

**AN EMPLOYED
ROMA WOMAN –
A POWERFUL
ROMA WOMAN**

SHORT OVERVIEW

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This short overview aims at reflecting the current state of affairs with the employment of Roma women with the state institutions of the Republic of North Macedonia, and the rate of use of the active employment measures and services by the Roma women. This document has resulted from the monitoring activities implemented in 2020 by the informal advocacy group for the Roma women's rights that operate within the project "Roma Women Advocating for Equal Employment Opportunities", supported by the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation. This informal group, established in 2019 with the technical assistance from HERA, advocates for equal employment opportunities for the Roma Women in our country.

December 2020, Skopje

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INTRODUCTION

When talking about the Roma participation in the labour markets of the Western Balkan countries, one should take into account that the gender gap is far more pronounced among the Roma compared to the other ethnic communities. Roma women are challenged by “unfriendly” attitudes across the labour market, regardless of the fact that they merely share similar employment aspirations as men. Social norms and community relations form a serious barrier to employment, as they determine the position of a Roma woman as the one who should remain in the household and take care of the family, thus limiting her education opportunities.¹

The Roma employment rate in the Republic of North Macedonia stands at 22%, almost twice lower compared to the other ethnic communities.² According to the Employment Service Agency data, a total of 4,632 unemployed Roma women were registered in 2019, while in 2020 this number increased by 10% and reached 5,140. Out of the total number of registered unemployed Roma women, as many as 94.88% have completed only primary or no education at all. By increasing the education level among Roma women, their unemployment drops. At national level, ten unemployed Roma women holding a university degree were registered in 2019, and only one such unemployed Roma woman within the City of Skopje. It is a worrying fact that, compared to 2019,

that the number of registered unemployed Roma women with completed secondary education increased by 16.94% in the first half of 2020, whereas the number of registered unemployed Roma women with completed higher education increased by 60% in 2020. This surge of Roma women unemployment is evident in all age groups, and particularly among the Roma women aged 40 to 59. The largest share of unemployed Roma women can be found in the 40 to 44 age group and, in the first half of 2020, 615 unemployed Roma women of this age group were registered.

Some 73% to 86% of young Roma people aged 18 to 24 are unemployed, having no access to proper training and ending up with poor education. In 2017, Roma persons made up just 1% of the total number of beneficiaries who used the support measures for self-employment, training, job creation and recruitment. As the public sector employment is concerned, the same year Roma people were represented with merely 1.3%, while in 2015 this share was insignificantly higher – 1.4%. If the employment structure per institutions is analysed, 750 Roma persons, out of the total of 1.715 of them, are employed in the public utility companies (43%). The number of Roma persons occupying positions higher in the hierarchy, such as managerial positions in institutions, is insignificant.³

1 Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / World Bank, 2019, <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/961361552440068008/Roma-Western-Balkans-Executive-Summary-Macedonian-3-12-2019.pdf>

2 Roma Integration Roadmap Republic of North Macedonia 2019-2021, Roma Integration Regional Cooperation Council, 2019, <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/docs/109/roma-integration-roadmap-republic-of-north-macedonia-2019-2021>

Although the number of Roma persons who use the active employment measures in the Republic of North Macedonia has increased over the recent years, this number still remains almost ten times lower compared to other ethnic communities. The criteria for participation in the active employment measures do not correspond to the needs of the socially vulnerable groups, and it is only by revising them that the participation of the vulnerable categories in the labour market can increase in the future, including of the Roma.⁴ In 2019, out of the total number of persons who used the active employment measures in the country, only 6.5%

were Roma, and even more devastating is the fact that only 2.02% were Roma women. The share of registered unemployed Roma women on the territory of the City of Skopje (8%) is double that of the total number of registered unemployed Roma women in the country (4.5%).⁵

Despite the many national and local employment strategies and action plans, and as many employment operational programmes and measures, Roma women continue to feel marginalised and discriminated against on the labour market.

