

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

OF THE STATE OF ROMA WOMEN
ON THE LABOUR MARKET AND THE
UTILIZATION OF ACTIVE EMPLOYMENT
MEASURES AND SERVICES

focus on the City of Skopje

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Author: Dragana Karovska Chemerska

Graphic Design: Grigor Unkovski

Translation: Milan Damjanovski



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Executive Summary

The Situational Analysis of the state of Roma women on the labour market was conducted under the auspices of the project “Roma women advocating for equal employment opportunities”. The objective of the project is to enhance the prioritizing of the issue of employment of Roma women in national policies, development of effective measures, as well as improving local policies, programs and measures for the employment of Roma women.

The subject of this analysis is the situation of Roma women on the labour market, with a focus on the City of Skopje. The analysis aims to provide insight into the existing national and local employment policies, programs and measures and their levels of utilization by Roma women in Skopje, as well as a view of the existing institutional support for their work integration. Furthermore, the analysis also sheds light on the perceptions of the target group concerning employment related issues. Finally, the analysis wants to offer recommendations for the improvement of the employment measures taking into account the specific characteristics and needs of Roma women as a target group, as well as to help increase the utilization of the existing employment measures by Roma women.

During the course of the analysis, both a qualitative and quantitative methodological approach was used for the purpose of better review of current employment policies and programs, as well as gathering relevant data from their direct users and beneficiaries. As part of the research, we used a quantitative method for data collection – survey questionnaire and the following qualitative methods – focus group, interviews and desk research.

The analysis has shown that there are a great number of unregistered unemployed Roma who either do not recognize the ESARNM as an institution that provides help and support for employment. The mandatory registration period which entails reporting every month to the ESARNM to acquire the status of active job seeker represents a burden for Roma women, as well as a risk of being left out of the support system for a whole year if they miss the registration deadline. In the ESARNM and its regional offices, as well as in the units of local self-government there are no teams sensitized for working with this target group. The civil servants who first come into contact with the Roma women when they come to this institution are also not sensitized to work with this target group. A huge percent of the unemployed Roma have either primary or no education which prevents from entering the process for application to use the employment measures. Roma women face discrimination during the process of employment and in their workplaces. Older Roma women are almost absent from the beneficiaries of the active employment measures and services, because they suffer from self-discrimination and lack of motivation. Roma women are limited in their opportunities to use employment measures and to be integrated in the labour market due to the small or non-existent institutional support with regards to taking care of the children or elderly in their home. The Roma Information Centers are providing an exceptionally small number of services in the area of employment.

The Analysis provides a variety of recommendations for the enhancement of the employability and employment of Roma women. There is a need to conduct in-depth research to identify and define the needs and challenges faced by Roma women when seeking employment and during work integration. Furthermore, it is necessary to introduce measures to encourage Roma women to register in the unemployed registry in order to enable them access to

the active employment measures, whereas the registration methods would be made easier and there would be no restrictions for access to the measures. The local self-government should be more actively involved in finding solutions to overcome Roma unemployment through sensitization and training of its employees, as well as increasing funds allocated for this purpose. Due to the specific characteristics of this target group, special employment measure should be designed for the long-term unemployed Roma women which would include an intersectional approach. Consultations should be carried out in order to introduce quotas for the most compatible measures for Roma employment. As a result of the high rates of discrimination against the Roma, raising awareness campaigns are needed on this issue, but lasso to encourage reporting cases of discrimination. Due to the large participation of Roma women in the informal economy, there is a need to transform the undeclared work of the Roma into declared work.

1. Introduction

The research for the purpose of drafting the Situational Analysis of the state of Roma women on the labour market was conducted by HERA – Health Education and Research Association under the auspices of the project “Roma women advocating for equal employment opportunities”, supported by the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation from Sweden. The objective of the project is to enhance the prioritizing of the issue of employment of Roma women in national policies, development of effective measures, as well as improving local policies, programs and measures for the employment of Roma women.

From its beginnings, HERA has developed a work agenda which recognizes Roma women as a target group that is need of empowerment and support in order to exercise its basic human rights. Through the years and working directly with Roma women from Skopje, our organization has had a successful impact on the realization and improvement of their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Based on our extensive experience working in the field and direct communication with the women, we have realized that one of the main needs of this target group is to achieve economic independence as a necessary step toward solving all the other challenges they face. The enjoyment and respect of the social and economic rights of these marginalized persons has direct influence on the enhancement of their sexual and reproductive rights.

Towards that end, an Advocacy Group was formed as part of the project comprised of Roma women. Furthermore, this document shall also contribute to the development of an advocacy plan for equal employment opportunities.

2. Background

The exact figures for the Roma population in Macedonia are very hard to determine. According to the last Census of the Republic of Macedonia from 2002, the percentage of Roma in the overall population in the Republic of Macedonia is approximately 2,7% (53,879), thus making the Roma the fourth largest ethnic community (after the Macedonians, Albanians and Turks). On the other hand, the figures provided by the United Nation's Development Program (UNDP) in their 2006 regional Roma Report (Ivanov et al., 2006) point to the conclusion that the actual number is somewhere between 220,000 and 260,000, which is over 10% of the population. In any case, here, as well as in other countries in the region, the poverty and unemployment rates are significantly higher for the Roma than those for the majority community.

According to the regional research concerning the socio-economic position of the Roma and the non-Roma population in the Western Balkans "Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans" carried out in 2017 by the World Bank and UNDP, "the Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe, as well as one of the most deprived and socially excluded groups. They typically have only limited access to basic services and economic opportunities. Although there are no reliable data on the Roma population in the Western Balkans, estimates suggest that the share of national populations represented by Roma ranges between 1.7 percent in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 9.6 percent in North Macedonia. Roma have only limited access to education, economic opportunities, health care, housing and essential services, and documentation, even relative to their non-Roma neighbors who live in close physical proximity." The data clearly shows the need to pay special attention to the integration of the Roma in the labour market.

Thus, this research reports that in the region only 16.5 % of the Roma are employed, which is an alarming figure considering that the overall employment rate in the countries in the Western Balkans was 41.57% in 2017. The findings of this research also tell us that the employment opportunities for working age Roma are very poor, as indicated by the low participation rate in the work force and the high unemployment rate. The Roma, and especially Roma women, have a much lower participation rate in the labour market than the non-Roma population. The Roma employment rate ranges from 13% in Kosovo to 22% in Macedonia. These rates are much lower than those for the members of other communities in the respective countries. Furthermore, the national average in these countries is much lower than the average employment rate in the 28 EU member states, which is 67,5 %.

Along those lines, this confirms the fact that the gender gap in the participation in the labour force is quite large in the Roma. The gender gaps in labor force participation among Roma range from 23 percentage points in Albania to 33 percentage points in Kosovo. Similar to all other existing research, of which unfortunately there isn't too many, this one also shows that the presence of children in the household and family responsibilities are the main reasons behind Roma women inactivity, while, among males, inactivity mostly arises because of insufficient labor demand. Certainly, these gender gaps are also due to other social factors, the norms in the Roma community, as well as discrimination.

The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and the EU accession process established the main principles for the building of political processes, institutional mechanisms and the opening of the debate on Roma issues. The National Roma Strategy, as a continuation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, expires in 2020. Even though there are National Action Plans for all areas covered by the Strategy, as well as a National Coordinative Body for the implementation of the Strategy, still their impact is alarmingly limited. There hasn't been any detailed research conducted, but there are assumptions about the reasons that have led to this state of things, such as the seclusion of the Roma issues from the main public policies, or budgeting, as well as ultimately the adequacy and the quality of the services and administration provided in this area.

