	53	59
25–34	34	37
35–44	28	27
45–54	25	26
55–64	28	23
65 +	10	17

Source: Labour source survey; State Statistical Office, Republic of Macedonia.

The unemployment of Roma observed in January 2011 accounts for 15,457 people out of which 6,577 are women.⁸⁶ Official data from 2011 indicate that Roma account for 4.8 per cent of all unemployed people.⁸⁷ In December 2010, the official number of unemployed Roma was 15,725.⁸⁸ Data from June 2008, when the corresponding figure was 17,740 people, indicated that 33 per cent of unemployed Roma had not completed primary education, 7 per cent had completed some form of secondary education and 0.1 per cent had completed higher education.⁸⁹

In 2007, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy subsidized the employment of around 50 Roma with the government’s contribution to the Decade Trust Fund. Despite evidence indicating that Romani women have fewer opportunities to access employment than do Romani men, Romani women were not prioritized through this

86 Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia. Data available at: <http://avrm.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/nacionalnost012011.pdf>.

87 Situation Analysis and the Attrition of Romani Girls and Boys in the Educational Process in the Republic of Macedonia.

88 Agency for employment of Republic of Macedonia.

89 Ministry of Labour and Social policy, Action Plan for employment under the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

initiative.⁹⁰ More recently, the 2009 National Operational Plan of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has included a programme to support the employment of Roma. However, taking into account that unemployment among Roma is consistently higher than among other Macedonian ethnic communities, the 78,048 euros allocated for this programme in 2009 could not realistically be expected to affect significant change.⁹¹ At the time of writing this report, there is no information as to the implementation and outcomes of the envisaged programmes.

Current Cultural and Diversity Policy

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2007. To date, however, there has been little action toward implementation. At the same time, while the current Macedonian cultural policy does not have any specific objectives towards minorities, minority groups have the constitutional right to freely express, nurture and develop their own cultural, religious, and linguistic identity and national features. The Ministry of Culture takes this into account in assessing project proposals submitted in open competition, as well as in the creation of the yearly cultural programmes.

Roma in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia operate private broadcast media in the Romani language, with a Romani newspaper published sporadically for several years in the early 2000s. Additionally, state television broadcasts programmes in the Romani language totaling 120 minutes per week.⁹² On the other hand, there is little promotion of Romani culture in mainstream society, with little state support provided for publications in the Romani language. The sparseness of libraries, theaters and cinemas, as characteristic of the country as a whole, is also particularly evident in Romani communities.

How the Macedonian Roma View Education

According to a 2004 UNICEF survey on the educational values of Macedonian Roma, Roma equate success almost exclusively with having an employment that provides regular income.⁹³ In this equation, education is valued primarily as a means to better employment prospects, with more than half of the parents participating in the survey indicating that they consider secondary education sufficient for their children, one third that primary education is sufficient and a small proportion expressing the view that their children should earn a university degree. A 2005 evaluation report on the Roma Education Programme of the Foundation Open Society Institute of Macedonia (FOSIM), reaches a stronger conclusion, making note of “the high motivation of parents to help their children and to devote time and finances, thus indicating an increase in the awareness of the significance of education.”⁹⁴ Among children participating in the UNICEF survey, a difference was observed between those attending school and those not attending school. While the former consider education as a precondition to become what they wish to become and articulate connections between education, employment and self-knowledge, the latter view education only in terms of concrete skills with immediate practical application (e.g., not being deceived in a shop, writing letters, dialing a telephone).

90 Decade Watch, 2007, Update available at: www.romadecade.org.

91 Operational Plan for active programmes and measures for employment, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2009.

92 Programme of the Macedonian National Television, www.mrt.com.mk.

93 Attitudes towards education among Roma communities, UNICEF, 2004.

94 Foundation Open Society Institute Macedonia, Roma Education Programme, Evaluation Report 2005–2006.

Civil Society and NGO Activation in Favour of Roma

Civil society has played an important role in bringing about the various reforms to the education system introduced in recent years. There are many non-governmental organizations promoting education of Roma, and education receives emphasis in varying degrees from organizations which are not necessarily specialized in education but work with Roma communities. While Romani civil society has played a central role as an implementing partner in educational programmes for Roma, it has only rarely been involved in assessing and measuring the impact of relevant measures on Roma communities and proposing alternatives to policy makers. Moreover, most of the work done with the goal of changing attitudes in relation to education, has focused on Roma while neglecting the majority population. As Roma parents need to value education more, non-Roma parents need to value diversity more and to appreciate the opportunity for their children to learn about it at an early age.

CHAPTER 2

Assessment of Health, Social and Educational Institutions and Their Impact on the Roma Ethnic Community

Overview of the Health Institutions and Health Services for Families with Preschool Age Children

Mother and child health care

Health services in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are provided through a network of health institutions organized into three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary health services.⁹⁵ The primary health services for women in relation to motherhood and small children are part of the basic package of health services which are financed through the Health Insurance Fund. The reduction of the health risks in socially vulnerable families in the area of women's and children's health is also addressed through two vertical programmes for health protection, which are financed by the State Budget. The two vertical programmes are:

- *Programme for health protection of particular groups of people and specific diseases in individuals that do not have health insurance (2009).*⁹⁶ Among the groups covered by this programme are nursing mothers, infants and children under the age of 18 who are not included in the regular state system of health protection.
- *Programme for active health protection of mothers and children (2009).*⁹⁷ This "has the purpose of ensuring equal access to basic health services for all women in relation to safe motherhood, and for all children in relation to their healthy start in life and provision of conditions for optimum growth and development of the children, regardless of the social, economic, ethnic or religious background."

Prenatal health protection is provided through gynecological primary health care units and through a community nursing system.⁹⁸ In 2009, over 95 per cent of pregnant women were covered by prenatal services and out of them, 41.8 per cent were in the first trimester of pregnancy. In the same year 55.9 per cent of registered pregnant

95 National Human Development Report 2004, Republic of Macedonia, Decentralization for human development.

96 Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia No. 3/2009.

97 Official Gazette of Republic of Macedonia No. 3/2009.

98 As part of the community public health system, the community nursing system is in charge of providing home visits to all pregnant women, and nursing mothers.

women were also covered with home visits services provided by community nurses.⁹⁹ See Table 4.

Table 4. Community nurse home visits to pregnant women in 2005–2009

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of live births	22,482	22,585	22,688	22,945	23,684
Number of community nurse home visits to pregnant women	21,564	20,084	23,028	24,909	25,366
Average number of visits per pregnant woman	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.9
Percentage of women covered by community nurse home visits	53.3	51.1	58.6	53.9	55.9

Source: Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children.

The country has a long tradition of hospital deliveries, with the delivery rate with skilled attendance at delivery and hospital delivery at 99.6 per cent in 2007.¹⁰⁰ See Table 5.

Table 5. Prevalence of skilled attended at delivery and hospital delivery in the period 2001–2008

Year	2001	2005	2006	2007	2008	
					Urban	Rural
Per cent	97.6	99.1	99.0	99.6	99.9	99.3

Source: Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children.

Preventive health services for infants and small children are provided by preventive health teams that perform health screening and immunizations, as well as by community nurse outreach services which include home visits to families with small children. In 2006, primary health care for children aged 0–6 years was provided by an average of 1.6 doctors per 1,000 children in this age group. Preventive health services are free of charge for all children, regardless of whether the families have health insurance or not. In 2009, the health screening coverage rate for children aged 0–6 was 68 per cent, marking a significant increase from the 2007 rate of 50 per cent.¹⁰¹ Additionally, 82.4 per cent of all newborns were covered through out-reach services and home visits performed by community nursing public health system, with an average of 4.9 home visits per year per infant aged 0–12 months.

The National Immunization Programme provides access to vaccination services for all children, free of charge. Immunization against tuberculosis, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, measles, rubella and mumps as well as polio is compulsory, with compulsory vaccination against Hepatitis B introduced in 2005 and for Haemophylus Influenza B in 2008. According to statistics from the National Institute for Public Health, the vaccination coverage rate for compulsory immunization of children ages 0–6 is over 90 per cent. See Table 6.

99 Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children, 2010, Annual Report. Information on the Health Status of Mother and Children in the Republic of Macedonia in 2008/2009.

100 Source: Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children.

101 Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children, 2010, Annual Report, Information on the Health Status of Mother and Children in the Republic of Macedonia in 2008/2009.

Table 6. Immunization prevalence rate, according to the National Immunization Schedule for ages 0–6 in the period 2005–2009

Type of vaccine	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
	per cent				
Hepatitis B	90.8	93.2	95.7	99.4	94.5
DTPR vaccine	97.1	92.8	95.4	99.4	95.9
OPV vaccine	97.5	92.0	95.5	99.4	96.4
MRP vaccine	96.4	93.9	95.8	99.2	95.8

Source: National Institute for Public Health.

Infant and young children's health

Premature birth and low birth weight. Birth weight is the key indicator for intra-uterine development of the newborn child, as well as for the health and development of the child, immediately after the delivery. Babies born weighing less than 2,500 grams faced increased risk of impaired immune function, diabetes, and heart disease and they are more likely to grow-up malnourished and with cognitive disabilities.¹⁰² In 2009, the prevalence of low birth weight newborns (below 2,500 grams) in the country was 8 per cent.¹⁰³

At-risk newborns. The project: Improving Care and Treatment of Children with Developmental Disabilities, implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the German Development Agency (GTZ),¹⁰⁴ included a component for keeping track of at-risk newborns in maternity hospitals, using the National List of Risk Factors as a basis for risk identification.¹⁰⁵ Although there is no established national register of newborns at risk, the data gathered in the framework of the project show that there is a significant difference in the frequency of at-risk newborns in specific ethnic groups. During 2006 in the metropolitan area of Skopje, the rate for registered at-risk newborns among Roma was almost twice as high as the rate in the majority population (i.e., 12.9 per cent versus 6.7 per cent). See Table 7.

Table 7. Prevalence of registered at-risk newborns by ethnic background of the mother in the maternity hospitals in the Skopje City area in 2006¹⁰⁶

	Macedonians	Roma
Total number of live births registered in the maternity hospitals in Skopje	3,491	676
Total number of registered at-risk newborns	235	87
Prevalence (per cent) of at-risk newborns	6.7	12.9

Source: Database of the Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children – Center for Risk Newborn.

102 UNICEF (2004) Innocenti Insight, Children and Disability in Transition in CEE/CIS and the Baltic States (pp.11).

103 Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children 2010, Information on the health status of mother and children in the Republic of Macedonia in 2008/2009.

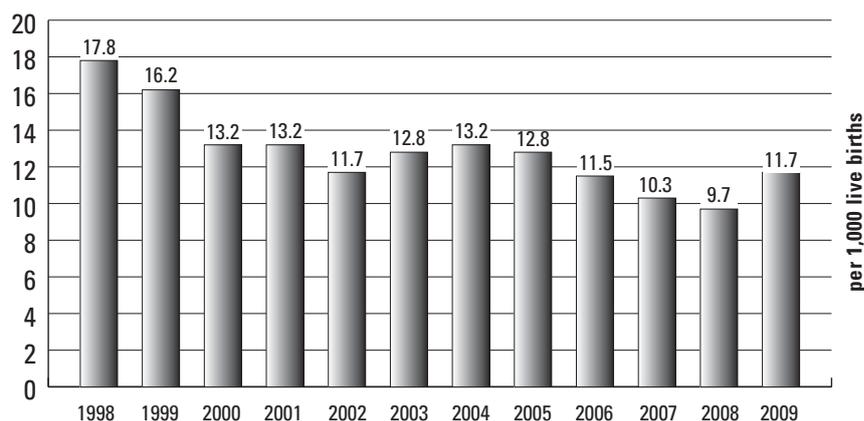
104 Ministry of Labour and Social Policy/GTZ, November 2002, Seminar on Early identification, registration and reporting of children born with risk and children with developmental disabilities.

105 Among the risk factors included in the National List are low gestational age, small birth weight, birth asphyxia, neonatal sepsis, neonatal hepatitis, congenital malformations, intracranial bleeding and delivery traumas.

106 Source: Database of the Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children – Center for Risk Newborn.

Infant mortality and under 5 mortality rate. The country has achieved substantial reductions in child and maternal mortality over the past two decades, but these achievements are unevenly distributed within the regions and among different socioeconomic groups. Infant deaths are mainly attributable to the persistence of early neonatal causes (0–6 days after delivery). Separating infant mortality reduction between 1998 and 2009 into neonatal and post-neonatal indicates that the largest declines in infant mortality over time were mainly attributable to substantial post-neonatal mortality reductions.¹⁰⁷ See Figure 4.

Figure 4. Infant mortality rate in the period 1998–2009



Source: Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children.

As shown in Table 8, the infant mortality rate among Roma is higher than within the majority population, although the rate declined between 2004 and 2009.

Table 8. Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) according to the ethnic background of the mother in 2004–2009¹⁰⁸

Year	Total	Macedonians	Roma
2004	13.2	9.8	19.4
2009	11.7	10.6	13.1

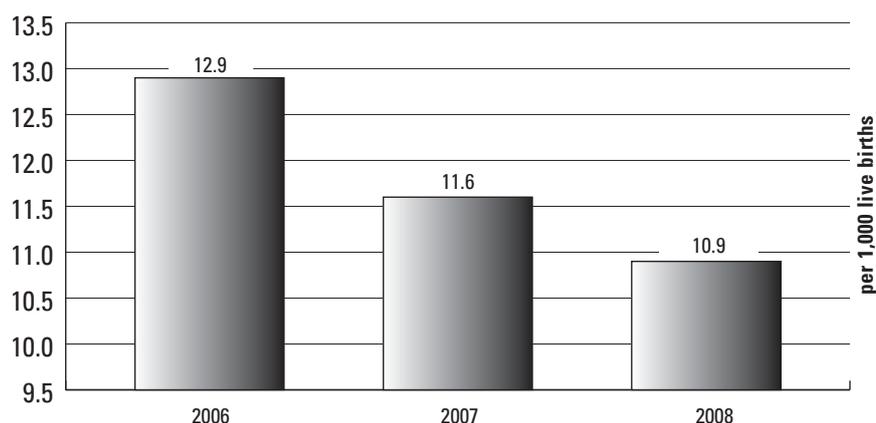
Source: Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children.

The under 5 mortality rate has also been decreasing, from 12.9 per 1,000 live births in 2006 to 10.9 in 2008, as shown in Figure 5.

107 Database of the Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children – Center for Risk Newborn.

108 Database of the Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children – Center for Risk Newborn.

Figure 5. Under 5 mortality rate



Source: Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children.

Nutrition status of children during the early childhood. The national data on the nutritional status of children ages 0–59 months shows that there is a lower prevalence at 2.3 per cent, of acute malnutrition (“wasting”), compared with the figure for “stunting,” at 8.7 per cent. The height for age indicator is more precise, since the growth of small children is affected by long-term inadequate nutrition or recurrent illness. In the country, 8.7 per cent of children below the age of 5 years show signs of stunting, with significantly higher prevalence in the Roma population than in the Macedonian population (i.e., 16.6 per cent versus 7.8 per cent). See Table 9.

Table 9. Nutrition status in children ages 0–59 months in 2005¹⁰⁹

	Weight for age		Height for age	Weight for height	
	Per cent below 2 SD	Per cent above 2 SD	Per cent below 2 SD	Per cent below 2 SD	Per cent above 2 SD
Total	2.3	8.3	8.7	2.3	10.6
Roma	5.8	17.1	16.6	1.5	6.9
Macedonians	1.5	11.6	7.8	2.3	13.4

Source: MICS, 2005–2006.

Access to Health Services for Roma Families with Small Children

There is no official statistic about the inclusion of Roma families in the health insurance system. This system enables entry into the public health system and provides economic security in access to health services. However, in a study conducted on a sample of 1.12 per cent of the total Roma population, 89.6 per cent of the respondents reported that they have health insurance and 88 per cent of them had chosen a primary health care doctor.¹¹⁰ In the same study, 21 per cent of the women reported not seeing a gynecologist during their last pregnancy, and 82.3 per cent said that they had delivered

109 State Statistical Office, 2007, Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey 2005–2006 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (MICS).

110 Pavlovski, 2008, Health, health protection and health impact on Roma population in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

in a hospital. A small percentage (0.6 per cent) of the respondents reported delivering in a private hospital where the costs for treatment are not covered by the Health Insurance Fund, but must be paid from private sources. See Table 10.

Table 10. Selected health indicators in the municipality of Šuto Orizari

Indicator	No.	Per cent
Total live births in 2007	439	100.0
Live births of Roma children only (in the above number)	329	74.9
Total health examinations performed in infants ages 3 months	350	84.7
Total health examinations performed in infants ages 6 months	369	84.0
Total health examinations performed in infants ages 9 months	364	82.9
Infant mortality rate in Šuto Orizari municipality	Per 1,000 live births	
2006	18.3	
2007	18.2	

Source: Database of the Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children.

The statistics from the Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) show differences in the health indicators in Roma children, compared with children from the majority population. There is a higher hospitalization rate due to pneumonia among Roma children, and they use outpatient services to a lesser degree, compared with the majority population of children. See Table 11.

Table 11. Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) indicators on the health of Roma children in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

MICS indicators	Macedonians	Roma
Per cent of children with moderate malnutrition	1.5	5.8
Per cent of newborns with low birth weight	5.4	6.9
Per cent of children that have health cards	89.8	75.5
Per cent of children hospitalized due to pneumonia	21.5	52.0
Per cent of children with pneumonia that visited outpatient clinic	21.5	12.1
Per cent of mothers delivered in health institution	99.2	82.1
Per cent of fully immunized children	88.3	74.7
Per cent of non-immunized children	0.9	3.4
Per cent of children with diarrhea that were not treated	13.3	22.7

Source: MICS, 2005–2006.

Box 2. Infant health and access to health services in the municipality of Šuto Orizari

The municipality of Šuto Orizari belongs to the Macedonian capital city, Skopje. According to data from the 2002 census, 60.6 per cent of the population in this municipality is Roma.¹¹¹ The municipality has a public health center that provides primary and preventive health care for children ages 0–18 years.