2

ROMA WOMEN IN THE STATE INSTITUTIONS

The data analysis concerning the employment of Roma women was made from the public information collected from the state institutions in 2019. The information was gathered from 141 state institutions. The criterion used for selecting the state institutions for monitoring the employment of Roma women was extracted from the opinion of the informal advocacy group as to which of these institutions are crucial for creating the employment and social protection policies concerning the Roma women at national and local level, including: (1) ministries, (2) the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, (3) independent authorities, (4) autonomous state authorities, (5) local self-government units, (6) social work centres and (7) employment centres.

³ Shadow Report on Chapter 23 for the Period between June 2018 and March 2019, European Policy Institute, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, 2019, <https://epi.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Shadow-report-MK-2.pdf>

⁴ North Macedonia 2020 Report, European Commission, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/north_macedonia_report_2020.pdf

⁵ Analysis of the Comments and Recommendations in the 2020 European Commission Report on North Macedonia – Sexual and Reproductive Health and Roma Social Inclusion, HERA – Health Education and Research Association, 2020, <https://hera.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Policy-Brief.pdf>

2.1

Ministries

As regards the employment of Roma persons in state institutions, this number is most prominent i.e. the highest in the ministries, compared to other public institutions. Out of the total of 17,967 staff employed in all 16 ministries, 203 are Roma, or 1.13%. Out of the total number of employed Roma persons, 38% are Roma women. In all 16 ministries overall, there are a total of 8 Roma persons holding managerial positions, with equal representation of men

and women, 4 each. Most of the Roma persons are employed in the Ministry of Political System and Inter-Community Relations (26), out of their 1,410 staff.

Three of the total of 16 ministries have no Roma women employed yet, as follows: Ministry of Local Self-Government, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning.