The Minister without a portfolio responsible for the implementation of the National Strategy for the improvement of the situation of Roma was appointed to be the National Contact Point for the 2020 Roma Integration project. In July 2019, he signed the Declaration of the Western Balkan countries for the integration of the Roma in the EU enlargement process, which also includes commitment to increase the employment rate of the Roma in the public sector proportionally to the share of the Roma in the overall population, as well as to increase the Roma employment rate to at least 25%. As part of the same project, the Roadmap 2019-2021 was also prepared which states that "the employment rate among Roma in North Macedonia is at 22%, compared to the employment rate among non-Roma of 40%. According to this document, the target may be set to at least 35% employment rate among Roma by the time North Macedonia acquires European Union (EU) membership. Assuming a stable employment rate among non-Roma, such commitment means that the Republic of North Macedonia will achieve only a 5% gap in the employment rate between Roma and non-Roma at the time of EU accession. To achieve the target at the time of EU accession, the milestones may be set at 25% employment rate among Roma in 2021 and 30% in 2025." Of course, the national employment programs are aimed at and are expected to impact all citizens, thus the assumption about the constant employment rate for the non-Roma population cannot be expected to be fulfilled.

According to the Roadmap, "The most effective and efficient way to achieve the set targets is by transforming undeclared work among Roma into declared work. The starting point regarding undeclared work is that 39% of

Roma are engaged in such work, compared to 15% non-Roma.” Having in mind that this project is carried out in cooperation with the Government of the RNM, the statements in this document clearly illustrate the current policies in the area of reducing the Roma unemployment rate through the transformation of undeclared work into declared. At the same time, it is recommended to have a specific approach for different economic activities, gradual reduction of social aid, subsidizing social contributions and wage taxes, reducing or annulment of outstanding debts for this category of persons, their inclusion and organisation in public enterprises or public-private partnerships, as well as informing them about the benefits of declared work.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, as the competent institution for the implementation of employment policies, at the end of 2018 carried out a process of analysis of the challenges faced by Roma women who require the introduction of urgent measures and activities. One of the areas covered in the Analysis is the employment of Roma women, which was based on the Action Plan for Employment derived from the Strategy for Roma Integration. Furthermore, the Analysis also highlights that the national Employment Strategy does not recognize the Roma as a specific vulnerable group that would require the adoption of measures adapted to their specific needs. Even though the recommendations provided in this Analysis stipulate the introduction of quotas for Roma women as part of certain employment measures in the Operational Plan for Employment for 2019, yet such quotas or specialised measures are not predicted in the Plan. These recommendations, also, point out the need for an Analysis of the status of Roma women taking into consideration their unemployment rate, qualifications, as well as further training reflecting the demands of the labour market.

The latest European Commission report on the progress of the Republic of North Macedonia states that Implementation of the Roma inclusion strategy (2014-2020) and corresponding action plans for education, employment, housing and gender, and health, is gradual and much remains to be done on Roma inclusion. The government is committed to continuously increasing funding for Roma integration policies, but the lack of expenditure monitoring, combined with the poor absorption of existing funds, remains a problem.

According to the same Report, the unemployment rate of Roma is 49%, while the number of Roma benefiting from concrete employment measures is very limited. A revision of the mechanism in place to promote Roma employment at all levels is needed.

In Chapter 19: Social policy and employment, it is concluded that the country is moderately prepared in this area. Some progress was made during the reporting period. The employment and social reform program is closely monitored by the government, but lacks adequate financing. The recommendations highlight the fact that the country needs to improve the activation of unregistered, long-term and unskilled unemployed people, pointing to the Roma as a specific target group. Furthermore, they emphasize the need to implement the Poverty Alleviation Strategy, the Roma

The educational structure of the Roma as one of the leading factors for the high unemployment rate, still remains at a very low level. Along those lines in the Report, in Chapter 26: Education and culture, one of the recommendations identifies the Roma as a separate target group which needs good quality access to education. It is estimated that 10% of children from Roma communities do not regularly attend primary school and their dropout rates remain high.

Finally, taking into account the fact that the national strategies for Roma integration shall expire in 2020, the processes have intensified of evaluation of the very EU Framework which defines these strategies. So, it is stated in the final report from this evaluation that the same priority areas are still relevant and that even though overall discriminatory attitudes in accessing public services have decreased, discrimination in accessing employment remains high. The unemployment rate of Roma remains high due to the overall labour market situation in the EU, as well as the high levels of discrimination. Also, the specific needs of certain sub-groups, among which are women, have not been sufficiently taken into consideration in the creation and development of employment measures and programs, resulting in a high level of gender gaps in this area. Because of this, it is recommended to include a gender perspective into the Framework objectives in the future. The low education levels of the Roma prevents them from utilizing the measures which offer training and labour market inclusion, so it is recommended to adapt the training and life-long learning activities to the socio-economic conditions and cultural characteristics of the Roma. Roma women are excluded from employment opportunities due to multiple factors, such as early marriage, family duties and obligations with children. For that purpose, it was recommended to consider providing child care in parallel with the training due to this additional obstacle which Roma women face. All of this undoubtedly points to the need to apply a special approach to Roma women when designing and implementing employment programs and measures.

3. Subject and objectives of the analysis

The subject of this analysis is the situation of Roma women on the labour market, with a focus on the City of Skopje. The analysis aims to provide insight into the existing national and local employment policies, programs and measures and their levels of utilization by Roma women in Skopje, as well as a view of the existing institutional support for their work integration. Furthermore, the analysis also sheds light on the perceptions of the target group concerning employment related issues. Finally, the analysis wants to offer recommendations for the improvement of the employment measures taking into account the specific characteristics and needs of Roma women as a target group, as well as to help increase the utilization of the existing employment measures by Roma women.

4. Methodology

During the course of the analysis, both a qualitative and quantitative methodological approach was used for the purpose of better review of current employment policies and programs, as well as gathering relevant data from their direct users and beneficiaries. As part of the research, we used a quantitative method for data collection – survey questionnaire and the following qualitative methods – focus group, interviews and desk research.

4.1 Research methods

Survey

The survey was conducted on 100 Roma women in 5 settlements within the City of Skopje where Roma population lives. The survey consisted of questions related to the employment status of Roma women, the reasons for unemployment, as well as the utilization of the national employment measures and services.

Interview

The interviews were conducted with representatives of MLSP and ESARNM. The interviews provided us with information on the current activities undertaken by these institutions aimed at increasing employment of Roma women in the country.

Desk research

The desk research has provided data and information from existing policies, strategies, action plans, national and international reports on the topic of the study, as well from analyses and operational plans, for the purpose of getting a comprehensive outlook of the current situation and context, as well as the existing mechanisms which serve to increase the country employment rate.

Consequently, the desk research also included the review of data and information available from similar research studies, data available from reports, strategies and other documents developed by relevant ministries and state agencies, reports of civil society organisations, as well as data from researches and reports of international agencies such as UNDP, EU, World Bank, ILO, etc.

With the help of the desk research, we have also gathered secondary information from statistical statements, publications and analysis of the State Statistical Office, the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Due to the lack of necessary information in the possession of state institutions, we have requested information by mail, sending letters requesting public information from all municipalities on the territory of the City of Skopje, the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

The desk research provided an overlay of the general situation of Roma women in Skopje with regards to employment, existing policies and practices for integration of Roma women in the labour market, the situation and number of unemployed Roma women from Skopje, the existing active employment measures and programs by MLSP and ESANRM.