In the Department for Preventive Health Protection of Preschool Age Children, there is a medical team that performs preventive health screening and immunization of infants and small children in Šuto Orizari. The team also includes 2 community nurses who perform field visits to families. These medical interventions are free of charge for all children, regardless of whether their parents have health insurance or not.

Within the public health center there is also a Center for Sexual and Reproductive Health. This Center is part of a partnership, between the NGO 'HERA' and the public health sector, to provide additional reproductive health services in this municipality, including health care during pregnancy and motherhood. Whereas in 2007, 74.9 per cent of births in this municipality were to Roma women, in 2008 this Center performed free-of-charge prenatal services for 72 pregnant women, which is around 16 per cent of the total registered deliveries in the municipality.¹¹²

Data from individual health reports submitted by the Public Health Center in Šuto Orizari shows greater inclusion of infants in preventive health screenings relative to the national average (i.e., 68 per cent in 2009), at over 80 per cent for children aged 3, 6, and 9 months.¹¹³ Regarding diseases registered in children aged 0–6 years, 86.1 per cent of the doctor visits in 2006 were due to respiratory infections and 4.2 per cent due to skin diseases and infections. These data can be attributed to the existence and activity of a comprehensive health center in a municipality with a predominantly Roma population, which provides both prenatal and primary health care for infants and small children.

Children with special needs and the system of child protection

Official statistics about the prevalence of disabilities among children in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are not in line with the European Academy of Childhood Disabilities (EACD) benchmark of 2.5 per cent. EACD also considers that an additional 8 per cent of the child population has learning and/or behavioral disorders, such that the overall share of children with disabilities and special needs in any given population is around 10 per cent.¹¹⁴ Disability statistics in the country capture only the people categorized and accommodated in specific educational institutions or who are receiving cash benefits. For younger children who are outside the educational institutions there are no reliable data.

111 State Statistical Office, Total population, households and apartments according to the territorial organization of the Republic of Macedonia from 2004, Volume 13, Skopje, 2005.

112 Source: Report from the work of the Center for 2008. HERA.

113 Source: Individual reports from the work of the Department in 2008, processed by: Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children.

114 UNICEF, 2004, Innocenti Insight, Children and Disability in Transition in CEE/CIS and the Baltic States. The European Academy of Childhood Disabilities considers a disabled children rate of at least 2.5 per cent to be the 'norm' (with 1 per cent having serious conditions). These benchmark figures exclude chronic illnesses like diabetes – Martin Bax, Chairman of the European Academy for Childhood Disabilities. (pp xii)

According to the National Programme for the Development of Education (2005–2015)¹¹⁵ and the Law on Primary Education,¹¹⁶ the goals of primary education are to ensure access to all children regardless of their age, sex, religious or ethnic affiliation, health condition and financial circumstances, as well as to ensure additional help for all students with special needs. There is no special legislation for children with special educational needs, but there are certain educational plans and programmes for provision of services in special schools, and for special classes in standard schools.

The Child Protection Law,¹¹⁷ which focuses more on financial needs than on educational ones, defines children with disabilities as follows:

- Blind and partially sighted children.
- Deaf and partially hearing-impaired children.
- Children with speech disorders.
- Children with physical (bodily) impairment.
- Children with behavioral difficulties.

By the same Law, children diagnosed with mild disability can attend standard kindergartens. They are exposed to the same early learning programmes, with an extra-individualised approach. The care for children with severe disability is organized in additional groups and via the use of special programmes.

Out of the 22,213 children enrolled in public kindergartens in 2009, only 40 (0.8 per cent) were recorded as children with physical and intellectual disabilities. Out of those 40 children, 35 were Macedonian and 5 were Albanian.¹¹⁸ While the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has identified the inclusion of children with disabilities in kindergarten-based early childhood development programmes as a special priority, this initiative is still at an early phase. According to research,¹¹⁹ only 20 out of 51 kindergartens agreed to enroll a total of 77 children with moderate disability. Sixty of these children originated from families with low social and economic status. According to discussions with members of the kindergarten Parents' Councils, only 10 standard kindergartens have accepted children with severe intellectual and multiple disabilities in the last couple of years.¹²⁰ According to the latest Social Protection Law¹²¹ target groups of institutions providing residential care for children include the following:

- Infants and small children up to 3 years without parental care.
- Children aged 3–18 without parental care.
- Children aged 7–18 with social and educational problems.
- Children aged 10–18 with behaviour problems.¹²²
- Children and youth with moderate and severe mental disabilities.
- Children and youth with physical disabilities.

There is no legal regulation concerning the age of admittance for institutions providing residential care for children and youth with mental and physical disabilities.

115 Ministry of Education and Science, 2006, National Programme for Education Development 2005–2015.

116 Article 27 of the Law on Primary Education.

117 Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 65/2004, Article 16.

118 State Statistical Office, 2010, Social statistics, Review 2.4.10.02.646.

119 Marcella Deluca, 2007, Gathering statistics and indicators for students with disabilities, learning difficulties and disadvantages in the Republic of Macedonia, Feasibility study and draft operational plan.

120 Marcella Deluca, data received from NGO "Poraka".

121 Social Protection Law: Official Gazette of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia No. 79/2009.

122 Behavioral problems are understood in this context as trouble with the law.

According to the State Statistical Office, in 2008 a total of 3,856 minors (of which 570 or 14.8 per cent were below age 7) with mental disabilities received social allowances. An additional 2,848 minors with physical disabilities were recorded, with 694 (or 24.4 per cent) below the age of 7. Behavioral disorders were recorded in only 12 children below 7 years of age, representing only 0.3 per cent of the total of 3,700 recorded cases of such disorders among children of 0–18 years.¹²³ Here, it should be noted that the disability categorization in the statistics presented in this paragraph, does not match the categorization of children with disabilities by the Child Protection Law. Moreover, because the care of children with developmental disabilities and learning difficulties is functionally segmented among three different ministries (Education, Health, and Labour and Social Policy), with little coordination, the data on children with disabilities is incomplete.¹²⁴

According to MICS, 8.5 per cent of mothers surveyed reported that their child of up to 2 years of age had speech difficulties and were unable to name any object. There is a significant difference in the data disaggregated according to ethnic background. Whereas 5.5 per cent of Macedonian mothers reported that their child had such difficulties, the corresponding rate among Roma mothers was 15.8 per cent. The findings of the same study in relation to the prevalence of speech comprehension of children aged 2–9, as reported by parents, show that 10.3 per cent of Roma children and 1.5 per cent of Macedonian children do not understand oral instructions.¹²⁵

Beyond the problems reported by Roma parents in relation to their children's development, there is considerable anecdotal evidence that many Roma parents deliberately understate the skills and achievements of their children in order to ensure access to special schools. An interview with three members of a committee for categorization of children with special needs suggested that some Roma parents instruct their children how to behave during school-readiness examinations in order to create an impression of severe mental disability for the purpose of obtaining an official diagnosis of mental retardation. In the interview, one member of the committee reported that Roma parents put pressure on the members of the committee to evaluate their children as having special needs, in order to secure access to special schools and classes with their free textbooks and monthly cash benefits of 600 denars.

Special schools

Data from the State Statistical Office for the 2008/2009 school year indicate that a total of 1,054 pupils were educated in 171 special classes of 40 standard primary schools and five special primary schools.¹²⁶ Instruction in special classes as well as in special schools follows a modified curriculum, working with a reduced educational programme, and with a lower number of children per class in comparison with standard schools. The data from the same publication also show that student enrolment in special classes in academic year 2007/2008 started from second grade (in which a total of 129 students were recorded), with no students recorded in the first grade.

From the total number of children attending special primary schools and special classes in the academic year 2007/2008, over 80 per cent are children with mental disability,

123 State Statistical Office, Statistical review: Population and the social statistics, 2.4.9.15, Social welfare for children, juveniles and adults in the Republic of Macedonia 2008/2009.

124 Marcella Deluca, 2007, Gathering statistics and indicators for students with disabilities, learning difficulties and disadvantages in the Republic of Macedonia, Feasibility study and draft operational plan.

125 MICS report, p. 110, Table SP 10, Children with special needs.

126 Državen zavod za statistika, *Osnovni i sredni učilišta na krajot na učebnata 2008/2009 godina [Primary and Secondary Schools at the End of the 2008/2009 School Year]* (Skopje: Državen zavod za statistika, 2010).

with some 10 per cent of the children categorized as deaf, or with sight and speech disabilities. The approximately 2 per cent of children attending special primary schools and special classes, who have a physical disability, is well below the proportion registered in most of the research from the OECD countries.¹²⁷ The overall prevalence of registered students with physical and intellectual disabilities and learning difficulties, according to the Ministry of Education, is 0.6 per cent, compared with the international average of approximately 2.5 per cent.¹²⁸ National data on the enrolment and attendance rate in special schools and special classes are limited, and no disaggregated national data are available, by ethnic and other characteristic of the students. See Table 12.

Table 12. Enrollment in special primary and lower secondary schools in 2007/2008

Type of disability	Students enrolled in special schools or special classes in standard schools	
	Number	Per cent
Mental disability	842	86.1
Educational neglected students (learning difficulties)	18	1.8
Hearing disability	61	6.2
Sight disability	28	2.9
Hearing and speech disability	12	1.2
Physical disabilities	17	1.7
Total	978	100.0

Source: State Statistical Office, Statistical review No 9.4.9.06/625.

There are different sources confirming that Roma children are disproportionately represented in special schools. The data from one study show that in over 50 per cent of the special schools and special classes visited in Skopje, Roma children make up a disproportionate amount of the student body.¹²⁹ Similarly, the Director of a primary school in Bitola, visiting in May 2009, reported that 19 out of the 47 pupils enrolled in special classes (39.6 per cent) are Roma. At the national level, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs reports that the number of Roma pupils enrolled in special primary education in the 2007/2008 school year was 385 and that the number of Roma in special secondary education was 80.¹³⁰ Combining the data on overall enrolment in special education from the 2008/2009 school year with the figures on the number of Roma enrolled in special education from the previous year, yields a rough estimate that Roma account for approximately 36 per cent of all children in special primary education and 28 per cent of the total in secondary education. As discussed above, Roma are often placed in special education for socioeconomic reasons rather than for educational purposes.

127 M.Deluca, Draft Report, p. 30.

128 UNICEF (2004) Innocenti Insight, Children and Disability in Transition in CEE/CIS and the Baltic States.

129 M.Deluca, Draft Report, 2007, p. 27.

130 Ministerstvo za trud i socijalna politika, *Analiza za sostojbata i namaluvanjeto na romskite devojčinja i momčinja vo obrazovniot proces vo Republika Makedonija [Situation Analysis and the Attrition of Romani Girls and Boys in the Educational Process in the Republic of Macedonia]* (Skopje: Ministerstvo za trud i socijalna politika, 2010).

Housing and Social Assistance Policies

The Macedonian Constitution defines the country as a social state that protects its citizens, without favoring individual populations.¹³¹ Changes to the legal framework concerning housing, which refer to specific population groups, started in 1998. These changes are mainly about the improvement of the legal framework for social housing and the resolution of issues concerning illegal buildings.¹³²

The Social Protection Law stipulates a right to housing for children and youth without parents, and for children deprived of parental care.¹³³ During 2007, from a total of 280 children accommodated in institution for children without parental care, 43.6 per cent were children aged 0–6.¹³⁴ Whilst there are no data available on the ethnicity of these children, a May 2009 field observation of the orphanage in Bitola revealed that, 36 of the 98 children (36.8 per cent) between the ages of 0–3 years were Roma.

While the vast majority of Macedonian Romani population live in cities, Roma are mainly concentrated in peri-urban areas of the cities, ghettos and poor areas, where basic social services are often missing.¹³⁵ UNICEF and World Bank research from the year 2000, which includes Roma living outside the Šuto Orizari municipality, found that: 30 per cent of families live in improvised dwelling units; every fourth family shares with one more family; half of the respondents live in spaces below 5m² per family member; and, that 78 per cent of the families have no toilets inside their home.¹³⁶ Similarly, research conducted for UNDP found that 36 per cent of Roma families live in substandard dwelling units and the average space of the living area is 50 per cent smaller than the residential living areas of the non-Roma families. Roma families have an average of 11.7 m² of residential space per family member, compared with the national average of 19.7 m².¹³⁷ On the other hand, according to MICS research (2005–2006), access to toilets for Roma families is significantly better than reported elsewhere, with only around 10 per cent of the Roma families lacking a toilet inside their home whilst 3 per cent of Roma families fetch the drinking water from outside their place of living.¹³⁸

Data for 2006 from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, indicated that 14 per cent of the households that were beneficiaries of the cash social assistance, belong to the Roma community. In the same year a total of 219,063 household members were receiving social assistance, 17 per cent of which (36,935) were children aged 0–6 years. A more recent survey found that 46.8 per cent of Roma respondents received social assistance, with 90 per cent of recipients of social assistance being beneficiaries of permanent cash assistance.¹³⁹

Overview of the educational institutions, including the preschool education institutions

The Government has adopted the National Strategy for the Development of Education 2005–2015 (National Education Strategy). The National Education Strategy was

131 Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia (Articles 1 and 35).

132 UNDP, National Vulnerability Report for Macedonia, focus on Roma, 2006, p. 15.

133 Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 62/2005.

134 State Statistical Office, Publication No 2.4.8.14/603 (2008) Social welfare for children, juveniles and adults in the Republic of Macedonia, 2007–2008.

135 Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, The Strategy on Roma in the Republic of Macedonia, 2005.

136 Vulnerability of Roma Children in the Dispersed Roma Communities in Skopje, Study Project, UNICEF, World Bank, September, 2000.

137 UNDP, 2006, National Vulnerability report for Macedonia, Focus on Roma, p. 16.

138 MICS, 2005–2006.

139 B.Pavlovski, 2008, The health, health protection and the effect on the health of Roma in the Republic of Macedonia.

developed by the Government in 2004 to set out the path ahead for required reforms in accordance with EU education standards. The document defines the State's mission in the area of education as: "education for all through provision of educational equality; increase of participation opportunities; increase of educational, cultural and economic competitiveness of the Macedonian society"¹⁴⁰

Preschool education

National legislation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia defines early childhood development (ECD), as preschool education that integrates care and education, specifically including measures and activities for the promotion of health and the advancement of the intellectual, emotional, physical and social development of the child.¹⁴¹ The main providers of ECD services are public kindergartens, with 52 such institutions located in 41 municipalities, and an additional 181 dispersed facilities located mainly in urban areas. Additionally, in 9 villages there are early childhood education and care sites which are not registered as kindergartens. A UNICEF situational analysis of ECD and preschool education in the country showed that the capacities of the existing kindergartens are insufficient to provide universal access for all children.¹⁴²

The net inclusion rate of children aged 0–6 in public kindergartens declined from 20 per cent to under 14 per cent between the years 2003–2004 to 2008–2009. This was mostly due to the transfer to compulsory education of children who belong to the age group of 5–6 years, which was traditionally the most represented in kindergartens. The final year of preschool education, which was incorporated into compulsory education in 2005–2006, was called the "zero year" in 2006–2007, becoming the first grade beginning in 2007–2008. As a result of children being moved to primary schools, kindergartens lost their traditional role as an institution that prepares children for school.¹⁴³

The total percentage for the inclusion of the youngest children is far lower than the overall net inclusion rate of children in public kindergartens. The share of the youngest children aged 0–2 of the total percentage of children enrolled in kindergartens is 21 per cent. The total number of children in kindergartens increases with age. The "oldest" kindergarten group (age 5) has the largest portion of children (28.6 per cent).¹⁴⁴ Though kindergartens are no longer as focused on preparing children academically, they are still viewed as an institution that plays an important role in the social and emotional adjustment of children. This explains the increase in the number of children in the kindergartens as they approach the time for enrollment into primary school. See Table 13.

140 Ministry of Education and Science (2004), *National Strategy for Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia, 2005–2015*.

141 In these documents, the term "early childhood development" refers to the child from birth until the age of 6 years.

142 Strategic assessment of the situation in the early childhood development and preschool education in the Republic of Macedonia, UNICEF, 2007/2008.

143 Source of all statistical data in this paragraph: State Statistical Office, Public institutions for care and education – kindergartens, 2009. – Statistical Review 6.4.10.02/646.

144 Source of all statistical data in this paragraph: State Statistical Office, Public institutions for care and education – kindergartens, 2009. – Statistical Review 6.4.10.02/646. The compulsory primary education in the Republic of Macedonia starts at the age of 6. This explains the small number of children over the age of 5 years in kindergartens.

Table 13. Number of children in public kindergartens in 2009, by age

	Number	Per cent from the total number (0–6)
Under 1 year	474	2.1
1 years	1,439	6.5
2 years	2,746	12.4
Total 0–2	4,659	21.0
3 years	4,937	22.2
4 years	5,312	23.9
5 years	6,350	28.6
6 years	927	4.2
Over 6 years	28	0.1
Total 3–7	17,554	79.0
Total 0–7	22,213	100.0

Source: State Statistical Office.

Primary, secondary and higher education

Primary education and, since the 2008–2009 academic year, secondary education are compulsory in the country. While relevant legislation prescribes penalties for parents whose children do not attend school, enforcement is weak, in large part because families living in poverty are not able to pay cash penalties from 400 to 700 euros. In addition to dividing primary education into three, three-year cycles, the Law on Primary Education provides possibilities for education in non-school settings such as in health, social, and penitentiary institutions, with the provision of education in such institutions intended to improve access and prevent the social exclusion of children with special learning needs, chronic diseases or behavioral problems.¹⁴⁵ For children with special needs, the Law provides access to special schools or special classes within the standard schools.

In the academic year 2007–2008, 997 standard primary school classes were attended by 220,833 students.¹⁴⁶ Out of all students, 9,785 or 4.4 per cent are Roma, of whom 96.9 per cent attend schools with the Macedonian language as the language of instruction. See Table 14.

Table 14. Students by sex, ethnic affiliation and language of instruction in standard primary and lower secondary schools in academic year 2007–2008

Language of instruction	Total number of students	Students ethnic affiliation					
		Macedonians	Albanians	Turks	Roma	Serbs	Others
Total	220,833	118,507	75,141	9,451	9,785	2,067	5,880
Macedonian	140,314	118,467	1,584	3,444	9,484	1,899	5,436
Albanian	74,103		73,571	30	298		24
Turks	5,999		22	5,977			
Serbian	417	40				177	200

Source: State Statistical Office, 2009.

¹⁴⁵ Law for Primary Education, 2008, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, Number 103/08.

¹⁴⁶ State Statistical Office, 2009, Statistical review: Population and social statistic in the Republic of Macedonia Primary, Lower Secondary and Secondary Schools at the end of the academic 2007/2008 year No. 6.4.9.06/605.

The total number of graduated students in standard primary and lower secondary schools in the academic year 2007–2008 was 27,046, out of which 673 (or 2.5 per cent) were Roma.¹⁴⁷ In secondary schools, a total of 22,113 students graduated in the academic year 2007–2008, of which only 276 or 1.2 per cent were Roma. The same year, from a total of 62,935 students enrolled in public university institutions, 184 were Roma, with 76 enrolled for the first time in the first year of study. Completion rates in university education among Roma are estimated at well below 1 per cent.¹⁴⁸ Tables 15–16 provide an overview of trends in Roma participation in primary and secondary education in terms of absolute numbers.

Table 15. Roma enrolled in primary education 2005–2010

Academic year	Boys	Girls	Total
2005/2006	4,469	3,940	8,409
2006/2007	4,441	3,940	8,381
2007/2008	5,268	4,882	10,150
2008/2009	5,421	5,130	10,571
2009/2010	5,528	5,225	10,753

Source: Ministry of Education and Science.

Table 16. Roma enrolled in the first year of primary education 2005–2010

Academic year	Boys	Girls	Total
2005/2006	685	671	1,356
2006/2007	715	654	1,369
2007/2008	782	699	1,481
2008/2009	839	833	1,672
2009/2010	754	729	1,483

Source: Ministry of Education and Science.

Table 17. Roma enrolled in secondary education 2005–2010

Academic year	Boys	Girls	Total
2005/2006	654	586	1,240
2006/2007	678	526	1,204
2007/2008	831	641	1,472
2008/2009	930	546	1,476
2009/2010	1,054	900	1,954

Source: Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2008/2009 academic year).¹⁴⁹

- 147 State Statistical Office, 2009, Statistical review: Population and social statistic in the Republic of Macedonia Primary, Lower Secondary and Secondary Schools at the end of the academic 2007/2008 year No 6.4.9.06 /605.
- 148 State Statistical Office, 2008, Statistical review: Population and social statistics: Enrolled students at school year 2007/2008 – 2.4.8.15.604.
- 149 Ministerstvo za trud i socijalna politika, *Analiza za sostojbata i namaluvanjeto na romskite devojčinja i momčinja vo obrazovniot proces vo Republika Makedonija [Situation Analysis and the Attrition of Romani Girls and Boys in the Educational Process in the Republic of Macedonia]* (Skopje: Ministerstvo za trud i socijalna politika, 2010).

Available information suggests that the overall coverage of Roma by the Macedonian education system is relatively high. Data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy indicate that 709 Roma completed primary education and 310 completed secondary education in the 2008/2009 school year. However, an estimate of the primary education completion rate generated for the purpose of this study, found that the completion rates in primary education are approximately half as high among Roma as among Macedonians.¹⁵⁰ See Table 18.

Table 18. Estimated rate of Roma and Macedonian students graduating in primary education in the 2006–2007 academic year¹⁵¹

Live births ¹⁵²				Number of children who complete primary education in the academic year 2006/2007 ¹⁵³		Estimated rate of students who graduated primary education in comparison to the live births in 1992		Estimated rate of students with graduated primary education in comparison to the live births in 1993	
1992		1993							
Macedonian	Roma	Macedonian	Roma	Macedonian	Roma	Macedonian	Roma	Macedonian	Roma
17,388	1,117	16,666	1,211	15,672	707	90.1 per cent	63.3 per cent	94 per cent	58.4 per cent

Supporting this estimate, is the UNDP's finding that differences in primary school enrollment rates between Roma and the majority population living in the vicinity of Roma communities, increase in the later grades of primary education. Only 57 per cent of Roma children enroll in the final grade at the age of 14, compared with 100 per cent in the majority population.¹⁵⁴ See Table 16.

Table 19. Primary school enrollment rates in 2005

Age (years)	Per cent of enrolled pupils		
	Majority population living in the vicinity of the Roma communities	Roma	National average
7	98	76	82
14	100	57	72

Source: UNDP, 2006.

150 As shown in Table 15, the estimate was calculated by comparing the numbers of students who completed primary education in the academic year 2006/2007 with the number of live births in 1992 and 1993.

151 The estimate was generated on the basis of live births registered in 1992/1993 and the number of students who graduated in the 2006/2007 school year, from the State Statistical Office.

152 State Statistical Office, 2006, Statistical Annual Review of the Republic of Macedonia.

153 Source: State Statistical Office.

154 UNDP, December, 2006, National Vulnerability Report for Macedonia-Focus on Roma.

European and Other International Agencies' Initiatives for Improving Education Among Roma Students¹⁵⁵

A Roma Education Fund was established within the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The main purpose of this Fund is to support the sustainability of Roma education programmes by giving priority to non-segregated education.¹⁵⁶

Among initiatives supported by international organizations and focused on the improvement of education in Roma communities, the following are especially important:

- Roma Education Programme (2004–2011).
- Equal Educational Opportunities for Roma Children (2006–2009).
- Alliance for Inclusion of Roma in Education (2005–2009).
- Education for All (2000–present).
- Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools (2006–present).

Roma Education Programme (2004–2011)

The Roma Education Programme (REP) is a project by the Foundation Open Society Institute of Macedonia (FOSIM) supported by USAID, Pestalozzi Children's Foundation and the Roma Education Fund. REP aims to provide comprehensive education support for increasing school retention and academic achievement of Roma children and youth. It has been implemented through positive interventions on all educational levels, from preschool through to university. Every project year, REP prepares over 200 preschool age children for primary education and provides additional out-of-school support in homework, writing and subject-based tutoring to over 900 Roma enrolled in the 1st to 8th grade in five primary schools. These activities are implemented on a daily basis by the five Roma Education Centers run by local Roma NGOs in Skopje (with two such centres), Prilep (with one) and Kumanovo (with two). The centers serve also as links between the Roma families and the schools. The Foundation for Educational and Cultural Initiatives Step-by-Step, provided training and on-site technical assistance to the project's primary school teachers and the REC educators.

The project also provides scholarship and school-based mentoring support to 364 secondary school students (262 students in the period 2004–2008 and another 102 students in the period 2009–2010) for completion of their secondary education. Scholarships are received by 35 Roma university students and over 80 university students from different study areas benefit annually from tutoring and the additional academic support provided by REP. The project has increased completion and success rates among the project beneficiaries.

In order to identify the barriers to the realization of the right to education, the project has also developed a comprehensive database on the Roma population in Kumanovo and Prilep and undertaken an analysis of the application of the Romani language and culture as an elective subject in primary schools. Additionally, the project prepared an alternative report to the Second Periodic Report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and submitted the report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

155 <http://www.soros.org.mk/default.asp?lang=eng%&menuid=242> (accessed December 2009).

156 The Strategy on Roma in the Republic of Macedonia, 2005.

Equal Educational Opportunities for Roma Children (2006–2009)

This is a project by FOSIM, supported by the Netherlands Embassy. The aim of the project was to improve school achievement of targeted 1st–4th grade students and to improve the retention rate of targeted 5th–8th grade primary school students. The project was implemented in 10 primary schools in 9 cities across the country, in partnership with 12 local Roma NGOs and the Foundation for Educational and Cultural Initiatives: Step-by-Step. This project extended the educational actions performed by FOSIM in the primary school component of the Roma Education Programme. During the three year project 2,550 students were provided with additional learning support in the After-school Support Centers, established and fully equipped with school furniture, didactic materials and computer equipment. Free textbooks and school materials and snacks were provided to children who attended additional classes. Training for teachers induced positive change in the classroom and in the teachers' approach to pupils. Throughout the project 747 teachers were trained in 5 different areas. The project showed improved school results for the targeted Roma students.

Alliance for Inclusion of Roma in Education (2005–2009)

The Alliance for Inclusion of Roma in Education is a project by FOSIM, supported by the Roma Education Fund and implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science's Department for Promotion and Development of Education in the Languages of Minorities. The project aims to: improve the retention and achievement rate of targeted Roma students enrolled in secondary education; increase the number of Roma with completed secondary education in the country; and to improve the transition rate of Roma students from secondary to university education. In the four years of implementation, the project provided a total of 1,464 scholarships to 657 students. A total of 149 teachers provided mentorship support for one or several years. Both intervention components, scholarships and mentorships, led to better retention rate and better school performance of students. The project increased the number of Roma with completed secondary education (498 graduates) and increased the number of Roma students enrolled at university. At the beginning of school year 2009/2010, the Ministry of Education and Science with Roma Education Fund support, continued to implement both project interventions: scholarships (to 800 Roma high school students), and mentorship.

Education for All

This initiative is supported by the UNICEF office in Skopje. Its purpose is to build the capacities of the teaching and management staff in the schools, in developing strategies to lower drop-out rates. The programme focuses on reintegrating students from vulnerable populations, including the Roma, who have dropped out from primary or secondary school, and who have an increased risk of lower academic achievement.

Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools (2006–present)¹⁵⁷

This project is implemented as a result of increased awareness about the importance of early childhood education and development, especially for children from vulnerable groups. It was initiated and managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and was financially supported by the Roma Education Fund. The UNICEF Office in Skopje procured didactical materials for the project and trained the staff. Initially implemented in 15 municipalities in the country, as of early 2011, the project covered 22 municipalities,

¹⁵⁷ See the website of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy at <http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/default.asp?> (accessed 10.03.2009).

with costs shared among the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the participating municipalities, and the Roma Education Fund. The total number of children supported through this initiative to date is approximately 700.

There were also other initiatives and programmes in the period from 2005 to 2008 which were of significantly smaller scope, such as support from the Freudenberg Stiftung and other NGOs. Among other things, these projects were concerned with supporting Roma Education Centers, raising awareness among the parents, improving literacy levels among adults, and providing additional teaching hours within the framework of the standard primary education system.

The Responsibility and Role of Local Self-Government in Provision of Social, Health and Educational Services for the Macedonian Population

The administration of the Macedonian educational system takes place on three levels: the central government, the municipality and the school. The Government is responsible for developing educational policies, funding education from the state budget, and overseeing the quality of education. The State Educational Inspectorate assesses the legal compliance of the educational institutions with appropriate legislation, and evaluates their quality based on the standards set by the Ministry and the Bureau for Development of Education, which is responsible for preparing teaching curricula and syllabi.

Education is funded primarily through the State budget. Each school is a separate budgetary unit. Schools are also separate legal entities, and each school manages its own budget. The school's annual programmes determine its funding needs, and schools are obliged to submit their annual financial plans in a timely manner to the school's founder. The decentralization process transferred the kindergartens into municipal ownership, but financing is in the control of the municipality only up to the level of building maintenance and salaries for the staff, in the form of earmarked grants. Educational materials and meals are paid for with funds generated from enrolment fees.¹⁵⁸

In 2002, as a result of the political reforms related to decentralization, the Law on Local Self-Government was adopted which significantly increased the competencies of local government. This included changes in the social, educational and health sectors. The legal framework for financing is defined in the 2004 Law on Financing of the Local Self-Government Units. This Law includes detailed information about fiscal decentralization and about financing of the competencies that were transferred from central to municipal government.¹⁵⁹ See Table 20.

Decentralization has still not reached a level where the municipalities are able to provide and/or stimulate the establishment of an active management system at the local level. The main focus of the current process of transfer of competencies from central to local government is on the transformation of buildings and their maintenance. As a result of this, the allocation of funds from the central budget is mainly to cover the costs for maintenance of buildings and staff salaries. Consequently, financing at present is not based on the local population's needs for specific social services.¹⁶⁰ See Box 3 and 4.

158 Equal Access to Quality Education For Roma Macedonia, from Vol. 2: Croatia, Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovakia: Monitoring report 2007, pp. 241–247.

159 UNICEF, 2009, Review of the Public Expenditures for Children.

160 UNDP, 1967, Fiscal decentralization in the Republic of Macedonia: An assessment.

Table 20. Overview of the status and content of competencies transferred from central to municipal government¹⁶¹

Sector	Competencies transferred	Current situation ¹⁶²
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Decision making authority ■ Right to establish public institutions for primary and secondary education ■ Financing of the work of primary and secondary schools and acquisition of the right over immovable property, staff, working assets and documentation 	<p>The following competencies were transferred to the municipalities and the City of Skopje:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 339 primary schools with a total of 18,505 staff ■ 81 secondary schools with a total of 6,655 staff
Social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Decision making authority ■ Right to establish public institutions ■ Financing of the work of the public institutions and acquisition of the right over immovable property, staff, working assets and documentation 	<p>The following competencies were transferred to the municipalities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Right on establishment ■ Right of ownership of 51 kindergartens with 3,236 staff
Health protection	Decision making authority	Decision making authority transferred to municipalities

Source: Martinez-Vasquez, et al., 2007.

Box 3. The Lifestart project in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Supported by UNICEF, the Lifestart project includes 1,270 parents of children aged 0–3 years and 2,505 children ages 3–6 years.¹⁶³ Parents are included in parental programmes in which they receive support and learn how to stimulate child development in home settings. Various activities are implemented in Early childhood Development Centers to stimulate social, emotional and cognitive development in children aged 3–6. Additionally, the Centers were used for piloting early learning and development standards.

	Total	Beneficiaries by ethnicity		
		Macedonian	Roma	Albanian
Children aged 0–3 years	1,297	24.1	24.5	50.4
Children aged 3–6 years	2,505	26.8	34.2	38.9

An evaluation of the project found a significant difference in the educational levels of the participating mothers. Out of all Roma mothers 25 per cent were illiterate and only 1.9 per cent had a secondary education, while 61.6 per cent of the Macedonian mothers had a secondary education. Additionally, whereas 31 per cent of the Roma mothers said that they were not able to take their children to the Centers on a regular basis, only 5.8 per cent of the Macedonian mothers made similar statements. Also important is that 32.7 per cent of the Roma mothers said that they would gladly participate in the work of the Center, compared with 2.3 per cent of the Macedonian mothers.¹⁶⁴

161 Martinez-Vasquez, J.A Timofeeva and N.Feruglio, 2007, Fiscal Decentralization in FYR Macedonia: An Assessment, Draft Report, UNDP.

162 The situation presented in the table referred to year 2007.

163 UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE) Geneva, (Switzerland) 2006 – Republic of Macedonia Early Child Care and Education (ECCE) programmes.

164 UNICEF, Skopje, 2003, Evaluation of the Life Start Project 2000–2003.

Box 4. Governmental initiatives for improving early childhood education and care

During the past few years, significant progress has been made to create an environment that is conducive to developing and implementing a strategic, inter-sectorial approach to early childhood development. Drawing on technical assistance provided by the UNICEF Country Office, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has developed the three closely linked key initiatives described below.

1. A set of holistic Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS) were developed to promote appropriate care and education for children from birth to six years. Providing a shared framework for understanding and communicating expectations for the development of young children, the Standards serve as a guide for parents, professionals, and policy makers, all of whom share responsibility for the well-being of young children. At the same time ELDS offer a basis for reforming national policy on early childhood development (ECD).
2. A National ECD Policy has been designed to reform the existing kindergarten system, promote community-based ECD Centers and reach out to a larger number of children, especially those who need it most. The Policy, which was developed through participatory processes involving diverse stakeholders, addresses the need to improve quality and equity in delivering ECD services using a holistic approach, through implementing ELDS in diverse ECD service provision sites. In order to address the rights, needs and well-being of all young children, the process of policy development was supported by evidence and information gathering through ECD situation analyses throughout the country.
3. Policy options for expanding and diversifying ECD services were piloted in 5 municipalities on the basis of the following principles:
 - Fairer use of public resources in delivering ECD services
 - Testing cost-sharing between public sectors (central budget and municipalities) and building municipal capacity to allocate budget resources for vulnerable children from the municipality
 - Improved efficiency of existing funds for delivering ECD services
 - Improving the quality of services by applying principles for inclusive early childhood programming through implementing ELDS in:
 - Building partnership with parents.
 - Focusing on children's interaction with people and the environment.
 - Recognizing that there is no one single delivery system option.
 - Providing continuous ELDS-based on-the-job training for all kindergarten teachers.
 - Building teacher capacity and willingness to employ teaching strategies that reflect the learning styles and address the educational needs of diverse groups of children.

Source: Country UNICEF Office, Annual Report, 2009.

CHAPTER 3

The Early Childhood Development System and the Place of Roma Children and Parents Within This System

Outline of Early Development Services for Children 0–6 Years

The institutions tasked with the care, nurturing and education of children aged 0–5 in the country are public kindergartens. The care of children in kindergartens is structured around the age of the children. Nurseries in kindergartens serve children up to 24 months old. Some of the 2-year-old children attend nurseries while the others who are ready are grouped with 3-year-olds as the 'small' groups in the kindergartens. Most of the preschool-age children (4–5 years) comprise the 'older', kindergarten groups.¹⁶⁵

The nurseries mainly provide care and nurturing of children. Although the official programme for work with the youngest children, aged 8–24 months, sets objectives concerning the motor, social, emotional, language and intellectual development of the children, the actual set-up of the nurseries and the training of the staff does not allow the achievement of these goals. On the other hand, in the other kindergarten groups for the 2–5 year-olds, children work with a teacher who has an educational background which is expected to provide more than mere nursing and care giving.