Furthermore, during the carrying out of the desk analysis, regional and local policies were taken into consideration related to issues of employment and social inclusion.

Focus group

Focus groups have been used to gather data about the awareness and the experience of Roma women, as well as their perception and attitudes concerning employment related issues. The focus groups were comprised of 7 Roma women (14, in total), all from the Municipality of Shuto Orizari as a municipality with the highest percentage of Roma population. The focus group helped to collect information on the experiences of Roma women in using the existing mechanisms for employment assistance, as well as their experiences on the labour market.

4.2 Research questions

- What is the rate of employment/unemployment of Roma women on the national level and on the level of the City of Skopje?
- What is the number/percentage of registered unemployed Roma women in ESANRM on the national level and on the level of the City of Skopje?
- What are the qualifications of the registered unemployed Roma women?
- Are there any employment measures and services directly aimed at Roma women?
- What is the utilization of the employment programs, measures and services by Roma women?
- How well do Roma women know and understand the employment measures?
- How adequate for Roma women are the employment measures?
- How accessible are employment measures for Roma women and how do they find out about them?
- What measures and services are most often used by Roma women?
- What are the reasons for the unemployment among Roma women according to their perception?
- What challenges do Roma women face when seeking employment?
- What are the basic strategic documents which deal with employment issues of Roma women?
- In what way do local communities contribute to the reduction of unemployment among Roma women?
- How many municipalities in the City of Skopje have action plans for employment of the Roma?
- Are there institutional mechanisms for providing support for the employment of Roma women?
- What is the status of the Roma Information Centres and what is their role in the employment of Roma women, as well how much are their services utilised?

For the purposes of this research, several instruments were developed: a survey questionnaire, focus group guide, interview guide, request for access to information of public interest.

4.3 Sample

Sample (municipality/settlement)

Municipality	Frequency	Percentage
Shuto Orizari	20	20%
Gjorche Petrov	20	20%
Centar	24	23%
Topaana	11	11%
Samoilova street	1	1%
Chair	4	4%
Karposh	21	21%

Sample (age)

18-25	18	18%
26-35	19	19%
36-45	28	28%
46-55	20	20%
56-65	14	14%
over 65	0	0%
No response	1	1%

Sample (education)

Primary (incomplete)	21	21%
Primary (completed)	37	37%
Secondary education (general)	6	6%
Secondary education (vocational)	9	9%
Higher education	2	2%
No education	21	21%
No response	4	4%

4.4 Procedure

The research was conducted during the period March - August 2019. The survey was carried out by Roma women, members of the Advocacy Group for Equal Opportunities in Employment, formed as part of the project for which purposes the analysis has been performed. The researchers who carried out the analysis held a training for the female surveyors and tested the questionnaire with their help. It was ascertained that the questions were clear and understandable. Only Roma women were surveyed as the sole target group of this analysis.

Interviews were carried out with representatives of the MLSP and ESANRM during the month of June. The focus groups were organized during the course of June 2019. There were two focus groups comprised of a total of 14 unemployed Roma women from the Municipality of Shuto Orizari, belonging to different age groups and with varying levels of education. Due to the social background of the women, they would often go beyond the boundaries of the discussion questions and enter into a discussion about the social issues they face. Because of the time limitations, those questions were not broached in a detailed manner.

The desk analysis took place during the period June-July 2019 for the purpose of gathering information and data related to the current policies regulating the issue of employment of Roma women. It was, also, used to provide information on existing research on the given topic.

One limiting factor was the focus of the research on the territory of the City of Skopje with regards to the survey and the focus groups. However, the requests for information of public character also included requesting information related to the national mechanisms for the support of Roma employment and their implementation. On the other hand, most of the Roma population in the country is concentrated in the City of Skopje. In that sense, the conclusions and the recommendations are reflective of the situation and are applicative to a great degree on the national level.

5. Findings

5.1 The situation concerning Roma women on the labour market and the factors impacting their employment

The Roma are one of the most marginalized groups that faces social inclusion, discrimination and unequal access to health services, education, housing and employment. They still remain unrepresented on the labour market with high rates of unemployment. The Roma live in exceptionally poor socio-economic conditions which constitutes violation of all the principles and values of our society and its need for social cohesion. This, consequently, leads to the failure to accept differences, lack of respect for democracy, as well as to violation of basic human rights. The issue of long-term unemployment of Roma is one of the most concerning factors that present an obstacle to their full inclusion in society. Among them, in fact, Roma women are especially affected by this issue that is influenced by a variety of socio-cultural factors.

That the Roma are experiencing a higher unemployment rate than the non-Roma population is also confirmed by the regional research of the socio-economic position of the Roma and the non-Roma population in the Western Balkans, carried out in 2017 by UNDP and the World Bank and which makes a comparison with the 2011 research by UNDP, the World Bank and the European Commission in order to showcase the achieved progress and the reduction of the gap between these two target groups.

According to this research, „Marginalised Roma continue to have lower employment rates than neighbouring non-Roma. Only 22 percent of marginalised Roma aged 15-64 were employed in 2017 (a rate similar to that in 2011), versus almost 40 percent of their neighbouring non-Roma counterparts. There are considerable gaps in employment by gender: just 13 percent of marginalised Roma women aged 15-64 were employed in 2017; among their male counterparts, the employment rate is over two times as high. Marginalised Roma are less likely to participate in the labour market than their neighbouring non-Roma counterparts, though the gap between the two groups is relatively small; labour force participation rates fell for marginalised Roma between 2011 and 2017, but they remain the highest in the Western Balkans region. The unemployment rate of marginalised Roma is much higher than that of neighbouring non-Roma. Unemployment particularly affects economically active marginalised Roma females: their unemployment rate stood at 58 percent in 2017 compared to 45 percent for their male counterparts. The great majority of marginalised Roma youth (ages 18-24) were not in employment, education or training. This is rather more expressed in young Roma women, where the percentages of those who are not in employment, education or training are 81 percent versus 57 percent of young Roma men. Out of them, Roma

women NEETs are mostly economically inactive because they are engaged in domestic and caretaking activities of younger and elderly members of the family. In contrast, male Roma even though they are active, are more likely to be unemployed due to the poor levels of education.

The situation is presented in more detail in Table 1 (taken from the same research)

Table 1

Според Извештај во сенка за Поглавје 23 за периодот јуни 2018 – март 2019 година подготвен од страна на

	National level	Roma	Others	Roma women	Roma men	Other women	Other men
Employment (% of population, ages 15-64)	49	22	22	13	31	26	52
Labour force participation rate (% of population, ages 15-64)	65	44	44	30	56	36	61
Unemployment (% of total labour force, ages 15-6)	24	49	49	58	45	27	14
Not in education, employment or training (% of population, ages 18-24)	N/A	74	74	81	67	33	33

The Shadow Report on Chapter 23 for the period between June 2018 and March 2019 drafted by the European Policy Institute – Skopje and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights states that „Roma participation in the active employment measures in 2017 amounted to only 1% of the total number of beneficiaries of the measures for self-employment, trainings, support for the creation of new jobs and work engagement were Roma. In terms of number of Roma employed in the public sector, in 2017, Roma represented only 1.3% of the total number of public sector employees, while in 2015 this percentage was 1.4%, which shows a reduction, instead of rise in the number of Roma employed in the public sector. If the structure of employees per institution is analysed, it can be seen that 750 Roma out of the total number of 1,715 Roma employed in the public sector, are employees in public utilities companies (43%).”