The kindergartens are open to all children and provide the option of full and half-day stays and short programmes. In 2009, 71.5 per cent of the children attending public kindergarten stayed 7–11 hours and 95 per cent were receiving two meals daily. Officially, the inclusion of the children in the kindergarten does not depend on the employment status of the parents, but the operational hours of the kindergartens are flexible enough to accommodate working parents. In reality, both parents of 73.8 per cent of the children in nurseries and of 70.3 per cent of the children in the other kindergarten groups are employed.¹⁶⁶ Most of the other children have at least one of their parents employed. This situation probably indicates that the kindergartens are seen mainly as institutions for the care of young children instead of institutions that contribute to early childhood

165 Before introducing compulsory education from the age of 6, the 'oldest' group in public kindergartens incorporated 6-year old children. From September 2007, the first grade in primary schools starts at the age of 6 and the kindergartens accommodate children up to the age of 5. However, much of the statistical data that follow refer to the period before the 2007/08 school year and thus include 6 year old children as part of the kindergarten.

166 Source of all statistical data in this paragraph: State Statistical Office, Public institutions for care and education – kindergartens, 2009, Statistical Review 6.4.10.02/646).

development. Additionally, these percentages may also be a result of the increased level of unemployment and the total poverty level of the population. Kindergartens cost 1,500 dinars (25 euros) per month, which is expensive for parents who are unemployed and even for many of the families with only one parent working.

Table 21. Overview of main institutional provision of early childhood education in the country

Provision name (types of services)	Governance (ministry or level of government in charge)	Who provides? (municipal, private non-profit, private for-profit etc.), official child: staff ratio in each kind of service
Public kindergarten (0–6)	Ministry of labour and Social Policy	Municipal <i>age 0–2:</i> 1 carer: 6 children <i>age 2–6:</i> 1 carer + 1 educator: 22 children

Both carers and educators work with children in public kindergartens. Carers are more numerous and make up 59.5 per cent of the total staff working directly with children in public kindergartens and 98.7 per cent of the staff working with children in nurseries.¹⁶⁷ The educators make up 40.5 per cent of the total staff (excluding management and technical staff), comprising 52 per cent of the staff working with kindergarten (as opposed to nursery) groups (with the figure lowest for the youngest kindergarten group and highest for the oldest group). The educators' main responsibility is the social, emotional and intellectual development of the children. The staff to children ratio is higher in the nurseries at 1 carer per 6 children, while kindergarten groups have a ratio of 1 carer per 22 children and 1 educator per 20 children. In practice, the carers and educators share very little joint time in the groups. Educators are dedicated to children mainly during the time planned for the implementation of structured learning activities, whereas carers are responsible for all the other activities.

The last official statistics on the ethnic background of the children in public kindergartens in the country shows that the number Roma children that attend nurseries is 0.9 per cent of the total number of children in the youngest age group and the Roma children participation is 1.7 per cent among the children in kindergarten groups. This is a clear indicator that the institutional programmes for early childhood development reach even fewer Roma children than the others groups. See Table 22 and 23.

167 Source of all statistical data in this paragraph: State Statistical Office, Public institutions for care and education – kindergartens, 2009, Statistical Review 6.4.10.02/646).

Table 22. Inclusion of Roma children in the public kindergartens in 2009

	Total number of children	Total Roma children	Per cent of Roma children from the total number of children in the kindergarten
Nursery	3,184	28	0.9
Kindergarten groups¹⁶⁸	18,160	314	1.7
Combined group 10	680	4	0.6
Groups for extra-institutional forms of activity¹⁶⁹	149	18	12.1
Total	22,173	364	1.6

Source: State Statistical Office: Statistical Overview 6.4.10.02/646.

According to the Law on Child Protection,¹⁷⁰ kindergartens can also be private institutions, but the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has no information about the number of private kindergartens registered in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. According to information from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, an unspecified number of children receive care and child rearing activities through various forms of “play groups” or foreign language schools.¹⁷¹ Some children with employed parents are taken care of by outsourced carers and babysitters on the basis of individual private agreements. Since there is no system of accreditation and certification for people who perform these services, there is no information on how many children are included in these unregulated forms of care. However, because private kindergartens and private babysitters are a privilege only affordable by families with higher levels of income, there is a large probability that a very small percentage of Macedonian children are included in this form of care. It turns out that most of the Macedonian children are taken care of in home settings, by either the immediate or extended family. This especially applies to Roma children, whose parents are unlikely to be able to pay for private childcare; available information suggests that Roma children whose mothers are engaged in informal work activities outside the home are looked after by relatives or neighbours, but there are no documented initiatives for organized “community” forms of care, even in cases where Roma families live in a homogenous Roma environment.

168 The combined group (of children) is systematically occupied with care, upbringing and education of children from 12 months to 6 years of age.

169 The groups for extra-institutional forms of activity are intended for children at 3 years of age and they organize playing activities, creative workshops, children’s workshops in the fields of culture and art, sport activities etc. In 2009 there were 7 such groups in four places.

170 Law on Protection of Children, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 98/2000.

171 According to the “Strategic Assessment of the Status with the Early Childhood Development and Preschool Education in the Republic of Macedonia (2007/2008)”.

Table 23. The number of children between birth and six years in the country, and the percentage of all Roma children in that total, 2002¹⁷²

Age	Total children			Total Roma children			Per cent of Roma children from the total number of children		
	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
0	22,746	11,706	11,040	1,056	529	527	4.64	4.52	4.77
1	24,677	12,749	11,928	1,106	545	561	4.48	4.27	4.70
2	25,234	12,971	12,263	1,222	593	629	4.84	4.57	5.13
3	24,398	12,611	11,787	1,040	550	490	4.26	4.36	4.16
4	25,702	13,242	12,460	1,090	559	531	4.24	4.22	4.26
5	26,215	13,621	12,594	1,150	570	580	4.39	4.18	4.61
6	28,078	14,494	13,584	1,120	597	523	3.99	4.12	3.85
Total	177,050	91,394	85,656	7,784	3,943	3,841	4.40	4.31	4.48

Source: State Statistical Office. National Census 2002.

Specific Policies or Strategies for the Early Development and Education of Roma Children

In 2006, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, supported by Roma Education Fund and UNICEF, and in cooperation with local NGOs, began implementation of the project: Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools. This was in an effort to support the inclusion and integration of Roma children aged 4–5 (6) years into kindergartens, which would facilitate their inclusion in primary schools.¹⁷³ Initially implemented in 15 public kindergartens, which received toys and other didactical materials for their participation in the project, the project also included 15 Roma carers who worked directly with children, and 35 carers who were trained to foster the personal competencies of Roma children and to help to counter biases and prejudices against Roma. Reaching over 700 children to date, the project now covers 22 municipalities.

The Causes of Low Roma Enrolment

The key reason for the low inclusion of Roma children in public kindergartens is the low social and economic status of the Roma, as elaborated in Chapter 1. It is unrealistic to expect a family living at or below the poverty line of 94 euros monthly income, to cover the monthly fees of approximately 25 euros for each child enrolled in public kindergarten. Considering the poverty line, it is almost impossible for child development to be paid proper attention by the family, which struggles to ensure mere existence. Because of this, even when a specific project enables Roma children to attend the kindergarten with all costs covered, there is no guarantee that the children will continue to attend on a regular basis. The evaluation of the project on: Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools, showed that the drop-out rate in the first year of implementation was 19.8 per cent and increased to 21.8 per cent in the second year.¹⁷⁴ This drop-out rate

172 Source: State Statistical Office. National Census 2002.

173 Evaluation study of the programme: Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools, June 2008.

174 Evaluation study of the programme: Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools, June 2008.

occurred even when Roma carers were engaged and with the educators employed in the kindergartens having been trained to recognize and address negative stereotypes and prejudices directed at Roma.

No in-depth analysis has been done on the reasons why Roma families are not prepared to send their children to kindergarten or on the causes of high drop-out rates. Still, it can be reasonably assumed that unemployment and poverty are important factors, as are the segregation of students and the parent's lack of education, which contribute to their under-valuing of early childhood development. However, there may also be other specific reasons, which have not been sufficiently researched. One of them could be the language spoken in the kindergarten, which especially applies to Roma children who speak Romani as their primary language.

In general, there are no professional development programmes in the country for staff who work on the inclusion of Roma children in kindergartens. Programmes offered are primarily for teachers and directors in compulsory education, mainly primary. Moreover, not even these programmes are institutionalized, but are provided on an occasional basis through externally funded programmes. There are also no activities geared toward non-Roma parents, which is not surprising since the education of parents in the schools is generally weak.

Box 5. 'Nashe Maalo' (Our Neighborhood)

'Nashe Maalo' was the first children's television programme in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia created to promote intercultural understanding, to encourage conflict prevention in a multicultural society, and to impart specific conflict-resolution skills, which children can use in their everyday lives. First aired in 2003 and re-aired in 2004 on several television channels, this series was co-produced by Common Ground Productions and Search for Common Ground Macedonia.

Among the main characters were a Roma girl and her mother, and the Roma language was used together with other languages. There were episodes that directly addressed negative stereotypes about Roma. A follow-up research study, *Lessons from Nashe Maalo*, measured changes in attitudes after watching the series. The results showed that the series managed to influence an entire generation of children, educating them on tolerance and respect.¹⁷⁵

175 Search for Common Ground Macedonia – Nashe Maalo: Television, Theatre and Outreach Projects http://www.sfcg.org/programmemes/macedonia/macedonia_television.html.
Evaluation of Nashe Maalo: Design, Implementation, and Outcomes, 2004 (<http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/nash2004.pdf>).

The country has still not resolved the issue of inclusion and retention of Roma children in compulsory education. Consequently, the activities of Roma NGOs are focused on children in primary school and their parents, despite the fact that there is an awareness that preschool education contributes to primary school success. A positive example is the previously mentioned programme on: Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools. The evaluation of this programme showed that there was willingness on the part of the parents to send the rest of their children to kindergarten only if they were not expected to pay the fee, but the observed drop-out rates raise the question as to whether in reality they would do so.¹⁷⁶

Kindergarten Teacher and Assistant Qualifications, Training and Representation

The main service providers in public kindergartens are carers and educators. By law,¹⁷⁷ the carers are the only ones who can be in charge of working with children in nurseries. To become a nursery carer either a four-year secondary education in pedagogical nursing, or a grammar school, music, art or physical education diploma is required, together with an additional professional course to acquire the necessary background in teaching, health and development for the care and nurturing of preschool age children. The law obliges preschool teachers tasked with the social, emotional and intellectual development of children aged 2–6 years, to have either a two-year or four-year university degree. People with a four year university background in preschool teaching are also legally qualified to work as educators.

Studies for preschool educators are delivered at teaching faculties located in Skopje, Štip, Bitola and Tetovo. Additionally, the Institute of Pedagogy within the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje provides studies for preschool educators. The study programmes at these faculties vary with regard to general and vocational subjects, subject content, student teaching requirements and duration of studies. In the light of the variations in the duration of pre-service training for teachers (i.e., two-year versus four-year programmes), the variations in the duration of pre-service training for preschool educators are perhaps not surprising. See Table 24.

Table 24. Educational titles and duration of studies in relevant faculties¹⁷⁸

Name of the Pedagogical faculty	Duration of studies (in years)	Educational title awarded
Pedagogical faculty – Skopje	4	Graduated teacher for preschool education
Pedagogical faculty – Štip	3	Graduated educator for preschool children
Pedagogical faculty – Bitola	4	Graduated educator
Pedagogical faculty – Tetovo	4	Graduated teacher for preschool education
Faculty of Philosophy – Institute of pedagogy	4	Graduated pedagogue in the area of preschool

Source: State Statistical Office.¹⁷⁹

176 Evaluation study of the programme: Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools, June 2008.

177 Law on Changes and Amendments of the Law on Child Protection. Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 65/04 29.09.2004.

178 University Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Faculty of Philosophy – Institute of Pedagogy: Student seminar paper: Comparative analyses of available study programmes for preschool educators in Macedonia, Skopje, 2009.

179 Statistical Overview 6.4.10.02/646.

In principle, preschool educators are obliged to attend seminars and other forms of vocational-teacher training dedicated to their professional development. Although the higher educational institutions in charge of pre-service training are also responsible for delivering the in-service training, the in-service training is not usually delivered. As a result, career progress and continued professional development depend mostly on personal commitment, with the opportunity to obtain a master's degree in preschool education under-utilized by employed preschool educators.¹⁸⁰

Past research into increasing professionalism in preschool education revealed many weaknesses in the education of the preschool educators. The most serious problems are the lack of unified standards which would define an effective preschool educator, and the lack of a system for monitoring and assessing the early child care and education process.¹⁸¹ While quality control of preschool education falls within the mandate of the Bureau for the Development of Education, the lack of standards in this area and the lack of human resources at the Bureau have led in turn to the absence of systematic monitoring of the work being done in kindergartens.

In the area of certification and accreditation of preschool teaching programmes, some progress has been made with implementation of the International Step by Step Association (ISSA) pedagogical standards by the Foundation for Educational and Cultural Initiatives: Step-by-Step – Macedonia.¹⁸² The standards developed within this programme establish the specific knowledge and skills necessary for: the successful achievement of an individual approach; appropriate learning environment; family involvement; teaching for meaningful learning; planning and assessment; professional development and social inclusion and integration. These standards were applied for certification of educators in the Step-by-Step model kindergartens, with approximately 20 people (kindergarten directors, teachers and an advisor from the Bureau for the Development of Education) were trained to conduct the certification procedure. A working version of the standards was distributed to all kindergartens in the country to assist in self-evaluation by the teaching staff. However, despite efforts to scale up the ISSA standards to the national level, the implementation of the standards remains on a project basis.¹⁸³ See Table 25 and 26.

Table 25. Educational level of people employed in kindergartens in 2009

	Four-year university education	Two-year higher education	Secondary education	Total
Nurseries (0–2 years)	27 5.1 per cent	23 4.3 per cent	480 90.6 per cent	530
Kindergarten groups (2–6 years)	517 30.2 per cent	449 26.2 per cent	747 43.6 per cent	1,713

Source: State Statistical Office.¹⁸⁴

180 According to the "Strategic Assessment of the Status with the Early Childhood Development and Preschool Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2007/08". Unpublished paper, prepared for UNICEF, 2008.

181 According to the "Strategic Assessment of the Status with the Early Childhood Development and Preschool Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2007/08". Unpublished paper, prepared for UNICEF, 2008.

182 International Step by Step Association: Competent Teachers of the 21st Century [http://www.issa.nl/docs_pdfs/Pedagogical-Standards-final-WEB.pdf].

183 The ISSA pedagogical standards are translated and prepared to be published in the Republic of Macedonia and by the end of January will be posted on the web site of Step-by-Step Foundation [www.stepbystep.org.mk].

184 Statistical Overview 6.4.10.02/646.

Table 26. List of national language terms

Country	Name of service (Nat. language)	Translation	Age served	Name of service staff (National language)	Translation	Qualification required	Length of training
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Градинка	Kindergarten	0–5 years	Воспитувач(к)а	Educator (for ages 2–5) pedagogical staff	Tertiary education	2–4 years
	Јасли	Nursery – within kindergarten	0–2 years	Негувател(к)а	Carer (for ages 0–5) nursing staff	Secondary education	4 years
	Основно училиште	Primary school	6–14 years	Наставник/чка – одделенски наставник – предметен наставник	Teacher – classroom teacher (ages 6–10) – subject teacher (ages 11–14)	Tertiary education	2–4 years

The educational background of the people in charge of working with children in the kindergartens generally meets legal requirements. The nurseries are mainly dominated by staff with completed secondary education (90.6 per cent), which corresponds with the requirements for carers.¹⁸⁵ In the older age groups, more than half of the staff (56.4 per cent) has a minimum of a two-year higher education, which corresponds with the legal requirements for the educational staff.

Other professionals employed in Macedonian kindergartens include psychologists, teachers, social workers, special teachers, speech pathologists, doctors, paediatricians and/or dentists, all of whom have relevant university diplomas and professional accreditation. Teachers of music, art, physical education, and nurses and social workers have at least a two-year or four-year secondary education. Kindergarten staff in the country employed on a long-term basis rather than through externally funded projects include a total of 20 Roma, only four of whom work directly with children: one works with children in nursery groups and three work with children in kindergarten groups, and only one in the position of educator.¹⁸⁶ Taking into account the absence of strict enrollment criteria at the pedagogical faculties and the relatively successful implementation of the ethnic quota system in the case of the Roma, the low numbers of Roma in the teaching professions are best explained in terms of the lack of attraction of such professions for Roma graduates of secondary education. For example, from 2004–2005 to 2008–2009 academic years, only 8 out of 210 Roma students receiving scholarships through the Romaversitas programme enrolled at the university to become educators in preschool institutions.¹⁸⁷

185 Source of all statistical data in this paragraph: State Statistical Office (Public institutions for care and education – kindergartens, 2009. – Statistical Review 6.4.10.02/646).

186 Source of all statistical data in this paragraph: State Statistical Office, Public institutions for care and education – kindergartens, 2009. – Statistical Review 6.4.10.02/646.

187 Source: FOSIM Roma Education Programme. Data refers and is limited only to the Roma university students that benefit from the project in the period 2004/05–2008/09.

Curriculum and Teaching Methods Used

In 2007 the Ministry of Education adopted the current curricular framework for early child care and education in the public kindergartens.¹⁸⁸ A working group of selected experts and experienced service providers was engaged in developing the programme. The whole process was coordinated by the Bureau for Development of Education, which is the institution responsible for the development of curricula in preschool, primary and secondary education.

The Programme for Educational Work with Preschool Children in Public Kindergartens differentiates between learning activities according to age groups: 8–18 months, 18–24 months, 2–4 years, 4–5 years and 5–6 years. The differences are mainly in the duration of the activities. The global objectives for preschool education and care, as defined in the programme, are the same for the two main age categories 8–24 months and 2–6 years. The goals relate to the following five developmental areas:

- social development;
- emotional development;
- sensory and motor development;
- communication and creativity;
- intellectual development.

This division of the goals into developmental areas makes the curriculum more holistic, without special emphasis on goals that are primarily oriented towards preparing the children for school.

The national programme was developed on the basis of multiple principles needed to ensure a child-centered approach. They include: monitoring and stimulating the individual development of the child; creating equal opportunities for optimal development of each child; respecting gender and socio-cultural differences; and, they provide activities harmonized with the age of the children. The principles require that young children learn through experience, using play as the dominant learning method to stimulate their imagination, opinions and personal expression. The programme does not strictly prescribe activities and methods for the realization of these goals, and preschool educators are given the freedom to choose activities they deem appropriate with respect to the child's personality. At the same time, it is expected that the care and educational process is open to participation by parents and subject to continuous evaluation. In summary, the programme favours an approach that combines the child's personal development with her or his socialization in the immediate and wider environment.

Two professional training programmes played an important role in setting the basis for the implementation of this national curriculum in the kindergartens. The first was the Step by Step Program, supported by the Open Society Institute – Macedonia and the Georgetown University in Washington D.C. This programme endeavored to establish conditions that would enable children to: choose their care and educational activities; resolve problems; work in a creative manner; socialize and play together; and, to care for the community and their environment. The second was a programme for interactive learning in the kindergartens, supported by UNICEF and Lincoln College in the United Kingdom. This programme contributed to the improvement of the care and educational process, with a view to promote self-confidence and individual development in each child.¹⁸⁹

188 Basis of the Programme for Educational Work with Preschool Children in Public Kindergartens. Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 125 15.12.2007.

189 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Early Child Care and Education programmes. UNESCO, 2006.

How the child-centered approach is actually used in the kindergartens is unclear, because there is no organized system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of services offered in the kindergartens.¹⁹⁰ This is also the case for the evaluation of the delivery of the new national programme as well as its impact on childhood development. Evaluations are mainly internal and are performed informally, through the self-evaluation of the preschool educators and their own evaluation of the achievements of the children. A system for external evaluation is lacking. In practice, external evaluation is usually performed on an ad hoc basis, and then only in relation to the implementation of the national programme.

The principles and general goals listed in the national programme for the kindergartens are not always consistently implemented through the goals and activities in specific preschools. Many of the specific goals are repeated across age groups and it is not always clear whether they refer to indicators, activities or expected outcomes from concrete activities. This is partially a consequence of the fact that the programme is not based on accepted standards for early childhood development. The programme includes expected results for each age group in all areas of intervention, but these results are not based on validated expectations of what the children need to know at a specific age.

In 2008, a working group supported by UNICEF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy drafted standards for early learning and development, for children aged 0–6 years.¹⁹¹ The basis for the development of these standards was that the children should develop in a holistic manner and that the development of the child's personality should be stimulated and monitored. This was to be achieved by simultaneously addressing five different but mutually related aspects:

- physical health and motor development;
- social and emotional development;
- development of a specific approach to learning;
- development of language, literacy and communication skills;
- cognitive development and acquisition of new skills.

The process of developing the standards included validating their content and age appropriateness. Surveys and observation of both children and parental involvement were used, with the assessment of the standards showing that children below the age of 2 who stayed at home were exposed to more social-emotional stimulations and were thus more socially competent than children going to public kindergartens. Children in this age group in public kindergartens were observed to be more isolated and received only basic care, such as eating and sleeping. On the other hand, children aged 3 and up who attended kindergartens were shown to be more advanced in their cognitive development and in their development of language and communication skills, as compared with children who stayed at home.¹⁹²

The standards can be used to support the overall development of the children in extra-institutional contexts. They are also a good basis for reforming the national curriculum where it concerns work in public kindergartens. Their application in the programme for early child care and education in public kindergartens could contribute both in terms of the implementation of the principles associated with the child-centered approach and

190 According to the Strategic Assessment of the Status with the Early Childhood Development and Preschool Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2007/08. Unpublished paper, prepared for UNICEF, 2008.

191 Damovska L, Shehu F., Janeva N., Plachevska S. and Samardziska-Panova Lj (2009). Early Learning and Development Standards for children ages 0–6 years. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Macedonia.

192 Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) – Documentation of the process in developing ELDS in Macedonia, UNICEF documents (Skopje office).

in the implementation of the goals that should be achieved. The standards are also a necessary component for the monitoring and evaluation of kindergartens.

Parental Involvement in Early Development and Education

The legislative framework which regulates activities in state kindergartens implies involvement of parents in the selection of programmes for nurturing and educating their children.¹⁹³ This includes respecting the right of the parents to be fully informed about the programme being implemented in their children's kindergarten. However, there is not only a lack of standardized and compulsory forms of parental and family participation, but there are also no documented reports on the kindergarten activities which necessitate parental input. For example, there is no documentation of discussions with parents about the individual developmental needs of their children, or about working meetings with the parents, or about the participation of parents on management boards.¹⁹⁴

The existing legal framework also enables the kindergartens to work outside of their premises in order to provide services to families. In the absence of regulations on the provision of these services, however, the work of kindergartens is in practice limited to the institutional setting. In similar fashion, although the law provides for the establishment of counseling services for parents, these services are not delivered in an organized manner.¹⁹⁵

Comprehensive Services, Parenting Education and Community Outreach

Supported by UNICEF since 1997, Lifestart is one of the larger project-based initiatives that contributes to the education of parents and stimulates community cooperation in early childhood education and care. One of the key components of the project is to stimulate the holistic development of preschool-age children from vulnerable population groups. The project included 1,270 mothers of children aged 0–3 years, who learned about the developmental characteristics of their children and about activities which could better stimulate and support their child's development in a home setting. Whereas 24 per cent of participating mothers were Roma, Roma accounted for 34 per cent of the 2,505 children aged 3–6 participating in the project. Children in this age category took part in educational and recreational activities designed to support their physical, cognitive and social-emotional development. Additionally, the project supports centers for early childhood development in the most marginalized areas of 20 municipalities. In addition to the activities with children described above, the centers also implement literacy programmes for parents.

As with most one-off projects, Lifestart lacks the necessary scope for sustainable change. There is no coordination or integration of all the services delivered to the vulnerable groups of children and families. The same is true of other projects targeting Roma which have been supported by international organizations. As a result, despite some documented successes of single projects on integration of Roma into public services including education, and some success in strengthening specific Roma communities, these initiatives mostly remain fragmented, geographically isolated and

193 Law on Protection of Children, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 98/2000.

194 According to the "Strategic Assessment of the Status with the Early Child Development and Preschool Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2007/08". Unpublished paper, prepared for UNICEF, 2008.

195 According to the "Strategic Assessment of the Status with the Early Child Development and Preschool Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2007/08". Unpublished paper, prepared for UNICEF, 2008.

weakly coordinated. Major weaknesses observed in services aimed at providing greater inclusion include the following:

- lack of parental involvement;
- restricted access to the Roma language and culture;
- low level of awareness and knowledge about Roma culture and tradition among service providers;
- low expectation of teachers for learning achievement of Roma children;
- lack of interactive learning and child needs-based learning principles.¹⁹⁶

Segregation and De-Segregation With Respect to Early Childhood Services and Transitions

The main language of instruction in kindergartens is Macedonian, which is the main language of instruction in 94.3 per cent of all kindergarten groups in the country. This is followed by Albanian, which is the language of instruction for 4.6 per cent of kindergarten groups, with the remainder (13 groups in total) for Turkish-speaking and Serbian-speaking children.¹⁹⁷ Macedonian and Albanian children are strictly separated according to their language of instruction, even when they attend the same kindergarten. The fact that these figures do not reflect the distribution of languages of instruction in compulsory primary education indicates that children who speak either Albanian, Turkish or Serbian are proportionally less present in kindergartens than are Macedonian-speaking children.

Since the Roma language is not officially present in the kindergartens, Roma children mainly attend the Macedonian language groups, and exceptionally the Turkish and Albanian language groups. This prevents the separation of the Roma children from the others, but it also makes it more difficult to integrate Roma children whose mother tongue is Romani into the other groups. Although these children enter the kindergartens without knowing the language of instruction, none of the official kindergarten and school programmes envisages Macedonian as a second language. Also, the staff is not trained to deal with such situations.

Roma children whose mother tongue is Romani are included in the educational process with lower language competency, which places them in an inferior position in relation to the other pupils. Notwithstanding the particular importance of a stimulating language environment in the preschool preparation of Roma children, there are very few Roma preschool educators in public kindergartens to smooth the transition from preschool to the formal school environment. As a result of their inadequate fluency in the language of instruction, Roma children face an increased risk of streaming into special classes where the learning expectations are significantly lower.

The language of instruction is not the only obstacle for the integration of Roma children. A mono-cultural approach in working with children is closely linked to the mono-lingualism of the Macedonian educational system as a whole.¹⁹⁸ This means that even

196 UNESCO: Briefing paper for the Experts' UNESCO/Council of Europe Meeting, Paris 2007, Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education. Audit of Preschool provision.

197 Source of all statistical data in this paragraph: State Statistical Office (Public institutions for care and education – kindergartens, 2009.– Statistical Review 6.4.10.02/646).

198 Only the Search for Common Ground Macedonia-supported project: Mosaic of bilingual groups in public kindergartens, actively sought to enable socialization of preschool-aged children in a multicultural environment. However, while the project supports bilingual groups which include the Macedonian and Albanian, Turkish or Serbian language, Romani is not among the languages supported. See http://www.sfcg.org/programmemes/macedonia/macedonia_mozaik.html.

Roma children whose mother tongue is Macedonian do not generally experience the kindergarten and the school as 'their' environment because they are mainly exposed to the influence of Macedonian culture. The carers and educators in kindergartens and teachers in the schools mainly come from the same ethnic community as the language of instruction, creating an atmosphere of insufficient sensitivity to cultural differences and in some cases preventing respect for such differences.

Reinforcing the lack of preparation in multiculturalism is the low proportion of Roma among the staff in the kindergartens and in schools. As a result, stereotypes and prejudices toward Roma among non-Roma staff generally go unchallenged. The staff, in turn, tend to deal with Roma children on the basis of preconceived low expectations regarding the children's potential. Moreover, the staff is unprepared to handle the prejudices of non-Roma parents who are reluctant to accept Roma children into groups with their children.¹⁹⁹ Taken together, these factors impact the overall atmosphere in a way that has a negative effective, not only on the social-emotional well-being, but also the intellectual development of Roma children. This is especially the case in compulsory primary education.

There are no preschool institutions for children with special needs, and very few children with special needs are included in standard kindergarten groups. Also, because of legal provisions allowing children with special educational needs to start with compulsory education later than other children, there are almost no Roma aged 6–8 years enrolled in special schools.

As discussed in the previous chapter, available data suggest that the total proportion of Roma children in Macedonian special schools is well above the percentage of Roma children within the total population of children. This situation is mainly due to teachers delivering insufficient education to Roma children aged 6–10. As a result, these children move into special schools after the age of 10, following the transition from class-based to subject-based instruction. The large number of Roma children in special schools is also due in part, to the insistence of some parents to have them placed there. Some Roma parents do this to be able to receive state benefits provided to families when a child with special needs is enrolled in a special school.²⁰⁰

Whatever their positive effects, many of the projects that target Roma children risk contributing to segregation. On the one hand, programme activities dedicated solely to Roma children isolate them from non-Roma children, even in cases where there are members of other ethnic communities living in the same neighborhood. On the other hand, perceptions on the part of non-Roma – particularly families with low social-economic status – that Roma children receive special attention, may increase hostility to Roma and increase efforts by non-Roma to maintain distance from Roma. These projects also raise a dilemma which is echoed loudly among the donors: satisfying the need for integration, which is provided by the non-separation of the Roma and non-Roma children in all activities, versus making the most efficient use of limited resources for the Roma population through ethnic targeting.

199 The evaluation of the project: Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools, showed that, before the training for stereotypes and prejudices, the staff in charge of working with the Roma children in the kindergartens had a defensive attitude or implicit prejudices towards Roma and among the non-Roma parents there was a certain degree of ethnic intolerance which could be seen in distancing their children. Evaluation study of the programme: Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools, June 2008.

200 Advancing Education of Roma in Macedonia: Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions, Roma Education Fund, 2007.

Transition of Roma Children from Kindergarten to School

Preschool education in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has not been a target of initiatives on inclusive education because it is not part of compulsory education. However, as part of a strategy to overcome differences imposed by living environments (rural vs. urban), socio-economic status and the educational level of the parents, nine-year compulsory education is expected to neutralize the existing differences. It should also enable better adaptation of the pupils to future educational requirements, by reducing the minimum enrolment age from 7 to 6.²⁰¹ On the other hand, the absorption of the last year of preschool into primary school seems to have ended the state's efforts to include preschool-age children of any ethnic background into public educational institutions.

Given that most Roma children speak Romani and do not attend kindergartens, they tend to arrive in primary school with little knowledge of the language of instruction. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the national curriculum does not take into account the need for the investment of systematic efforts to ensure that children master the language of instruction. Teachers are also not trained on how to assist the children in mastering the language of instruction. This is despite the fact that the Law on Primary Education prescribes that the schools should organize additional teaching hours for all students who do not show satisfactory results. In fact, only in rare cases are extra hours organized for those Roma children struggling with the language of instruction.²⁰²

One of the biggest projects, which aims to facilitate the entry of the Roma children into primary schools, is managed by the Open Society Foundation of Macedonia, in cooperation with Roma NGOs.²⁰³ In the 2008/2009 school year, around 200 Roma children were included in Roma Education Centers, located in five Roma settlements. These Centers strive to impart basic mathematical knowledge, Macedonian language skills and other skills necessary for successful integration into primary education. The Centers also provided extra-curricular support, including help with homework and organizing additional tutoring in various subjects for around 700 Roma children in five primary schools. Notwithstanding the positive effects of the project and its impact on the children's academic attainment (especially in lower primary education), the fact remains that this is a result of the activities outside of the formal system of education.

201 Concept for the nine-year primary education and upbringing. Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia, Bureau for Development of Education, 2007.

202 Law on Primary Education, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 52 from 2002; Advancing Education of Roma in Macedonia: Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions, Roma Education Fund, 2007.

203 Foundation Open Society-Macedonia: Roma education programme <http://www.soros.org.mk/default.asp?lang=eng&menuid=242>.

CHAPTER 4

Key Challenges in the Process of Inclusion of the Roma Population in Early Childhood Development Programmes

There are a number of key challenges in seeking the inclusion of the Roma population in early childhood development programmes. These challenges can be grouped as follows:

- cultural challenges;
- economic and social challenges;
- challenges in health and well-being of young children aged 0–3 years;
- the broader educational challenge, and in particular, the early education challenge;
- the data collection challenge;
- the integration and segregation of Roma children.

Each of these challenges is addressed in more detail below.

Cultural Challenges

Elements of patriarchal culture can be observed in many Roma communities across the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Harmful gender roles and traditional practices present in communities are not known to Macedonian institutions, thus undermining the effectiveness of some public services. For example, early marriages which put teenagers in parental roles cannot be addressed effectively in the current policy framework, as teenage parents need systematic and targeted support to raise their children in a fully responsible manner. While this is not a burning issue in the general population, it is a reality in Roma communities, but there are no programmes designed to specifically support teenage parents to complete their formal education, gain employment or learn about their children's development.

81

Economic and Social Challenges Faced by Roma Parents with Young Children

High rates of unemployment and poverty in Roma communities prevent families from raising their children in the way they know to be best. Parents who work but are poor, cannot afford to pay kindergarten fees and often leave older children to care for younger siblings during working hours.

The dominant understanding in Roma communities is that all members of the family are responsible for raising the youngest, with older children often expected to take care of their younger siblings. In addition to placing a considerable burden on older children, this arrangement threatens the proper development of the younger children.

In Roma communities, child development is generally seen as a spontaneous process rather than the result of organized efforts to encourage the child to develop emotionally, socially, cognitively and intellectually. Knowledge about the various aspects of early childhood development is largely absent in Roma families in general and among women in particular, who have limited access to education and are more vulnerable to poverty.

Challenges to the Health and Well-Being of Young Children Aged 0–3 Years

Beyond the stated recognition of the need for services to optimize childcare in the first three years of life, and despite the importance of this period for brain development, to date there has been no systematic response to this need. The participation of this age group in early childhood development programmes (in the public kindergartens) is insignificant. Of the total number of children that attended kindergartens only 2 per cent were aged 1 year or under and 6 per cent of the children were aged 2 years or under. Moreover, while this age group is to a large extent covered by relevant health programmes (over 50 per cent with health examinations, over 80 per cent with home visits, and over 90 per cent with immunizations), these programmes do not take a holistic approach to early childhood development. In its efforts to improve the practices of families in caring for children, the Macedonian healthcare system is mainly focused on transferring specific information, with little attention being paid to the effectiveness of this transfer in terms of changes in parental behavior and acquisition of healthy, safe, socio-emotional and cognitive stimulation. Similarly, periodic check-ups in healthcare institutions are mainly focused on the assessment of physical health at the expense of overall child development, with no national system for recording and monitoring health problems and developmental delays.

The family remains the primary environment for children in the 0–3 age range and therefore exerts the greatest direct impact on the quality of early childhood development. However, 95 per cent of Roma mothers who delivered in 2007 had completed only primary education or lower, 95 per cent of Roma live in peri-urban and poor areas generally characterized by poor living conditions. This being the case, the accumulation of social and educational risk factors among Roma families with small children leads to improper cognitive and language stimulation in the interactions of family members with children aged 0–3. The lack of public services for the social-emotional and language-cognitive stimulation of development in early childhood may also result in additional difficulties in the social integration of these children when they enter the formal educational sector.²⁰⁴

The difference in the percentage of children hospitalized due to pneumonia between the Roma (52 per cent) and the majority population (21.5 per cent) as well as the corresponding difference in the percentage of children that were treated for diarrheal diseases (22.7 per cent among Roma children versus 13.3 per cent among Macedonian), may be attributed to Roma parents' inability to identify the symptoms of disease in timely fashion. Poor communication between healthcare workers (who are usually not Roma) and Roma parents, may reduce the effectiveness of information concerning preventive

204 EACEA, Eurodyce: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities through Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe, Brussels, 2009.

health care and treatment of sick children, with deficiencies in inter-cultural competencies among healthcare workers potentially contributing to misunderstanding and abuse.