Based on the data of the State Statistical Office, in 2018, the number of the active population in the Republic of North Macedonia is 957,623 persons, out of which 759,054 are employed, while 198,569 persons are unemployed. The activity rate for this period is 56.9, the employment rate 45.1, while the unemployment rate reaches 20.7. According to the EARNM data, as of 30.04.2019, the number of unemployed Roma registered at the ESARNM and the Employment Center of the City of Skopje is 7,821 at the national level, out of which 3,661 or 46% are women, while on the level of the City of Skopje the number is 2,587 out of which 1,301 or 50 % are women.

As part of the survey conducted for the purposes of this Analysis, 72% of the women surveyed have responded that they are unemployed, while only 16% said that they are employed part-time or full-time. On the other hand, just 28% of the unemployed respondents have registered with the ESARNM. 39% of the surveyed have answered that they are available for work and that they are actively seeking employment. Out of them, 59% have been actively seeking employment for more than a year. The highest percent of the Roma women, 39%, when asked about the method of seeking employment have answered that they do it mostly through friends and relatives.

5.1.1 Age structure and level of education

Judging from the information gathered through the research for this analysis, it is evident that in the unemployed person's registry, except for the youngest and oldest age groups where the figures are drastically lower, all the other age groups are almost equally represented. Still, among the registered Roma women the largest number is in the 40-44 years age group. With regards to the level of education, an exceptionally high percentage, i.e. 94% of the registered unemployed Roma women on the national and on the level of the City of Skopje, either have no education or just primary education.

Table 2

	Total		15-19		20-24		25-29		30-34		35-39		40-44		45-49		50-54		55-59		>60	
	all	f	all	f	all	f	all	f	all	f	all	f	all	f	all	f	all	f	all	f	all	f
Skopje	2597	1301	98	54	232	126	271	134	224	120	294	162	323	184	327	159	310	160	326	149	192	53
RNM	7821	3661	289	147	698	337	725	343	710	344	889	460	972	482	990	458	956	447	959	428	633	215

Overview of the unemployed according to age structure, Roma nationality, registered at ESARNM and the Employment Center of the City of Skopje as of 30.04.2019 (source: ESARNM)

Table 3

	Total		No education or primary education		Incomplete secondary education		Completed secondary education		Associate's degree		Higher education		MA		PhD	
	all	f	all	f	all	f	all	f	all	f	all	f	all	f	all	f
Skopje	2597	1301	2352	1219	145	26	95	54	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	0
RNM	7821	3661	7140	3438	272	49	375	163	3	0	31	11	0	0	0	0

Overview of the unemployed according to the level of education, Roma nationality, registered at ESARNM and the Employment Center of the City of Skopje as of 30.04.2019 (source: ESARNM)

The low level of education greatly limits the opportunities for employment of Roma women. The lack of appropriate educational qualifications, knowledge, professional and social skills that would enable them to fully integrate in the labour market affects their employability, as well as the progress in their employment for those that attain it. Women with incomplete or completed primary education are most often inactive on the labour market, outside of the education system and long-term unemployed. On the other hand, when they find employment, it is usually temporary or as part of the informal labour market.

In the Education Strategy 2018-2025, one of the identified challenges is the large number of Roma pupils outside the education system. According to the Strategy, a large rate of drop out is also obvious, as well as the low degree of literacy of children with Roma ethnical background. The following are stated as the most frequent reasons for this state: insufficient knowledge of the Macedonian language, low degree of education of parents and poor socio-economic status. To combat this, the new reformed Law on Primary Education stipulates the hiring of educational mediators in all primary schools to provide additional support to Roma students in primary schools.

The criteria set for applying for any of the measures in the Operational Plan for Employment require having a primary school diploma and a status of an active job seeker according to the ESARNM records. However, in practice these criteria have often proven to be restrictive for a great number of Roma women.

The findings from the survey and focus groups conducted for the purposes of this Analysis have indicated that 49% of the surveyed Roma women think that they can't find employment because they haven't completed their primary education. Furthermore, 10% stated they lack adequate training opportunities, meaning that very often due to their lack of education they are unable to even sign up for a specific training. From the surveyed Roma women who were asked "What kind of support you most need to be employed?", 43% answered that they need adequate education, to complete their education, additional education or training.

With regards to their age, 13% of Roma women who responded to the question "What kind of support you most need to be employed?", said they don't need anything because they are too old. All of them were aged 45 to 55 years.

..."To find some job and a good one, with good working conditions, to do what you know best. We would also learn something new. I want to be either a beautician or a hairdresser. But, they never asked something like this in the Agency. I have experience, I'm good at it, I've tried it. There, when I heard about the course for tailors, I had no experience with machines...

...Do I have education?...of course I don't, only eighth grade...Do you think this is the reason why?...I think so, yes...

...What kind of education do you have?...Primary, but I failed to finish eighth grade so I am registered as illiterate...

5.1.2 Intersectional discrimination

In our society, Roma women are discriminated on a variety of basis, especially when it comes to employment. The frequent cases of ethnic discrimination committed both by employer and service users resulting from the dominant stereotypes against the Roma, unfortunately are not reported by them due to lack of information where they can do it, as well as because of the lack of trust in the institutions of the system. This situation puts Roma women at a disadvantage, which to a great extent reduces both the quantity and the quality of the employment opportunities available to them. Even though employers declaratively do not discriminate, still research shows that Roma women are discriminated both regarding access to work, as well as the size of their wages. Furthermore, Roma women are discriminated with regards to their profession and the form of their employment. Most Roma women are working in undeclared jobs and are deprived of the benefits of formal employment and the chance to enjoy a secure and stable income. In majority of the cases, Roma women themselves avoid to formalize their employment for a variety of reasons, among which are the risks of losing welfare benefits, high social contributions and wage taxes, as well the risk of activating their outstanding debts through initiating the payment enforcement orders when formal employment starts.

Roma women testify about the poor employment conditions and the violation of their worker's rights which are reflected in their low income, work-place abuses and the lack of opportunities for career progress. All of this leads to very low productivity, lack of motivation to seek employment or inability to keep existing jobs. On the other hand, they are neither encouraged to seek employment with better working conditions and higher wages, thus they only see the possibility of employment in low paid professions.

According to our survey, 27% of Roma women when asked „Why don't you seek employment?“ responded that they don't want to be employed. The findings from our survey and focus groups conducted for the purposes of this Analysis show that 10% of the surveyed Roma women think that they cannot find a job because of discrimination.

Have you worked anywhere before? ...Yes...What? ...I worked in a private school before...Well, why aren't you working there anymore?...they said we will employ you full time, but before the end of the school year they called me, told me to sign something...when I signed it, I was signing my resignation... Wait, they fired you?...Yes, yes...Why did they fire you? Did your employment contract expire?...I didn't have a contract or anything like that...So, you didn't even have a contract? On what basis did you work there?... Also in a school, until we were caught by inspection, then they registered me. And all that time my documents were hidden in a drawer...

What about the Agency, did you ever tell them that you know how to do this?...No, I didn't...Why?...I didn't want to, it is hard to work with old people...Then, you don't want to work in this field?...No, there are many old people that you can't even lift or move, the ones with a stroke...You wouldn't want to do this job?...No, it's very hard to work with old people...