Parents with lower levels of completed education are more likely to engage in improper health practices such as poor diet, alcohol consumption and smoking, as well as including improper and late use of existing preventive healthcare programmes. In particular, lack of general knowledge of the principles of a healthy lifestyle and how to address sickness in children, have a negative impact on the health of the children.

The country has a stable legal framework²⁰⁵ which favours long-term maternity leave, reduced working time for parents of children with special educational needs and breastfeeding of children up to the age of one year. However there is weak institutional support by the public institutions for the nurturing of children between the ages of 1 and 3. In addition, Roma families are generally excluded from these social packages because most Roma parents are unemployed or work in the informal private sector.

There is no legislative and institutional integration of care for children with special needs and developmental delays. Instead, this type of care is covered by institutions under two ministries, with little coordination at ministerial or institutional levels. Institutions under the Ministry of Health provide early detection, monitoring and treatment of the medical aspects of disability, as well as limited services on early identification and development stimulation (through the Center for Children Born at Risk in Skopje and the development counseling office in Bitola, respectively). Although these services are free for everyone, including families who do not have health insurance, actual utilization is limited by geographical distance, lack of access to information among parents and the absence of a standardized referral system for children. For its part, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy provides social assistance for the children with disability, but most children aged 3 years and younger remain outside all these programmes, such that the quality of their care depends mostly on what is provided by the family. Additionally, although there is a legal possibility for children categorized with mild to moderate disability to attend regular kindergartens, the total number of children between ages 0–3 in the kindergartens is insignificant, with only 7 children with developmental delays in this age group attending kindergartens in 2009.²⁰⁶

The categorization of children with special needs is done by various health institutions, all of which rely primary on a medical model which is not sufficiently specific to distinguish between organic impairment and disability rooted in social factors. The current situation in the country requires a model for categorization on the basis of educational needs (e.g., organic impairment, ethnicity).²⁰⁷

The Broader Education Challenge, and in Particular, the Early Education Challenge

The transfer of the preschool group of children from the kindergartens to the primary schools appears to have ended systemic efforts to include the parents of children in preparing them for school, which was traditionally considered to be the role of the kindergartens. As a result of that, there are no special programmes or campaigns that could be used to increase the low level of inclusion of children in the preschool institutions. In addition, the disproportionately low rate of enrollment of Roma children in preschool institutions effectively already fosters the social exclusion of Roma in early childhood.

205 Law on Labour, Official Gazette No. 62/05.

206 State Statistical Office, 2010.

207 Marcella Deluca, 2007.

Parental training on early childhood development is organized but is of limited scope, and then only through externally supported initiatives and projects. Because of this, children from families with lower social and economic status who do not attend kindergartens are generally exposed only to traditional approaches to childrearing in the family, without sufficient stimulation for proper social, emotional and intellectual development. This is especially the case for Roma, who consequently face difficulties when they first enter the school system.

The curriculum in use in state kindergartens is not based on accepted standards for early learning and development. Combined with the absence of a system for monitoring and assessment of the quality of early childhood care and education services, this means that there are no institutionalized possibilities to assess the effect of programmes on children's developmental and learning outcomes.

Kindergartens have no sustained cooperation with the parents and the local community. On the one hand, the process of decentralization is still in an early phase, such that there is no system for active management of kindergartens at the local level. On the other hand, there is no coordination and integration of all the services that come into contact with vulnerable groups of families and children.

The number of children enrolled in the first grade of primary education is lowest in the Roma community – far below the corresponding enrollment rates in Macedonian, Albanian and other ethnic communities. The percentage of Roma children completing primary education is also disproportionately low. Reasons for the low inclusion and the high dropout rates among Roma children include poor economic and social conditions, the low educational level of their parents and negative attitudes toward the school, as well as the insufficient preparation of the children for school. Other reasons can be found in teachers, who tend both to have low academic expectations of Roma and to be unwilling to make additional efforts in activities to advance the cognitive development of pupils who come from intellectually deprived environments.

The Data Collection Challenge

There is no official monitoring system to produce ethnically disaggregated data on key health indicators, including but not limited to access to health services and morbidity rates. As a result, most information regarding access by Roma to relevant services comes from assessment and research done by NGOs. These NGOs have widely varying degrees of capacity to design and carry out methodologically appropriate data collection, resulting in turn in broad discrepancies among findings of different studies on a given theme. Closely related to this, there is no single dataset allowing a comparison of the Roma's participation in education with that of the majority population.

Taking into account the universal lack of ethnically disaggregated data regarding access to services, enrollment in educational institutions and educational outcomes, recent official statistical publications (especially those related to kindergartens) have presented the attendance and enrolment data by ethnicity. In similar fashion, the latest Law on Health Records stipulates that official forms for collecting health data will include ethnicity.²⁰⁸

The typologies of developmental delays contained in the Law on Child Protection and the Law on Social Protection are not compatible with each other or with the OECD

208 Zakon za evidencii vo oblasta na zdravstvoto, Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija 20/2009.

categorization of children with special learning needs. Moreover, there are no specific and standardized instruments for assessment of disability. As a result, there are no accepted figures on disability by category and ethnicity at the national level.

Transition and Segregation of Roma Children

Roma children in kindergartens and schools are not separated on the basis of language from the ethnic majority, as is the case with children from other ethnic communities who have the possibility to attend instruction in their mother tongue. However, the Roma children are exposed to a mono-cultural non-Roma setting, with the mono-lingual approach closely related to the mono-cultural approach. As a result, there is very little learning about Roma culture. This situation is reflected in the incomplete integration of Roma children, who are often not fully accepted by the non-Roma children and their parents and who may manifest their own lack of comfort in an unfamiliar setting by distancing themselves from the other children.

Because the curriculum does not foresee working with children for whom the mother tongue is different from the language in which kindergarten and school activities are conducted, kindergarten and school staff are not trained to teach the language of instruction to non-native speakers. Roma children with Roma mother tongue therefore face additional linguistic difficulties in adapting to kindergartens and schools. Lack of knowledge of the language of instruction results in turn in a danger that Roma children will be referred to special schools where the learning expectations are much lower than in standard schools.

The educational system offers neither pre-service nor in-service training programmes for preschool staff in multicultural education in general or in fighting stereotypes and prejudices against Roma in particular. Also, because of the extremely small numbers of Roma employed in kindergartens, stereotypes and prejudices among non-Roma staff go unchallenged. As a result, the kindergarten environment is poorly prepared for Roma children.

Many of the projects that aim to contribute to the inclusion of Roma children in education raise a dilemma between satisfying the need for integration (which is provided by the lack of separation of the Roma and non-Roma children in all activities) and making the most efficient use of limited resources for the Roma population at the risk of reinforcing segregation.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

There is overwhelming evidence of the importance of the early years for social and academic competences later in life. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is also widespread agreement about the need to raise the overall quality of early childhood experiences, including the transition to primary education. Nonetheless, despite knowledge of the positive influence of early childhood education on school progression and educational outcomes, there is no consensus on how to optimize early learning experiences for all children.

The observations and experience described in this Macedonian report yield a set of conclusions and recommendations on ways in which the early learning experience might be optimized for Roma children. The conclusions and recommendations are organized under four headings: access, financing, quality and research.

Access

It is a fundamental assumption of this report that all children should have equal access to affordable preschool education of a consistent quality. In practice, however, there is a shortage of affordable and accessible early childhood education (ECE) service options for preschool children in the country. This shortage is compounded by the concentration of public preschool institutions in urban settings. As a result, Roma families often face barriers of cost and distance.

For ECEC service to be accessible, several conditions must be met:

1. A space must be available. In practice, this means that each local community should house a publicly funded kindergarten to serve at least children between the ages of three and five. In remote and underserved areas, alternative forms of preschool education should be considered to supplement publicly funded kindergartens.
2. Services must be appropriate to the needs of both the child and the family. Parents should have the possibility to choose what preschool they want their children to be in.
3. Expenses to be covered by parents must be kept at a level proportionate to parents' level of income.
4. Parents should have access to the information, tools, and support they need to get their children off to a good start in life.

5. Local authorities should be informed about the need for ECE and encouraged to include ECE in local budgets.

With an eye to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to participate in quality ECE, the following guidelines should be applied:

- Focus on communities where participation has been low, attending in particular to Roma and rural communities.
- Address the specific needs of individual communities, taking a holistic approach to child development to ensure that the activities of healthcare and educational institutions are mutually reinforcing.
- Increase the Government's role in facilitating access to quality ECE services, including but not limited to eliminating administrative barriers to such access.
- Prioritize reduction of inequalities and reorganization of current programmes at the same level as expanding enrollment of under-served populations under the current institutional framework.

Financing

Although the central government in the country is no longer directly responsible for preschool education, its fiscal power has played an important role in shaping the current institutional framework. Moreover, the central government remains responsible for transferring to municipalities the funds to be used for preschool education. Thus, it is still the case that "only the regular funding that state investment brings is able to guarantee access and quality on a fairly equitable basis for all groups."²⁰⁹

Policy research and analysis of practice show that good quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) requires an adequate level of funding for operation of the programme, with a significant public investment essential to provide stability for programmes while keeping fees affordable for parents. More specifically, public funding must be substantial enough to finance capital costs and to cover all or most of the costs of programme operation such that any costs to parents are affordable for families across the income spectrum. Additionally, public funding must be sufficient to ensure adequate infrastructure and training at all levels.

Recommendations aimed at ensuring adequate funding for ECD in the country include the following:

1. Increasing the state budget for preschool education by revising the basis for the transfer from center to municipalities of earmarked grants for child protection (including ECD) to focus on annual per-child costs.
2. Establishing a normative model for estimating the costs of ECD on central and local level that will provide the opportunity for equitable access and quality assurance for different levels of provision of services (e.g., formal full-day preschool; half-day preschool; day-care centers; outreach services).
3. Building the capacity of the municipalities to plan and realize expansion of ECD programmes toward the ultimate goal of reaching and sustaining universal access.
4. Reviewing the fiscal implications of providing free-of-charge, learning-focused activities (3 hours per day 3 times a week) for all children aged 3 to 5 years.

209 OECD, 2001.

5. Mapping and identifying possibilities for inter-municipal cooperation in establishing and financing comprehensive, differentiated ECD services for marginalized and under-developed areas.

Quality

The paucity of specific evidence about the quality of Macedonian kindergartens points to the need to develop monitoring and evaluation arrangements in this area. In the meantime, initiatives aimed at quality improvement should focus broadly on ensuring that all children benefit from stimulation, positive experiences, and interactions that nurture all aspects of their development. Integral to such initiatives should be provisions for realizing the right to choose, the right to play and the right to creative expression, with equal progress opportunity secured for all children.

Approaches to be considered by state and local authorities for improving the quality of ECD services in the country include the following:

1. Strengthening regulations related to ECD services.
2. Encouraging in-service training for persons employed in institutions providing ECD services.
3. Raising wages of persons delivering ECD services.
4. Supporting initiatives associated with quality.
5. Funding local institutions that can support quality initiatives.

International experience suggests that the development and application of quality frameworks can help to guide and support professional staff, to promote an even level of quality across age groups, and to facilitate communication between staff, parents and children. Bringing together some of the approaches listed in the previous paragraph, a Macedonian national quality framework could include:

- A clear statement of the values and goals that should guide early childhood centres;
- A list of programme standards to facilitate development and learning (e.g., child/staff ratios, teacher qualifications);
- An outline of the knowledge, skills, dispositions and values that children at different ages can be expected to master across broad developmental areas;
- An assessment framework focusing on children's outcomes and guiding their growth and progress across learning and developmental areas;
- A set of guidelines outlining the processes through which children achieve age-appropriate goals and how preschool teachers should support them, with particular attention to children whose home environment is linguistically and culturally different from the formal educational environment.

Research

Bridging the long-standing gap between research and practice in ECEC requires research focused on practice and that research findings be disseminated in a user-friendly format. To this end, the following types of research should be undertaken:

1. An examination of the factors explaining non-participation in early childhood education services.
2. A synthesis of research evidence from within and outside the country on the characteristics and consequences of practices in ECEC, with particular attention to

what parents and practitioners can do to implement the practices most beneficial for Roma children.

3. A survey of practices for making the transition to kindergartens, taking into account family characteristics and children's experiences before entering kindergarten.
4. A survey of practices for making the transition from kindergarten to school.

All research under this heading should be based on ethnically disaggregated data gathered and maintained in conformity with EU standards on data protection.

Bibliography

- Alakeson, V. (2005), *Too much, too late: life chances and spending on education and training*, Social Market Foundation, London.
- Archive Pediatrics, (2008), *Primary Care Services Promoting Optimal Child Development From Birth to Age 3*, Vol. 133, downloaded from www.archpediatrics.com on January 10, 2008.
- Barany, Zoltan D. (1995), *The Roma in Macedonia: Ethnic Politics and the Marginal Condition in a Balkan State*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 18: 515–31.
- Ball, J., Pence, A., Pierre, M. and Kuehne, V. (2002), *Intergenerational teaching and learning in Canadian First Nations partnership programs*. In M. Kaplan, N. Henkin and A. Kusano (Eds.), *Linking lifetimes: A global view of intergenerational exchange* (pp. 83–100). New York, NY: United Press of America, Inc.
- Brooks-Gunn, J., Klebanov, P.K., Smith, J., Duncan, G.J. and Lee, K. (2003), *The black-white test score gap in young children: Contributions of test and family characteristics*. *Applied Developmental Science*, 7, 239–252.
- Carneiro P. and Heckman J. (2003), *Human Capital Policy. Working Paper 9495* <http://www.nber.org/papers/w9495> National Bureau of Economic Research 1050 Massachusetts Avenue Cambridge, MA 02138 February 2003.
- Crowe, David M. (1996), *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.
- CRPRC Studiorum (2008), Report on the condition of housing and health in Roma community in Macedonia.
- Damovska L, Shehu F, Janeva N, Plachevska and Samardziska-Panova, Lj (2009), *Early Learning and Development Standards for children ages 0–6 years*. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Macedonia [Стандарди за рано учење и развој кај деца од 0 до 6 години].
- Decade Watch (2007), Updates available at: www.romadecade.org.
- Damovska L, Shehu F, Janeva N., Plachevska S. and Samardziska-Panova, Lj (2009), *Early Learning and Development Standards for children ages 0–6 years*. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Macedonia.
- Državen zavod za statistika (2010), *Osnovni i sredni učilišta na krajot na učebnata 2008/2009 godina* [Primary and Secondary Schools at the End of the 2008/2009 School Year]. Skopje: Državen zavod za statistika.
- Deluca, Marcella (2007), *Gathering statistics and indicators for students with disabilities, learning difficulties and disadvantages in the Republic of Macedonia*, Feasibility study and draft operational plan.
- Durham, Edith (1984), *High Albania: A Victorian Traveller's Balkan Odyssey*. London: Phoenix Press.
- EACEA, Eurodyce (2009), *Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities through Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe*, Brussels, 2009.
- EUMC (2006), Joint Statement of European Roma women activists, EUMC round table with Romani Women May 3, 2006 Bucharest, Romania.
- European Health for All (2006), database, January 2006.
- European Roma Rights Center (2003), *Profile of One Community: A Personal Document Survey*.
- Foundation Open Society Institute–Macedonia, (2006) Roma Education Program, Evaluation Report 2005–6.
- _____ (2009), *How Inclusive is the Macedonian Society*.
- _____ Roma Education Programme, Accessed December 2010 at: <http://www.soros.org.mk/default.asp?lang=eng&menuid=242>.
- Fox, Nathan A. (2009), *The importance of early experience for brain and behavioral development: Implication for Early childhood policy and practice*, ISSA Annual Conference, Bucharest, 2009.

- Fraser, Angus (1995), *The Gypsies*. Second ed. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Hancock, Ian (1993), Review, *supra* note 35 at 73, pp. 79–80.
- Hart B. and T. R. Risley (1995), *Meaningful Differences in Everyday Experiences of Young American Children*. U.S.: Brookes. HERA, (2008), Report from the work of the Center for 2008.
- Institute for Health Protection of Mothers and Children (2010), Annual Report, Information on the Health Status of Mother and Children in the Republic of Macedonia in 2008/2009.
- International Step by Step Association: *Competent Teachers of the 21st Century* [http://www.issa.nl/docs_pdfs/Pedagogical-Standards-final-WEB.pdf] Accessed 21 Dec. 2011.
- Kenrick, D. and G. Puxon (1972), *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, London and Brighton 1972.
- Kolsti, J. (1991), *Albanian Gypsies: The Silent Survivors. The Gypsies of Eastern Europe*. Ed. David Crowe and John Kolsti., 51–60. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe.
- Lewy, G. (2000), *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Martinez-Vasquez, J.A. Timofeeva and N., Feruglio (2007), *Fiscal Decentralization in the Republic of Macedonia: An Assessment*, Draft Report, UNDP.
- Marushiakova, E. and V. Popov (1999), *The Bulgarian Romanies during the Second World War. In the Shadow of the Swastika: The Gypsies During the Second World War*. Ed. Donald Kenrick., 89–94. Vol. 2. Hatfield: Centre de recherches tsiganes/University of Hertfordshire Press.
- _____ (2001), *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire: A Contribution to the History of the Balkans*. Ed. Donald Kenrick. Paris and Hatfield: Centre de recherches tsiganes and University of Hertfordshire Press.
- Mijalkovska, M. (2009), *Comparative analyses of available study programs for preschool educators in Macedonia*. Skopje, 2009 [Компаративна анализа на постоечките наставни програми за воспитувачи во Македонија]. University St Cyril and Methody: Faculty of Philosophy, (2009), – Institute of Pedagogy: Student seminar paper.
- Mujič, Muhamed A. (1953), *Položaj Cigana u jugoslovenskim zemljama pod osmanskom vlašću* [The Position of Gypsies in the Yugoslav Lands under Ottoman Rule]. Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju 3–4: 137–93.
- OSCE/ODIHR (2005), Election Observation Mission, Final Report, June 2005.
- OSI (2006), *Monitoring education for Roma*. A statistical baseline for Central, Easter and South Easter Europe.
- OSI/EU (2007), Monitoring and Advocacy Programme: Equal Access to Quality Education For Roma Macedonia, from Vol. 2: Croatia, Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovakia: Monitoring report 2007, pp. 241–247.
- Pavlovski, B. (2008), *Health, health protection and health impact on Roma population in the Republic of Macedonia*.
- Petrovich, M.B. (1980), *Religion and Ethnicity in Eastern Europe. Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe*. Ed. Peter Sugar. 373–417. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio.
- Petrovski, T. (1993), *Kalendarskite običaj kaj Romite vo Skopje i okolinata*. Skopje: Feniks.
- Poulton, H. (1993), *The Roma in Macedonia: A Balkan Success Story?* RFE/RL, Research Report 2, No.19: 42–45.
- _____ (1995), *Who are the Macedonians?* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Puxon, G. (1974), *Romite vo Makedonija i Vizantija* [The Roma in Macedonia and Byzantium]. Trans. Blagoj Stoičovski. Glasnik za nacionalna istorija 18(2): 81–95.
- Refugees International (2009), *Nationality Rights for All: A Progress Report and Global Survey on Statelessness*, 11 March 2009.
- Republic of Macedonia – Agency for Employment (2011), Review of unemployed persons according to ethnic affiliation.
- _____ (2011), Data available at: <http://www.avrm.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/nacionalnost012011.pdf>.