What kind of help do you need to become more qualified to work?...With primary education, I can only work as a janitor, nothing else, for example, in kindergartens, schools...

...Just as we know how to work around the house, we will work like that, we clean, wash, bake bread, do the laundry, that is also work...

...Have you worked anywhere before?...I have cleaned houses, regular cleaning and upkeep of homes...What about the others?...I have worked everywhere, bakery, sandwich shop, everything, all those jobs, I have also been a cleaner...

...Here most young women go and look for jobs by themselves, at the stalls, in the market, in homes, workshops, sandwich shops, shops...

...Even the state does not provide good conditions anymore, you go there and they'll find you a job, you kill yourself working for 5000 denars outside in the sun, we all know where the Roma work...Where?...Sweepers, outside, sweeping the streets, picking up the garbage, just as they do to this very day for 5000, they work for a month or two and that's it, they are kicked out...

The Roma women from the focus groups pointed out that they are frequently verbally abused by the employers, even sexually harassed. Because of these situations, very often they either leave their jobs or are demotivated to even look for a new job.

..If you let them, if they come close to you, it's all over. If you don't know how to defend yourself, they may even attack you. This is why there's no work left, nowhere to turn... They'll take advantage of you...

...She didn't work there long. She found it hard. She wasn't treated well. They used dirty words. She was bossed around, told how to work, yelled at. The behaviour was vulgar just because she was Roma ...

...The one who was the boss, he said some things that were not appropriate. But, I didn't let him. I quit my job...

5.1.3 Socio-economic and culturological factors

The traditional norms and values limit Roma women to their activities in the home where they are responsible for the care and upbringing of the children and the elderly in the family. Roma women themselves see this situation as limiting them from taking advantage of opportunities to work and make a living, as well as from opportunities for education and/or additional training. The survey shows that 29% of surveyed Roma women when asked why they are not seeking employment and are unavailable to work, responded that they are busy with their household chores, while 27% stated that they don't want to be employed, most often because of their duties at home. 7% of those that had answered the question why they do not take advantage of the employment measures, responded that there is no one else to take care of the children.

...Are you working somewhere?...No...Do you want to work?...Yes, but I have a small child and I have no one else to take care of him while I work...

...They only accept children from 3 years of age on, from 8:00 to 12:00, and where are you supposed work with these hours...

...From September now, it's from 7:00 to 15:00...but, at the moment it's until 12:00, this is no good for us, we need it to be from 9:00 to 16:00-17:00 so our children can stay there, to be bathed and fed...

...I have no place where to leave my child...

...Could you find a place where to leave the children while you are attending the training?...Well, this is the problem, and it will be a problem then...

...Let me tell you, I've tried to find a job, but the biggest reason was that I got married, had children and I had no one to take care of them, so I couldn't go to work. Only my husband works in our family, and he is the only one working now...

Immediately after the completion of the focus groups, a new kindergarten was opened in Shuto Orizari. The current government policy aimed at opening new kindergartens is a step forward in the improvement of this situation. However, it is necessary to develop new systems to support their inclusion in the labour market. This is especially relevant towards ensuring their participation in professional training activities, which would make them more competitive on the labour market.

Great number of Roma are welfare recipients, so employment would often lead to the loss of the only income they have. What is needed is a more thorough and detailed informing of this target group about the benefits from formal employment.

...Is there work, are there jobs where you can get hired?...there are jobs, but only private jobs...What do you mean under private?...undeclared work...Does this bother you?...Well it bothers us, because if we are registered, then we lose welfare...So, you don't want to be registered...well, it's better this way, you can also receive welfare...

5.2 Employment policy and program framework

The employment programs or operational plans in Macedonia, as public policy interventions aimed at changing the current situation regarding a specific socially excluded target group, have proven that there is a serious commitment by the Government in this field. The goal of these policies and programs is to achieve a higher employment rate, increased income, reduction of poverty, social inclusion and economic independence of vulnerable groups.

5.2.1 Strategy for the Roma 2014-2020

When it comes to the Roma, the basis for these interventions aimed at their labour integration is the Strategy for the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020 adopted in 2014 in accordance with the EU Strategy 2020, accompanied by the Action Plans for its implementation in the five priority areas. The Strategy focuses on five areas: culture, education, health, employment and housing.

The strategic goal in the area of employment is: "Improving of the conditions and opportunities for employment and decreasing of the unemployment of the Roma community, and thus its integration into the society in the country." At the same time, the specific strategic goals listed in the area of employment concerned with increasing the number of Roma registered in the Employment Service Agency, as well as those involved in active measures for employment, as well as enhancing the employability of the Roma community through the creation and implementation of incentive policies and programs.

The National Action Plan for Employment 2016-2020 is aimed at achieving the following outcomes: Improved access for the Roma to the Government employment programs until 2020, especially for Roma women; and Higher income and sustainable employment for Roma until 2020, especially for Roma women.

Implementation of the Strategy for the Roma and the national action plans is in the purview of the line ministries in accordance with the priority areas. The monitoring of the implementation of the plans in accordance with the Strategy is carried out by the National coordinative body for the implementation of the Strategy for the Roma. For the purposes of this Analysis, we sent a RAIPC to the MLSP concerning the outcomes and outputs of the National Action Plan for Employment based on the Strategy for the Roma 2016-2020, to which we received a reply that the Ministry has no related available data and referred the Request to the ESARNM. At the same time, for the purposes of the Analysis we submitted a RAIPC to the ESARNM, wherefrom we received information about the utilization of the employment measures and services by Roma women.

Published and publically available reports on the implementation of the Strategy for the Roma 2016-2020 are the following: the Report on the implementation of the public policy for integration of the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia for 2017 prepared as part of the work of the Council for Regional Cooperation - Integration of the Roma 2020, as well as the Shadow Report - Implementation of the Roma Strategy in the Republic of Macedonia for 2016 and 2017 drafted as part of the project Civil Society for Roma Integration - In the Shadow, implemented by CEA and Romalitico.

5.2.2 Other relevant strategies

Relevant documents in this area are, also, the National Employment Strategy 2016-2020 where the Roma are not distinguished as a separate target group, the National action plan for youth employment 2016-2020 where they, also, are not distinguished as a separate target group, the National strategy for reduction of poverty and social exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia, where the Roma are distinguished as a separate target group.

5.2.3 NAP for the strengthening of the position of Roma women in society 2016-2020

Finally, the NAP for the strengthening of the position of Roma women in society 2016 – 2020 foresees the monitoring of employment from a gender equality perspective which would be carried out by the MLSP. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in its response to the RAIPC informed us that in cooperation with a certain number of CSOs there are pending changes and amendments to the National Action Plan for the strengthening of the position of Roma women in society which are expected to be adopted in 2019/2020, which include proposals for specific activities to improve the status of the Roma woman. At the same time, MLSP notified us that they implemented an affirmative measure in 2018 which included Roma women as a separate category of persons for whom specific active employment measures are stipulated in the Operational Plan for 2019.

5.2.4 LAP of the local self-governments in Skopje

On the local level, following our research, we have concluded that on the level of the City of Skopje, only the Municipality of Shuto Orizari in 2018 has adopted a Local Action Plan for employment for the 2018-2020 period.

5.2.5 OPERATIONAL PLAN for active employment programs, measures and labour market services

Apart from all these strategic documents and action plans on the local and national level which are key for the implementation of specific activities in the area of employment, MLSP together with ESARNM have applied a system for planning and implementation of active measures and services on the labour market intended to meet the different needs of vulnerable groups and employers. These include services for the unemployed, training, job creation programs, work clubs, internships, etc.