- Republic of Macedonia (2007), *Equal Access to Quality Education For Roma in Macedonia*. From Vol. 2: Croatia, Montenegro, Slovakia: Monitoring report, pp. 241–247.
- Republic of Macedonia – Ministerstvo za trud i socijalna politika (2010), *Analiza za sostojbata i namaluvanjeto na romskite devojčinja i momčinja vo obrazovniot proces vo Republika Makedonija* [Situation Analysis and the Attrition of Romani Girls and Boys in the Educational Process in the Republic of Macedonia]. Skopje: Ministerstvo za trud i socijalna politika.
- Republic of Macedonia – Ministry of Education and Science (2004), National Strategy for Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia, 2005–2015.
- _____ (2006), National Programme for Education Development, 2005–2015.
- _____ (2007), Concept for the nine-year primary education and upbringing. Bureau for Development of Education, 2007 [Концепција за деветгодишното основно образование и воспитание].
- Republic of Macedonia – Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (2005), The Strategy on Roma in the Republic of Macedonia.
- _____ (2009a), Action Plan for employment under the Decade of Roma Inclusion.
- _____ (2009b), Early childhood development: Early learning and development Standards for children 0–6.
- _____ (2009c), Operational Plan for active programmes and measures for employment.
- _____ (2009d), Revised Decade Action Plans.
- _____ (2010), Situation Analysis and the Attrition of Romani Girls and Boys in the Educational Process in the Republic of Macedonia.
- Republic of Macedonia – Ministry of Labour and Social Policy/GTZ (2002), Seminar on Early identification, registration and reporting of children born with risk and children with developmental disabilities, November, 2002.
- Republic of Macedonia – Official Gazette (2000), Law on Protection of Children, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 98/2000 [Закон за заштита на децата. Службен весник на Република Македонија бр.98/2000].
- _____ (2004), Changes and Amendments of the Law on Child Protection. Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No.65/04 [Измени и дополнувања на Законот за заштита на децата. Службен весник на Република Македонија бр. 65/04].
- _____ (2005), Law on Labour, Official Gazette No.62/05.
- _____ (2007a), Basis of the Programme for Educational Work with Preschool Children in Public Kindergartens. Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 125 15.12.2007.
- _____ (2007b), Law on Primary Education, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 52/02; Advancing Education of Roma in Macedonia: Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions, Roma Education Fund, 2007 [Закон за основно образование. Службен весник на Република Македонија бр. 52/02].
- _____ (2007c), Basis of the programme for educational-upbringing work with preschool age children in the public kindergartens. Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 125 15.12.2007 [Основи на програмата за воспитно-образовна работа со деца на претшколска возраст во детските градинки.].
- _____ (2008), Law for Primary Education, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, Number 103 /08.
- _____ (2009), Social Protection Law: Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No.79/2009.
- Republic of Macedonia – State Statistical Office (2002), Book I, Total population, households and dwellings.
- _____ (2002a), National Census 2002. [Државен завод за статистика. Попис на населението].
- _____ (2002b), Statistical Yearbook and Census data, 2002.

- _____ (2005), Total population, households and apartments according to the territorial organization of the Republic of Macedonia from 2004, Volume 13, Skopje, 2005.
- _____ (2006), Statistical Annual Review of the Republic of Macedonia.
- _____ (2007), Multi Indicator Cluster Survey, MIKS, 2005–2006.
- _____ (2008a), Publication No 2.4.8.14/603, 2008, Social welfare for children, juveniles and adults in the Republic of Macedonia, 2007–2008.
- _____ (2008b), Statistical review: Population and the social statistics (2.4.9.15) Social welfare for children, juveniles and adults in the Republic of Macedonia 2008–2009.
- _____ (2008c), Statistical review: Population and social statistics: Enrolled students at school year 2007/2008 – 2.4.8.15.604.
- _____ (2009a), Public institutions for care and education – kindergartens], 2009. – Statistical Review] 6.4.10.02/646 [Државен завод за статистика (Јавни установи за згрижување и воспитание на деца – детски градинки) 2009 – Статистички преглед 6.4.10.02/646].
- _____ (2009b), Statistical review: Population and social statistic in the Republic of Macedonia Primary, Lower Secondary and Secondary Schools at the end of the academic 2007/2008 year No 6.4.9.06 /605.
- _____ (2010), Social statistics, Review 2.4.10.02.646.
- Republic of Macedonia (2010), Zakon za sprečuvanje i zaštita od diskriminacija [Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination], Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija 50/2010.
- _____ (2008), Zakon za unapreduvanje i zaštita na pravata na pripadnicite na zaednicite koi se pomalku od 20% od naselenieto vo Republika Makedonija [Law on Advancement and Protection of the Rights of the Members of the Communities Which Are Less than 20% of the Population in the Republic of Macedonia], Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija 92/2008; Zakon za upotreba na jazik što go zboruvaat najmalku 20% od gragjanite vo Republika Makedonija i vo edinicite na lokalnata samouprava [Law on the Use of A Language Spoken by at Least 20 per cent of the Citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and in the Units of Local Government], Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija 101/2008.
- Roma Education Fund (2007), *Advancing Education of Roma in Macedonia: Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions*, Roma Education Fund, 2007 [Унапредување на образованието на Ромите во Македонија: Проценка на земјата и стратески правци на Фондот за образование на Ромите] Roma Education Fund, (2007), *Advancing Education of Roma in Macedonia, Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions*.
- _____ (2008), Evaluation study of the programme: Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools.
- Said, E. W. (1993), *Culture and Imperialism*. UK: Vintage Books.
- Search for Common Ground Macedonia (2004), *Evaluation of Nashe Maalo: Design, Implementation, and Outcomes*, 2004 (<http://www.sfcg.org/sfcg/evaluations/nash2004.pdf>).
- _____ (2004), Nashe Maalo: Television, Theatre and Outreach Projects, http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/macedonia/macedonia_television.html.
- Shonkoff, J.P., Philips, D.A. (2000), *From neurons to neighbourhoods: The science for Early childhood development*, Washington DC, National Academy Press.
- Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija (1991), Ustav na Republika Makedonija [Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia], Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija 52/1991.
- _____ (2001), Ustav na Republika Makedonija [Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia], Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija 52/1991; Amandmani IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII i XVIII na Ustavot na Republika Makedonija [Amendments IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII and XVIII to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia], Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija 91/2001.
- _____ (2002a), Zakon za lokalnata samouprava [Law on Local Government]. Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija, no. 5.

- _____ (2002b), *Zakon za srednoto obrazovanie* [Law on Secondary Education]. Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija, no. 152.
- _____ (2004), *Zakon za finansiranje na edinicite na lokalnata samouprava* [Law on Financing the Units of Local Government]. Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija, no. 61.
- _____ (2007), *Zakon za izmenuvanje i dopolnuvanje na Zakonot za srednoto obrazovanie* [Law on Modifications and Amendments to the Law on Secondary Education]. Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija, no. 49.
- _____ (2008a), *Zakon za izmenuvanje i dopolnuvanje na Zakonot za srednoto obrazovanie* [Law on Modifications and Amendments to the Law on Secondary Education]. Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija, no. 92.
- _____ (2008b), *Zakon za unapreduvanje i zaštita na pravata na pripadnicite na zaednicite koji se pomalku od 20% od naselenieto vo Republika Makedonija* [Law on Advancement and Protection of the Rights of the Members of the Communities Which Are Less than 20% of the Population in the Republic of Macedonia], Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija 92/2008; *Zakon za upotreba na jzik što go zboruvaat najmalku 20% od gragjanite vo Republika Makedonija i vo edinicite na lokalnata samouprava* [Law on the Use of A Language Spoken by at Least 20 per cent of the Citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and in the Units of Local Government], Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija 101/2008.
- _____ (2009), *Zakon za evidencii vo oblasta na zdravstvoto* [Law on Health Records]. Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija, no. 20.
- _____ (2010), *Zakon za sprečuvanje i zaštita od diskriminacija* [Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination], Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija 50/2010.
- Spasovski, O., Ballazhi, S. and Friedman, E. (2010), *Mapping Policies and Practices for the Preparation of Teachers for Inclusive Education in Contexts of Social and Cultural Diversity: Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Country Report*. Turin: European Training Foundation.
- UNCRC (2000), *Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*.
- UNDP (2006), *At Risk: Roma and the Displaced in Southeast Europe*, United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Bratislava.
- _____ (2006), *National Vulnerability report for Macedonia, Focus on Roma*.
- _____ (2007), *Fiscal decentralization in the Republic of Macedonia: An assessment*.
- _____ (2009), *People-Centred-Analysis (PCA)*, [Граѓански засновани анализи].
- UNESCO (2006), *The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Early Child Care and Education programmes*.
- _____ (2006), *International Bureau of Education (IBE) Geneva, (Switzerland) 2006 – Republic of Macedonia Early Child Care and Education (ECCE) programmes*.
- _____ (2007), *Briefing paper for the Experts' UNESCO/Council of Europe Meeting, Paris 2007, Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education, Audit of Preschool provision*.
- UNHCR (2009), *Enisa Eminovska and Sexual Rights Initiative; Fifth Round of the Universal Periodic Review for Macedonia*, UN Human Rights Council, May 2009. Shadow report on the situation of sexual rights of Romani women, children and youth beggars.
- UNICEF (2000), *Vulnerability of Roma Children in the Dispersed Roma Communities in Skopje*, Study Project, UNICEF, World Bank, September 2000.
- _____ (2003), *Evaluation of the Life Start Project 2000–2003*. (Skopje office).
- _____ (2004a), *Attitudes Towards Education among Roma Communities*.
- _____ (2004b), *Innocenti Insight, Children and Disability in Transition in CEE/CIS and the Baltic States*, p. 11.
- _____ (2004c), *Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey, 2006*.

- _____ (2008a), *Evaluation study of the programme: Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschools*.
- _____ (2008b), *Strategic Assessment of the Status with the Early childhood development and Preschool Education in the Republic of Macedonia, 2007/08*. Unpublished paper.
- _____ (2008c), *Strategic Assessment of the Status with the Early Child Development and Preschool Education in the Republic of Macedonia (2007/08)*. Unpublished paper, prepared for UNICEF, 2008.
- _____ (2009a), *Child Census for children who are not registered at birth or do not have personal documents*.
- _____ (2009b), *Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) – Documentation of the process in developing ELDS in Macedonia – UNICEF documents*. (Skopje office).
- _____ (2009c), *Review of the Public Expenditures for Children*.
- UNICEF, World Bank (2000), *Vulnerability of Roma Children in the Dispersed Roma Communities in Skopje*, Study Project, September, 2000.
- United Nations Human Rights Council (2009), *Fifth Round of the Universal Periodic Review*, May 2009, Ensis Eminovska and Sexual Rights Initiative.
- United States Department of State (2008), *Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Macedonia*.
- United States Department of State (2009), *2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Macedonia*. Ustav na Republika Makedonija [Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia], Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija 52/1991; Amandmani IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII i XVIII na Ustavot na Republika Makedonija [Amendments IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII and XVIII to the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia], Služben vesnik na Republika Makedonija 91/2001.
- Vandenbroeck, M. (2007), *Beyond anti-bias education: changing conceptions of diversity and equity in European early childhood education*, European Early Childhood Education Research Association, 15(1).
- Voices for America's Children and the Child and Family Policy Center (2004), *Early Learning Left Out: An Examination of Public Investments in Education and Development by Child Age*. Report prepared in partnership with: Voices for Alabama's Children, Children's Action Alliance of Arizona, Colorado Children's Campaign, Connecticut Voices for Children, Kansas Action for Children, Michigan's Children, Citizens for Missouri's Children, South Dakota Coalition for Children, Vermont Children's Forum, The Children's Alliance of Washington, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, February 2004.
- Weyrauch, W.O. (2001), *Gypsy law: Romani legal traditions and culture*.
- WHO (2004), *Child and Adolescent Health and Development: The importance of carer – child interaction for the survival and development of young children*.
- World Bank (2005), *Decade of the Roma, Non-Roma focus groups, Focus groups discussions, Macedonia 2005*, available at: www.worldbank.org.mk.
- Young Roma Women Leaders (2001), *On virginity*, Research publication, Macedonia 2001.
- Zirojevič, Olga (1981), *Romi na području današnje Jugoslavije u vreme turske vladavine* [Roma on the Territory of Today's Yugoslavia in the Time of Turkish Rule]. Glasnik Etnografskog muzeja u Beogradu 25: 225–45.
- Zoltan, Barany (2000), *Politics and the Roma in state-socialist Eastern Europe*.

Annex 1. The World Bank Argument for Investing in Roma Children

Roma Inclusion: An Economic Opportunity for Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania and Serbia, World Bank, 2010

Roma Inclusion: An Economic Opportunity for Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania and Serbia explores the question: "what is the *economic* argument for Roma inclusion?" The analysis is based on quantitative data from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania, and Serbia, and information from interviews with 222 stakeholders – government and non-government officials and Roma and non-Roma. Seven household surveys for these four countries provided sufficiently rich information to make the economic calculations. The four countries represent more than two-thirds of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

The report argues that Roma inclusion is smart economics, increasing GDPs by more than 3 per cent and government budgets by more than 4 per cent annually now – numbers that are increasing sharply given current population trends. The focus of the report is on the economic benefits of Roma integration. In particular, it asks the question: *How much larger would the economies be, and how much higher would government revenue be, if Roma enjoyed the same labour market opportunities as the majority populations?*

The current labour market integration of Roma is poor. Equal labour market opportunities would generate more economic productivity and provide fiscal benefits in terms of lower government payments for social assistance such as guaranteed minimum income programs, and increased revenue from income taxes. Even lower bound estimates show that there are large economic and fiscal benefits. For the four countries, we estimate the economic benefits to be at least Euro 2 billion annually and the fiscal benefits to be at least Euro 700 million annually. These are lower bound estimates that rely on official population estimates, some from the 2001/2002 national censuses, which put the combined Roma population across these four countries at 1.1 million compared with 3.1 million according to commonly used estimates (e.g. UNDP, 2006). The latter population figures would suggest that the economic benefits from inclusion are at least Euro 5.5 billion annually and fiscal benefits at least Euro 1.8 billion annually for the four countries. This corresponds to productivity losses of 2,412 Euro for each working age Roma in Bulgaria, Euro 7,344 in the Czech Republic, Euro 2,596 in Romania, and Euro 3,458 in Serbia. Further, estimates for Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans region as a whole are Euro 3.4 to 9.9 billion annually in economic gains and Euro 1.2 to 3.5 billion annually in fiscal gains. These figures unequivocally support the words of one of the 222 stakeholders interviewed: "[the Roma] represent an opportunity, not a burden."

For the full Policy Note see: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTROMA/Resources/Policy_Note.pdf.

Annex 2. Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Programs

Early Childhood Programming for Minority Groups

The work of four research professors – two American: Jacqueline Jordan Irvine and John Ogbu; one European, Michel Vandebroeck; and, one Canadian, Jessica Ball – bring interesting insights into how education and early childhood programming for minority groups can be approached. These contributions provide a balance of perspectives. Jacqueline Jordan Irvine focuses on the questions that need to be asked when segregated, racialised education has been the tradition. John Ogbu lists the following factors to explain the continuing education gap between white and black students in the United States: being a “*caste-like, involuntary minority*” affects motivation and achievement; *negative school climate*, in the form of teacher expectation and student-parent-staff relationship, reinforces among students the effects of socioeconomic status and race; in turn, academic success may be considered to be acting white, in particular among adolescents; and schools generally consider *Afro-American vernacular English* as unacceptable. The third contribution by Michel Vandebroeck is situated in the Belgian context of high immigration. Vandebroeck comments on the difficulties for young immigrant children to succeed within the current practice of the early childhood services founded by the majority culture. The final perspective from Jessica Ball, a Canadian expert on First Nations education, outlines ‘guiding principles’ in dealing with minority cultural groups that fear for their identity and continued existence.