■ **How much do Roma women know about the OP and is it accessible to them?**

The Operational plan for active employment programs, measures and services for the labour market for 2019 defines employment programs, measures and services that are aimed at ensuring the creation of new jobs, support for job creation and improving the employability of the unemployed, especially of youth and welfare beneficiaries.

Access to the employment programs, measures and service is provided to all the registered unemployed persons, as well as to employers. According to the plan, the right to participate is determined on the basis of the terms and criteria defined for each individual employment program, measure and service. As a general rule, the achievement of equal representation of men and women shall be the goal pursuant to the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, as well as ensuring at least 30% participation of young persons up to 29 years of age.

In the Operational Employment Plan for 2019, Roma women are the only ones acknowledged as a separate target group that needs to be accessed in Measure 2.1 Wage subsidies, and they can be recognized as being part of the unemployed women from vulnerable categories who are identified as potential beneficiaries of Measure 1. Support for self-employment (entrepreneurship). With regards to employment services, Roma women are acknowledged as a separate target group in the utilization of Service 5. Activating the unemployed Roma, where it is stated that "The service shall be aimed at all unemployed Roma. Unemployed persons shall have access to a team of mentors who shall be hired in the local communities. Their role shall be to motivate and regularly inform them about opportunities for employment or building their professional capacities. Through an individual approach to identify the knowledge, qualification and skills of beneficiaries, they shall be referred to appropriate programs from the Operational Plan for active employment programs and measures and services on the labor market." This service shall be implemented by UNDP with its own team of mentors.

On the other hand, we have noted the identification of the young and persons with disabilities as separate target groups toward which certain active employment measures are directed. This approach, especially for young persons as a target group, during the past period has shown to be a good strategy for greater utilization of the measures.

In order to use the active measures and services, citizens have to be registered as unemployed at ESARNM on a monthly basis. Based on the conducted survey and focus groups, we could see that a great portion of Roma women do not register themselves as unemployed for a variety of reasons. Great number of Roma women are not informed about the role and the mandate of the Agency itself, rather they see registering as unemployed as a condition to be able to be welfare beneficiaries. The statements provided in the focus groups clearly indicated that many of them do not know the exact name of this institution and still call it the "Bureau". Quite often, Roma women don't even know where it is located, what are the registration procedures, or the kinds of support they can receive from this institution. Conversely, those of them that are informed and register or have registered in the past, lack motivation to continue doing this due to the fact that they haven't received help and support from the Agency staff.

Last but not least, reporting to the unemployed registry on a monthly basis is not advantageous to Roma women because they often miss the deadlines, whereas in such cases they are unable to use the EASRNM measures and services for a certain period of time. The frequent failure to register or the refusal of a job offered by the Agency

prevents them from using the active measures and services of this institution. Those that are regularly registering stated that they were never referred or informed about the opportunities offered by the Agency, thus their monthly registration comes down to mere administrative recording by Agency staff.

How often are you contacted by the Agency? Let's say, how many times during the year do they call you?... they don't call regularly, when they have something they call..Of course, but how often? Do they call you, let's say, once a month?...yes, yes, it happens, every five six months they call twice, for example...
 ...Why are you not registered in the Agency?...Well, I'm not from here, I'm from Prilep...Can't you be registered here?...no, well I haven't tried yet, that's why...Why is that?...because we have small children...

Aren't you interested in working?...if there was work, I would work...And you're not registered because you think there won't be any work even if you registered?...well, I haven't gone there and I don't know..Would you go there?...well, I would go there, why not...
 ...yes, I'm registered since 2006...Since then, have you ever been offered at least one job?...no...
 ... Did anyone from the Agency contact you, sit down with you?...Nothing...What about some training?...no.. they don't even call you?...no...

...In the Bureau, yes, I go to be registered...Have they ever called you?...no...Since when are you registered there?...well 7 years, 8... Have they ever called you?...no..When you go there, does anyone meet you there?...no, I hand them my booklet, they register me, and that's it...Have you ever seen someone from the Agency, has anyone had a talk with you?...no, no, with nobody, no...
 ...Has any one of you ever been told about the measures and services provided by the Agency?...No, no, nothing, not when I registered, they never call to offer jobs nor do they tell me anything when I go to register...

...Do you know what these employment measures mean, have you heard about them, are they familiar to you?.. Yes, yes... It means to go to training, I don't know, it says here, there is like a board there...there in the Bureau...there are trainings, training for what, there is one for hairdressers, I don't know for what else, there are many trainings...
 So, you've only seen them on the billboard, someone told you to do that?..No, no...Has someone from the municipality ever called you, told you something?...No..Have you been to the municipality, to ask about it?...No...

...Why aren't you registered?...because I didn't apply on time, I was 2-3 days late to register, they blocked me in the computer, they took me out...
 ...I was supposed to go there every month and I forgot, I was late and when I saw in my booklet that I should

go and register, I went there and they told me I have been taken out of the computer...

...I have a girlfriend, yesterday, I wanted to bring her here too and she told me that she was once here, you talked, she went to the Bureau as you say, she left a request for employment and a month, two, three passed and nothing happened, they didn't help her...

...Until now I never thought of that, I don't know all these procedures, how they go and so...

...no, nobody told me anything, nobody has called me...I go to the counter, still remember it's counter I0, I went there, I signed, they wrote the date when I have to register in the booklet and that was it...They didn't call you?...No...So I have been registered since I was I9, after I became an adult...How old are you now?...29...So, nothing for I0 years?...no, that is why I tell you it's all in vain...you wait long for them to find a job for you...so, it's better to find a job by yourself, then wait for them...

■ What is the utilization by Roma women of the employment measures and services?

With regards to the rate of utilization of the employment measures and services by Roma women, the 2018 data show that a total of 163 Roma women have been beneficiaries of the employment measures, with almost half of them (48%) being up to 29 years of age. In the first quarter of 2019, there is a slower rate of utilization of the measures, seeing that only 41 Roma women have taken advantage of them. Once again, during this period, the youngest age group was the one most active in using employment measures. We can conclude from this that the provided measures are more suited to the needs of the younger population, so there is a need to adapt the measures to meet the specific needs of the older age groups.

Table 4

Age	ESARNM		Employment Center of the City of Skopje	
	Total Roma	Roma women	Total Roma	Roma women
Up to 29 years	133	54	71	25
30-49 years	108	49	30	15
Over 50 years	37	15	10	5

Overview of the total number of unemployed Roma according to gender and age structure using the active employment measures pursuant to the Operational Plan for active employment programs and measures and services on the labor market for 2018, for the period January-December 2018

Table 5

Age	ESARNM		Employment Center of the City of Skopje	
	Total Roma	Roma women	Total Roma	Roma women
Up to 29 years	38	18	5	3
30-49 years	20	13	7	3
Over 50 years	8	4	1	0

Overview of the total number of unemployed Roma according to gender and age structure using the active employment measures pursuant to the Operational Plan for active employment programs and measures and services on the labor market for 2018, for the period January-April 2019

The active employment programs, measures and services in the Operational Plan for 2018 and for the first half of 2019, as well as their utilization by Roma women are showcased in the tables below which represent the response by ESARNM to the RAIPC.