1. The Contribution of Jacqueline Jordan Irvine

The recent election of Barack Obama as President of the United States has brought home to many Europeans that EU countries may seriously lag behind in diversity policies and attitudes. Although much progress has been made in the nomination of ethnic minority ministers, most European countries are far away from the election of minority politicians (or bankers) to leadership positions in their fields. A similar delay may exist with regard to European educational research on diversity and inter-cultural education. Already, in 1991, Jacqueline Jordan Irvine²¹⁰ had published her ground-breaking *Black Students and School Failure: Policies, Practices, and Prescriptions*, which received the Outstanding Writing Award from the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, and was selected as an Outstanding Academic Book by the American Association of College and University Research Librarians. In her book, Irvine points to the failure of the American education systems to upgrade the educational experience and performance of the fastest growing segment of the American school population, which is blacks and other minorities. According to Irvine, “the country’s survival and strength will ultimately depend on the quality of education given to this important group that has been systematically and effectively excluded from the benefits of educational opportunity.” Without education, blacks and other minorities will never achieve economic independence, and the self-perpetuating cycle of poor school achievement, poverty, and teen parenthood will grind on relentlessly.

210 Jacqueline Jordan Irvine is Charles Howard Candler Professor of Urban Education in the Division of Educational Studies at Emory University. Professor Irvine’s specialization is in multicultural education and urban teacher education, particularly the education of African American students. Her books include *Black Students and School Failure* (Greenwood); *Growing Up African American in Catholic Schools* (Teachers College Press); *Critical Knowledge for Diverse Students* (AACTE); *Culturally Responsive Lesson Planning for Elementary and Middle Grades* (McGraw-Hill); *In Search of Wholeness: African American Teachers and their Culturally Specific Pedagogy* (Palgrave Publishers); and *Educating Teachers for Diversity: Seeing with the Cultural Eye* (Teachers College Press).

Over 20 years ago, Irvine raised (and answered cogently), the questions that we are asking today as if for the first time:

- Should school integration be compulsory? (In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court declared segregation illegal.) Should parents be compelled by law to send their children to integrated schools? Should school integration be a national educational priority?
- Should taxpayers in more affluent communities be required to share their wealth by supporting schools in poor communities?
- Should parents receive free vouchers to send their children to private schools? Does giving parents this choice of schools serve the public interest?
- Does tracking create educational inequality? Is state mandated, high stakes testing beneficial to minority students? A disproportionate number of minority students are being denied grade promotion and graduation based on mandated standardized tests. Should these tests be increased or decreased?
- Does separating students by ability exaggerate differences and lead to mediocre schooling for those in the middle and lower tracks?
- Is bilingual education politically and pedagogically sound? Does it lead to national disunity?
- Does the focus on multicultural education in schools stress the differences among groups and erode common values?
- Should immigrant and minority children be taught in their native languages? Should schools adopt an English-only policy?
- Should all children be taught by majority and minority teachers? (Minority teachers are more likely to understand the language, personal style and presentation of minority students and exhibit a teaching style that attends to cultural differences in perceptions of authority, instructional delivery and teacher performance, and in their use of culturally familiar speech and events. Their presence among majority students helps to break down negative stereotypes and persuade students that they live in a multicultural society.)
- Is mainstreaming beneficial to handicapped students? Public Law 94–142 gives handicapped students in the States the right to learn in the least restrictive learning environment. What are the pros and cons?
- Do schools discriminate against minority boys?
- Should schools that serve low-income students receive more money from taxpayers?

Irvine argues that black children are subject to school failure because of their culture, race, and social class. In particular, the majority teachers whom they meet hold low expectations about their learning abilities and eventual outcomes. She points out that not all black children are equally at risk, as consideration must be given to regional, class, and gender variations. However, race remains a salient factor that contributes to unequal school treatment and later, to unequal levels of employment and participation in society. She attributes the cause of the problem to failures in cultural synchronization (failure of white school districts and teachers to recognise and acknowledge positively the norms of black community culture), teacher training and pedagogical process, all of which have a deep impact on the school achievement of black students. The author suggests interventions, such as inter-cultural and anti-bias teacher training, more teachers from minority communities and the use of cultural pedagogy. In this regard, she describes competencies that can be developed in teacher training and staff development programmes. Acknowledging that there are no quick and simple solutions, no single programme or packaged intervention, Irvine suggests that the U.S. needs to develop a long-term, visionary national policy, implemented in the field by caring teachers who are supportive, properly trained, and not afraid of, resentful, or hostile to black children.

2. The Contribution of John Ogbu

John Uzo Ogbu (deceased, 2003) was a Nigerian-American anthropologist and professor known for his theories on observed phenomena involving race and intelligence, especially how race and ethnic differences played out in educational and economic achievement. He suggested that being a “caste-like minority” affects motivation and achievement, depressing IQ scores. He also concluded that some students did poorly because high achievement was considered “acting white” among their peers. Ogbu was also involved in the 1996 controversy surrounding the teaching of African American Vernacular English in public schools in Oakland, California. The 2000 book *Eminent Educators: Studies in Intellectual Influence* focused on him as one of “four intellectual giants of the 20th century.” (extracted from *Wikipedia*, 28 February, 2009).

School climate, in the form of teacher expectation, preparation, staff entente, student-parent-staff relationship, has been found to mediate the effects of socioeconomic status and race in academic success (Jussim et al. 1996; Christensen et al. 1992; Comer 1980). The perception of students, parents, and teachers of a positive school climate has also been found to increase academic success and lessen disciplinary problems (Brookover et al. 1978; West 1980; Esposito 1999). Despite the obvious influence of school climate, little research has been carried out to examine the impact of a school’s racial climate on overall academic achievement.

A school’s racial climate includes student perceptions of racial fairness, cultural sensitivity, equitable school policies and practices. Students’ perceptions of a school’s racial climate were found to be related to goal commitment for white students and to social experiences for African American students (Cabrera et al., 1999). It has been suggested that if students perceive the structure of the school as unequal or providing them with little return for their efforts, the students then become disengaged leading to academic failure (Mickelson, 1990; Ogbu, 1978). Another explanation put forward is that of societal stereotypes. Studies on the achievement gap which highlight the academic inferiority of African American students may in fact lead to the conclusion that they are inferior because of their race. It has been shown that African American students’ test performance may suffer because of their own perception and belief of this stereotype, and because of the school’s (teachers and peers) perception and belief of the stereotype (Aronson et al., 1998; Steele and Aronson, 1995).

Involuntary Minorities

Ogbu observed that in some cases groups of people of the same race but located in different countries manifested different ability and/or achievement levels according to some measures. He studied how, why and to what degree this might be so. He concluded that U.S. Americans could be divided into “voluntary minorities” (groups of immigrants who chose to come to the United States, and their descendants) versus “involuntary” or “caste-like” minorities (descendants of groups of persons who found themselves in the United States, or under United States jurisdiction, against their will).

In *Minority Education and Caste* (1978), Ogbu argued that “involuntary minorities” often adopted an “oppositional identity” to the mainstream culture in response to a glass ceiling imposed or maintained by white society on the job-success of their parents and others in their communities. Therefore, he reasoned, some non-whites “failed to observe the link between educational achievement and access to jobs.”^[1]

Acting White

In 1986 Ogbu co-authored, along with Signithia Fordham, a study which concluded that some African American students in a Washington, D.C., high school did not live up to

their academic potential because of the fear of being accused of “acting white,” findings echoed in his 2003 book *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement*. He concluded that these students’ cultural attitudes hindered their own academic achievement and that these attitudes are too often neglected by parents, educators and/or policymakers.

Though the study’s conclusions gained a popular foothold, a later study obtained different results. In 2003, Karolyn Tyson, a sociologist, and William Darity Jr, an economist, both at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, directed an 18 month study at eleven North Carolinian schools which found that white and black students have essentially the same attitudes about scholastic achievement; students in both groups want to succeed in school and show higher levels of self-esteem when they do better in school. The results of this study have been published in a book by Stanford sociologist Prudence Carter.^[2]

A 2006 study titled *An Empirical Analysis of “Acting White”* by Roland G. Fryer, Jr. at Harvard University and Paul Torelli suggested that the phenomenon has a significant effect on black student achievement, especially in schools with high inter-racial contact and among high achieving students, but little or no effect in predominantly black or private schools.^[3]

African American Vernacular English

In 1996, Ogbu played a prominent role in the debate about the utility of African American Vernacular English. As a member of a task force on African American education in Oakland, California he noted that “standard” or “proper” English required in the classroom differed from black vernacular English spoken at home and outside school. Ogbu encouraged teachers to become familiar with and to make use of this vernacular (christened “ebonics”) in helping African American students transition to traditional English.

3. The Contribution of Michel Vandebroek

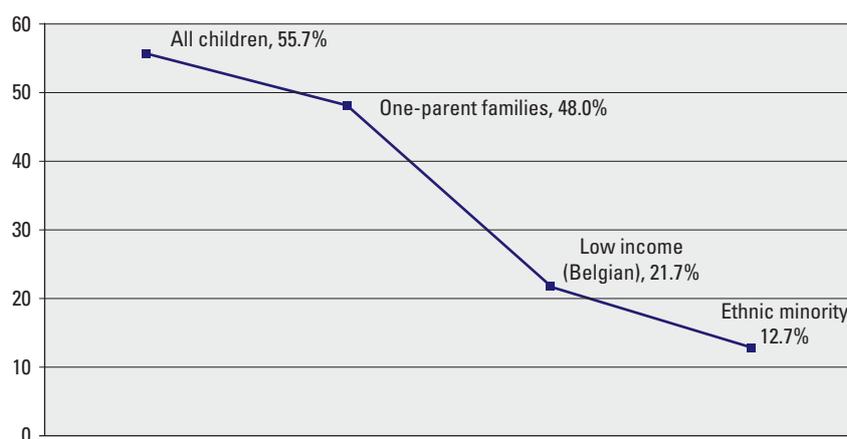
Michel Vandebroek is a professor of sociology at the University of Ghent in Flanders. He has long experience of working across two cultures (French and Flemish) and with socially disadvantaged children from immigrant backgrounds through the Diversity in Early Childhood Education and Training network in Flanders. One of his very useful insights into diversity is his perception that societies tend to label and ‘culturalise’ poverty or exclusion (Vandebroek, 2007). For example, if the children of ethnic groups are not accessing children’s services, a well-known response is to attribute this to cultural preference: “Mothers of such-and-such a group prefer to rear their children themselves!” While it is true that certain cultural factors can play a role (often having little to do with women’s choices, e.g. male traditions and perceptions that prevent women from seeking work outside the home), other equally plausible explanations of low enrolments may be overlooked by government and policy analysts, e.g.

- Ethnic or immigrant mothers may have great difficulty in finding work outside the home, due to a number of factors, e.g. no work available in their neighbourhoods; low language or educational levels; prejudice against foreigners and foreign dress, etc.
- The hidden costs of services may be too great for very poor families to afford.
- Although there may be more children in the poorer neighbourhoods, fewer early childhood services are made available than in affluent ones (confirmed by the ECD reviews).
- Services are organised in such a way as to virtually exclude parents, particularly in education services.

- Mono-cultural services and organisation predominate, that is, only the values and norms of mainstream society are reflected in the available services.²¹¹

In sum, it is far too easy to ‘culturalise’ what are perceived as negative attitudes of minority populations toward state services and society. A more objective analysis demands attention to the family situation and the needs and expectations of excluded populations. This becomes clear from the figure below: whatever the ethnic belonging of the different groups, the children of disadvantaged families – who most need services – attend them least of all, which indicates that questions of class and income also enter into decisions about enrolling children in services.

Figure A. Use of childcare (0–3 years) by different groups in Flanders



Source: *The Child in Flanders. Kind en Gezin, 2008.*

In sum, the structural barriers and environmental constraints that prevent access to early childhood services need to be identified and assessed (see *Starting Strong II*, pages 74–77). For example, junior classes attached to primary schools often fail to meet the needs of working parents as they generally open on a half-day basis and only during term-time. Services may be closed for summer, winter and spring breaks, and for teacher professional development days. Unless this service is augmented by after-school care or another wrap-around service, the situation forces many mothers of young children either to reduce their work to part-time or to drop out of employment for a number of years to care for their children at home. In addition, junior classes attached to primary schools are

211 Vandebroek’s insights are corroborated in Roma experience by Katy Negrin from the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program, and senior editor of a recently released series of monitoring reports on *Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma*, covering eight Central and South Eastern European countries. Negrin points out that:

- Many Roma parents are illiterate and cannot read the notifications sent to them to enrol their children in kindergarten or school.
- Many Roma families live in marginalised settlements, often illegal or unregulated, and their children are not included in the usual call for enrolment, that is, that Roma parents may not receive enrolment notifications.
- In many cases, even if their settlement is legal, just getting to school from a Roma settlement can be an obstacle: Roma settlements are often far from a local school, over bad roads, and do not have regular public transport.
- With poor access to health care, Roma children may not have the medical certificate required for registration in a kindergarten.
- Many Roma families are so poor that they do not have money to dress children appropriately for school. Especially in bad weather, they keep their children home rather than sending them out without shoes or a coat. Money for school supplies may also be an obstacle. In only a few countries are materials provided free of charge to students in need.

often unsuitable for very young children with special or additional learning needs because of large group sizes and lack of care and appropriate pedagogical approaches.

It is highly probable that such structural inequities play an important role in low-income, immigrant and Roma families' access to services. These include not only issues of affordability but also environmental constraints, e.g. mothers' working conditions, general health and education levels in the family, the accessibility of services; the openness of services to diversity etc. More subtle power relations need also be taken into account, including the disconnect between local families and preschool staff or the relationship between local administrations and non-voting populations.

Importantly, early childhood centres need to be perceived by excluded groups as welcoming and culturally affirmative. All parents wish to feel that they are respected as the first educators of their children, and that their children will not feel alienated in a strange institution. Many centres and educators go to great lengths to provide this assurance, but the experience of the Roma and other indigenous children has not been a happy one. Frequently, in history, these children were forcibly taken away from parents and placed in state sponsored orphanages or special schools to be acculturated into 'superior' values and practices. In many instances, it is now necessary to build up trust again, through an acknowledgment of the valuable contribution each culture can bring to society. If possible, for example, mother tongue support should be provided in centres to young children with an immigrant or Roma mother tongue. This is not only an expression of respect for Roma culture, but also a sound educational principle. The development of the mother tongue is important for concept formation in young children and for the acquisition of a second language.

There is a need therefore to expressly 'de-culturalise' perceived negative aspects of group behaviour and to 'culturalise' pedagogy and educational outcomes. Often, as mentioned previously, lack of attendance at early childhood services, or the failure of children to reach pre-defined goals, are attributed to cultural factors, e.g. "Roma mothers do not wish to send their children to services before the age of 5 years" or "Roma children start with such disadvantages that they will never catch up". We need to 'de-culturalise' such phenomena and learn through local research why Roma children are not being enrolled or why they are not doing so well in schools. In similar fashion, the goals and routines of early childhood centres may need to be 'culturalised'. Roma or any minority children can reach goals important for themselves and their future learning, within the standards of their own culture. At first, they may not attend the centre every day or may wish to sleep at times different from the usual sleeping period, but open communication between the educators and parents can solve most differences and bring routines and learning goals more into conformity with the realities of the children involved.

Outreach to and consultation of families and communities: All this implies a continual co-construction and reconstruction of the daily practice of kindergartens and an endless negotiation with the stakeholders involved (children, families, local communities and policymakers). Neither children nor parents can be construed simply as clients of an existing centre that knows what is right and will not change. For this reason, effective early education services will develop community involvement in the preschool years, not only for providing expanded services and referrals where necessary, but also as a space for partnership and the democratic participation of parents. This position is confirmed by a central insight of the post-modernists, viz. that external discourses about quality and goals must be supplemented by community/parental participation and meaning-making. When opportune, communities and education authorities will also provide support to parents to improve their skills and participation in preschool affairs, through adult education, information, services and community-building activities.

The continuity of children's experience across environments is greatly enhanced when parents and staff-members exchange information regularly and adopt consistent approaches to socialisation, daily routines, child development and learning. Early childhood staff should be trained to listen to parents. They will encourage parents to support the learning of young children, and will share with families the values upon which early childhood services are based, including participation and respect for diversity. Staff will engage parents in centre activities. They will promote positive attitudes toward children's learning, provide parents with information and referrals to other services, and include parents in centre committees and management. Efforts will be made to ensure equitable representation and participation of families from diverse backgrounds.

4. The Contribution of Jessica Ball

Jessica Ball is a professor in the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria, Canada where she is Co-Coordinator and Principal Investigator on Early Childhood Intercultural Partnerships. She has worked extensively in innovative programmes to sustain cultural diversity, early childhood development and community development, in particular among minority First Nations groups in Canada. The following are 'guiding principles' that she has learned from working with these groups. In some regards, similarities with the Open Society Foundations insights gained from working with Roma groups can be seen.

Participation and Roma human resources' development: Adopting a participatory approach, by involving Roma communities in project design and implementation and Roma employees throughout project phases.

- *Integration:* Integrating Roma and non-Roma generally, as well as in specific areas of public service responsibility: housing, education, health care and employment.
- *Anti-discrimination:* Taking care to avoid all forms of unjustified discrimination and requirements, conditions, or criteria that might lead to the exclusion or arbitrary treatment of Roma and other vulnerable groups. At the same time, Open Society Foundations reiterate their strong support for affirmative actions meant to reduce the existing socio-economic gap between Roma and the majority populations.
- *Desegregation:* Working toward eliminating the isolation between Roma and non-Roma, by facilitating access to major social, political and economic institutions such as local governance, employment, housing, education and health for Roma communities.
- *Capacity Development:* Supporting the ability of Roma and non Roma to identify problems of Roma Inclusion and to articulate solutions within an EU-financed development framework.
- *Sustainability:* Encouraging affordable and achievable solutions, which do not require constant subsidies and which could win the support of majority populations.

Open Society Foundations – London

100 Cambridge Grove, 4th Floor
London W6 0LE, UK
www.soros.org

Roma Education Fund

Teréz körút 46
H-1066 Budapest, Hungary
www.romaeducationfund.org

UNICEF R.O. CEE.CIS

Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
www.unicef.org/ceecis

Roma
Early
Childhood
Inclusion