Table 6

OP 2018 – Active programs and measures			Unemployed Roma women		
			Applications	Participants	Employed
1		Program for self-employment (entrepreneurship)	19	6	6
2.1		Wage subsidies	26	17	17
2.2		Employment and growth of legal entities		5	5
3.1		Work place training for a known employer	0	0	0
3.2		Training for professional qualifications at the request of employers	4	3	3
3.3	3.3.1	Training for crafts in demand	3	2	0
	3.3.2	Training for personal assistants	4	2	0
	3.3.3	Training for professions in demand	17	7	0
3.4	3.4.1	Training for acquiring skills in the areas of banking, financing and controlling	0	0	0
	3.4.2	Training for acquiring basic computer skills	4	2	0
	3.4.3	Training for acquiring skills – foreign languages	10	5	0
	3.4.4	Training for acquiring advanced IT skills	0	0	0
	3.4.5	Training for acquiring security skills	0	0	0
3.5		Internship	14	6	2
4.1		Program for community work -UNDP	31	22	5
4.2		Public works	17	17	2
	0	Subsidized employment of persons at social risk	13	13	6
		Total	162	107	46

Implementation of the Operational Plan for active employment programs and measures and services on the labor market for 2018

Table 7

OP 2018 - services		Number of unemployed Roma women, covered by the Employment services
1	Job seeking assistance	2584
2	Motivational training	72
3	"Preparation for employment and work" Training	16
4	Professional orientations and career counseling	151
5	Activation of unemployed Roma	
	Informed and motivated persons	549
	Filled out questionnaires for profiling and assessing the professional capacities of the unemployed person for inclusion in the active measures	333
	Applied for participation in active employment measures	23
	Included in the active employment programs and measures	19
	Employed	44

Implementation of the Operational Plan for active employment programs and measures and services on the labor market for 2018

Table 8

OP 2018 – Active programs and measures		Unemployed Roma women		
		Applications	Participants	Employed
1	Program for self-employment (entrepreneurship)	14		
2.1	Wage subsidies	24	17	17
2.2	Employment and growth of legal entities		6	6
3.1	Work place training for a known employer	6	1	1
3.2	Training for professional qualifications at the request of employers			
3.2 (6)	Work place training at the request of a known employer – implemented by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation			
3.3	Training for crafts in demand	8	3	
3.3	Training for professions in demand	48	21	
3.3 A	Pilot Training for crafts and professions in demand in the Strumica Region			
3.4	Training for acquiring skills in the areas of banking, financing and controlling	0	0	0
4.1	Pilot Training for digital skills in demand (with co-financing)			
4.2 A	Training for advanced IT skills			
4.2 B	Training for advanced IT skills (with co-financing)			
4.2 B	Introductory training for IT skills			
5	Internship	25	9	
6.1	Program for community work			
6.2	Public works		18	
	Total	125	75	24

Implementation of the Operational Plan for active employment programs and measures and services on the labor market for the first half of 2019

Table 9

OP 2018 - services		Number of unemployed Roma women, covered by the Employment services
1	Job seeking assistance	2281
2	Motivational training	38
3	“Preparation for employment and work” Training	1
4	Professional orientations and career counseling	114
5	Activation of unemployed Roma This service was implemented by UNDP by hiring 7 mentors in 16 municipalities: Chair, Gazi Baba, Gjorche Petrov, Karposh, Shuto Orizari, Kumanovo, Berovo, Delchevo, Pehchevo, Kochani, Vinica, Shtip, Prilep, Bitola, Ohrid and Struga.	

Implementation of the Operational Plan for active employment programs and measures and services on the labor market for the first half of 2019

***one person can be included in multiple employment services, as well as in multiple activities within one service.**

Concerning the implementation of the Operational Plan for active employment programs, measures and services, the 2018 data indicate that the most efficient measure was “Wage subsidies” which resulted in the employment of 17 Roma women or 37% of the total number of persons employed with the help of this measure. However, this is a measure which is primarily aimed at the employers, not the unemployed persons.

Roma women, on the other hand, have shown most interest in the Program for community work accounting for 19% of the overall number of applications. Still, only 5 Roma women were eventually employed. This program is carried out through the municipalities with the implementation of social services projects. For this purpose, the unemployed are provided training in a variety of professions, such as: nursing old and infirm persons, nursing persons and children with disabilities, educational and personal assistants included in the educational process, etc. This is a very good opportunity for Roma women who traditionally perform these duties and tasks in the family, thus have the foundation to be additionally trained in this field. However, there is visible need for provision of additional support when utilizing this measure.

With regards to the services, the most requested one was “Job seeking assistance” with a total of 2,584 Roma women

benefiting from it. As part of the service “Activation of unemployed Roma”, 549 Roma women were informed and motivated, 333 applied to use employment measures, out of which only 23 or 7% of the applicants have been included in the measures. From all of the above, it is indicative that just a very small number of the interested Roma women can use the measures even with assistance by the available mentors as part of the service, which points to the fact that these measures are not fully adequate for this target group.

The number of applications for using the measures in 2019 has been growing considering the fact that already during the first part of the year there have been 125 applications, whereas the highest interest was shown for the “Training for professions in demand”. Again, most Roma women have been employed through the measure “Wage subsidies”. Furthermore, the most requested service was “Job seeking assistance” with 2,281 applications in only six months which is almost double from the previous year. The service “Activation of unemployed Roma” is carried out by UNDP in 16 municipalities with the hiring of 7 mentors, 2 of which are in Skopje. However, we shall complete data for this only after the end of the calendar year.

Based on the data from our survey, 98% of the surveyed Roma women have never been the beneficiaries of employment measures and services, out of which 53% have answered that they are not informed about the measures and 61% are not informed about the services.

■ **How are Roma women informed about the existence of the measures and services from the OP?**

The Employment Center of the City of Skopje, during 2018, had organized Info meetings with the unemployed for the purpose of promoting the active employment programs and measures from the OP for 2018. The objective of these meetings was to present and promote the programs and measures, as well as encourage the unemployed to become involved in the process of active job seeking through the use of these instruments. Besides these events, the Agency informs the unemployed also through its services, the everyday contacts with the unemployed in the Employment centres, through the Agency’s website, printed and electronic media, etc. ESARNM has sent us lists of the participants at these meetings, but unfortunately this data had not been segregated according to nationality and gender and thus not allowing us to establish how many of them were Roma women.

Apart from these events, they stated in their response that the Employment Center of the City of Skopje is carrying out its regular activities for informing and cooperating with the employers through organized visits, individual daily meetings and communication in order to monitor and meet their demands in an effective and timely manner. No information was provided about how many Roma women have benefited from these activities.

During 2018, ESARNM representatives have taken part in 10 meetings, mostly in the municipality of Shuto Orizari

organized by other institutions, municipalities and CSOs to present and promote the active employment programs and measures. Only two of those meeting were organized by the Roma Information Centres.

The Employment Center of the City of Skopje regularly collaborates with the municipalities at the level of the City of Skopje in order to promote the active measures and services both for the unemployed and the employers. In their response, they didn't provide any information about the number of these meetings and the number of Roma women present.

Motivational training activities are realized on the premises of the employment centres as a service from the OP. Their objective is to increase motivation and information for involvement in the measures, as well as building of the capacities for active job seeking. As a result of the identified need of the unemployed, especially young persons to receive information through direct contact, other forms of information and counseling have been implemented. The response doesn't state which are those other forms of information and counseling.

Roma information centres

The Roma Information Centres are located in the Centres for social work. At the moment, their status is being transformed from temporary to permanent employment. During the course of the past period of their operation, they have worked based on the works tasks assigned to them by the MLSP and the Centres for social work. The Roma Information Centres have the task to establish communication between the institutions and the citizens for the purpose of establishing a system for exchanging information relevant to the Roma community. Their role is to represent and advocate for their Roma clients on the local and national level in order to ensure access to the institutions and for the Roma exercise their rights in a variety of areas, one of which is employment. These information persons should also identify the needs of the Roma population on the local level in all areas of their work, one of which is employment.

During 2018, the RIC on the territory of the City of Skopje have organized only two events to inform the Roma about the employment measures and services. In 2018, the RIC on the territory of the Municipalities of Shuto Orizari and Chair have received requests for a total of 31 employment related services, In the Municipality of Shuto Orizari, 16 man and 6 women have requested services, while in Chair services were requested by 4 men and 5 women. According to this information, only 11 Roma women throughout the year have reached out to the Roma Information Centres in the City of Skopje.

In 2019, during the first three months not a single employment service has been requested from the RIC on the territory of the City of Skopje. As of April 2019, the RIC on the territory of the City of Skopje are no longer functioning.

The analysis of the received information about the utilization of the measures, as well as the findings from the focus groups with Roma women leads us to conclude that there is a great lack of information among this population about the opportunities provided by the ESARNM and the Employment Center of the City of Skopje. Roma women are not informed about the possibilities offered by the OP for employment, as well as are not aware what exactly the active employment measures and service entail. No research or consultations have been carried out with the target group to find out about their needs in the process of job seeking and work integration.

...What is the easiest way for information about these things to reach you somebody to come to you, if someone invites you, will you come to such a meeting?..just like this, just like you coming here and inviting us..Would you come?...Yes, sure...Do you use any social network, Facebook?...No...So, the information won't reach you this way, the only way is to invite you and meet with you?...Yes...

...How did you hear about this course?...From the newspaper, when I took my kid to kindergarten, the headmistress called me and asked me if I want to attend a course...

...Tell me whether this year or any past year, was there an event in Shuto Orizari where the term employment was mention, where you got some sort of information?..no, not once...If there was something like that, would you go?...yes, why not...

6. Conclusion

The issue of Roma employment is part of the strategic documents for the integration of the Roma in society, while the current employment action plan which is derived from the Strategy for the Roma 2016-2020 serves as the basis for the drafting of the annual operational plans and the monitoring of the defined strategic goals. However, these documents lack an adequate system for the monitoring of the results. So, the NAP for employment fails to provide a list of measurable and comparable initial indicators, while where there are ones they fail to provide the time period to which they refer. There was no regular evaluation conducted during the implementation, which is why there are no available reports from which we could see the official results and achievements for each individual year of the realization of the Strategy.

There are a great number of unregistered unemployed Roma who either do not recognize the ESARNM as an institution that provides help and support for employment, or lack trust that there would be any benefits from registering as unemployed.

The mandatory registration period which entails reporting every month to the ESARNM to acquire the status of active job seeker represents a burden for Roma women, as well as a risk of being left out of the support system for a whole year if they miss the registration deadline. This way, their access to the active employment measures and services is restricted.

In the ESARNM and its regional offices, as well as in the units of local self-government there are no teams sensitized for working with this target group. As a result, the civil servants who first come into contact with the Roma women when they come to this institution, fail to share with them basic information about the active employment programs, measures and services.

A huge percent of the unemployed Roma have either primary or no education which prevents from entering the process for application to use the employment measures. They are not acknowledged in the Operational plan for active employment measures and services as a separate target group with specific needs for specialized employment measures, which due to their long-term unemployment and the reasons behind that, should include intersectional cooperation.

Older Roma women are almost absent from the beneficiaries of the active employment measures and services, because they suffer from self-discrimination and lack of motivation to become active on the labour market. Roma women face discrimination during the process of employment and in their workplaces, yet no national campaigns to raise awareness about this issue have been conducted. At the same time, Roma women are not informed about the methods of how to report and be protected from discrimination.

Many of the Roma women are part of the inactive work force because of the traditional role of the woman in the family. Roma women are limited in their opportunities to use employment measures and to be integrated in the labour market due to the small or non-existent institutional support with regards to taking care of the children or elderly in their home. There is a lack of a gender sensitive approach in the designing of the employment measures for the purpose of reducing the gender gap in employment.

The low level of utilization of the active employment measures and services by Roma women is due to the lack of information. The Roma Information Centres no longer exist in the City of Skopje, whereas during the past period they had provided an exceptionally small number of services in the area of employment.

There are no Local action plans for employment on the territory of the City of Skopje, with the exception of the Municipality of Shuto Orizari. No report has been published with regards to the implementation of the LAP of the Municipality of Shuto Orizari. In the field, Roma women report of the lack of persons appointed by the municipalities to provide support during the seeking of jobs or work integration.

7. Recommendations

During the course of the development of the new Strategy for the Integration of the Roma and the Action Plan for employment, measurable and comparable baseline indicators and gender sensitive indicators should be included to ensure equal access to the measures, as well as easier monitoring of the realization of the goals.

Introduction of measures to encourage Roma women to register in the unemployed registry in order to enable them access to the active employment measures. Consequently, facilitate registration by opening more registration points which are more accessible to Roma women, as well as to reduce the frequency of regular registration as an unemployed person. Finally, not to restrict the access to employment measures to persons who have missed the deadline to register or have refused jobs offered by the ESARNM.

Activating the units of the local self-government to take part in finding a solution for the issue of Roma women unemployment by the adoption of Local action plans and allocating human resources and funds for their implementation. Appointing persons to provide support in the municipalities during employment and work integration of long-term unemployed persons from marginalized groups. These persons should receive mandatory training for working with persons having problems finding employment.

Conducting in-depth research to identify and define the needs and challenges faced by Roma women when seeking employment and work integration.

Designing special employment measures for the long-term unemployed Roma women which would include an intersectional approach and be aimed at completing their education as a means to enhance their employability.

Carrying out consultations with direct potential users of the employment measures and civil society organizations active in the field of Roma employment, concerning the compatibility of the offered employed measures with the needs of Roma women as a specific target group. Based on these consultations, quotas should be introduced for the most compatible measures for this target group aimed at increasing the motivation of Roma women to apply and improve the utilization of the employment measures provided with the Operational plan for employment.

Raising the awareness of the employers and service users about the discrimination against the Roma in order to overcome all stereotypes related to the Roma population. At the same time, the Roma population needs to be encouraged to report discrimination and use the mechanism for protection against discrimination.

Due to the large participation of Roma women in the informal economy, there is a need to transform the undeclared work of the Roma into declared work. For that purpose, new measures need to be developed to combat this challenge, including social entrepreneurship as a potential model, or the provision of a support system for those that want to formalize their work engagement.

Using a gender sensitive approach in the development of employment measures in order to reduce the gender gap in employment.

The carrying out of information activities of different kinds is needed in order to achieve greater coverage of Roma women who are unaware of the benefits of acquiring the status of an active job seeker, or the employment measures and services offered by the ESARNM.

Improving the coordination between institutions and inter-institutional cooperation on the central and local level in the development and implementation of the employment policies.

Acronyms

EU – European Union

MTSP – Ministry of Labour and Social Policies

ESARNM – Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

UNDP – United Nations Development Program

RIC – Roma Information Centres

NAP – National action plan

RAIPC – Request for access to information of public character

CSO – Civil society organization