Chart 1: The Number of Employed Roma Women in the Ministries in 2019



6 The information was received from all 16 ministries (100%).

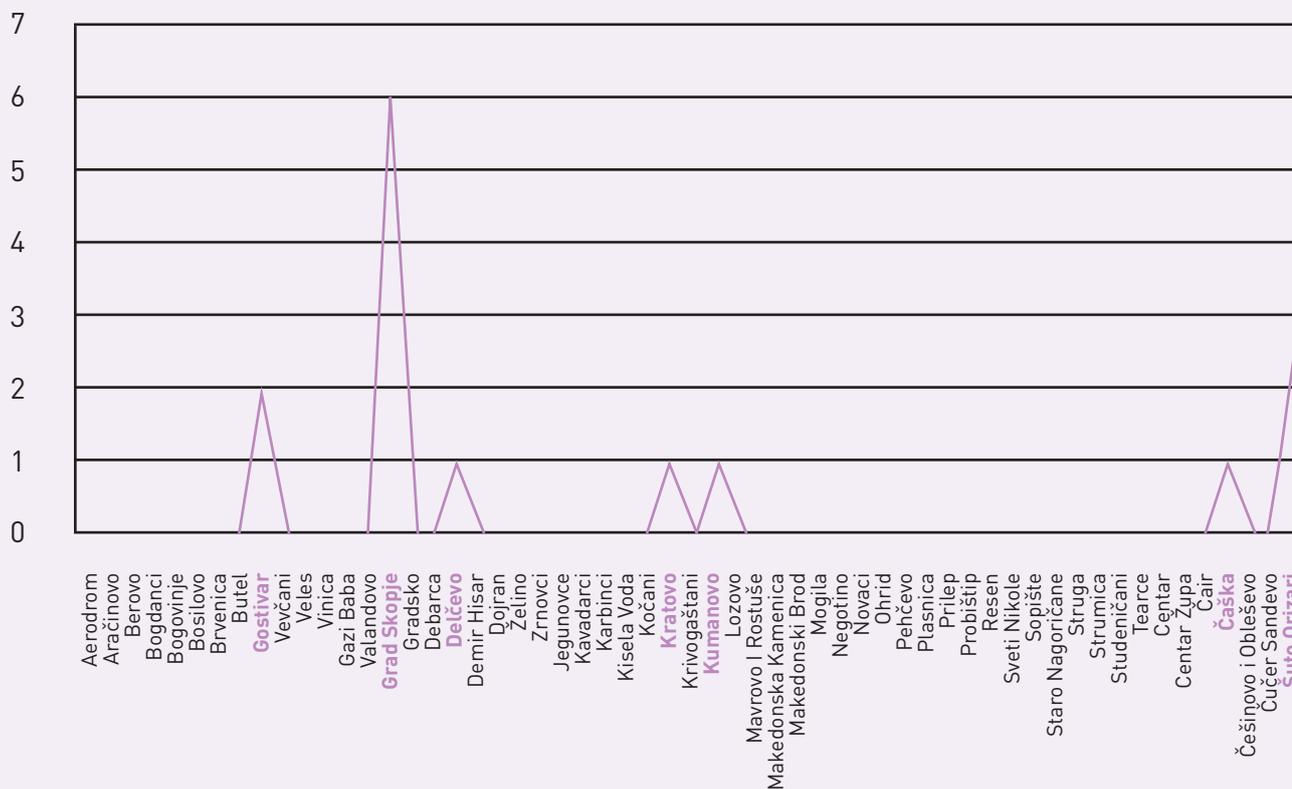
2.2

Local self-government units

Roma persons are employed in only 11 local self-government units on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia. Out of the 3,928 employed staff, only 1.04% are Roma. Roma women are employed in only seven of all the local self-government units, majority of whom in the City of Skopje (6), the Municipality of Šuto Orizari (3) and the Municipality of Gostivar (2). As regards the gender representation, out of the total of 41 employed Roma persons, 36.6% are Roma

women. There are no Roma persons employed at managerial positions in the local self-government units. Even though the Municipality of Šuto Orizari is the largest municipality in the country inhabited by Roma population, out of the 18 employed staff there, only 8 are Roma, or 44.44%. Of those, 37.5% are Roma women, with not a single member of the Roma community holding a managerial position in the Municipality.

Chart 2: The Number of Employed Roma Women in the LSGU



7 The information was received from 56 Local Self-Government Units (69%).

2.3

Government of the Republic of North Macedonia

Out of the 651 employed staff in the state institutions of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, 21 are Roma persons, or 3.2%. Compared to the other categories of state institutions, RNM Government's institutions hold the largest share of employed Roma. Majority of them are employed in the Government's General Secretariat (17), with the share of Roma women standing at merely 29%, in contrast to that of 61% of men. The Legislation Secretariat has no Roma staff members. Not a single Roma woman holds a managerial position in the state institutions of the RNM Government.

2.4

Independent authorities

Out of the total of 408 employed staff in the specialised services of (1) the RNM President, (2) the RNM Assembly, and (3) the RNM Ombudsman's Office, only seven persons, or 1.7% belong to the Roma ethnic community. As regards the gender representation, 42.8% or 3 staff members are Roma women. Same as with the institutions of the RNM Government, out of the total number of the employed Roma persons, not a single Roma man or woman holds a managerial position.

2.5

Autonomous state authorities

The share of Roma persons in the autonomous state authorities is the lowest compared to the other state institutions that were monitored by the informal advocacy group. Only seven persons out of the 751 staff employed in the autonomous state authorities belong to the Roma community, or 0.9%. Unlike the other state institutions, when it comes to gender representation, the number of Roma women is higher (7) than that of Roma men (5), however, here, too, not a single Roma person holds a managerial position.

⁸ The information received concerns the General Secretariat of the RNM Government the General and Common Affairs Department and the Legislation Secretariat. No information was submitted by the Secretariat for European Affairs and the Framework Agreement Implementation Secretariat.

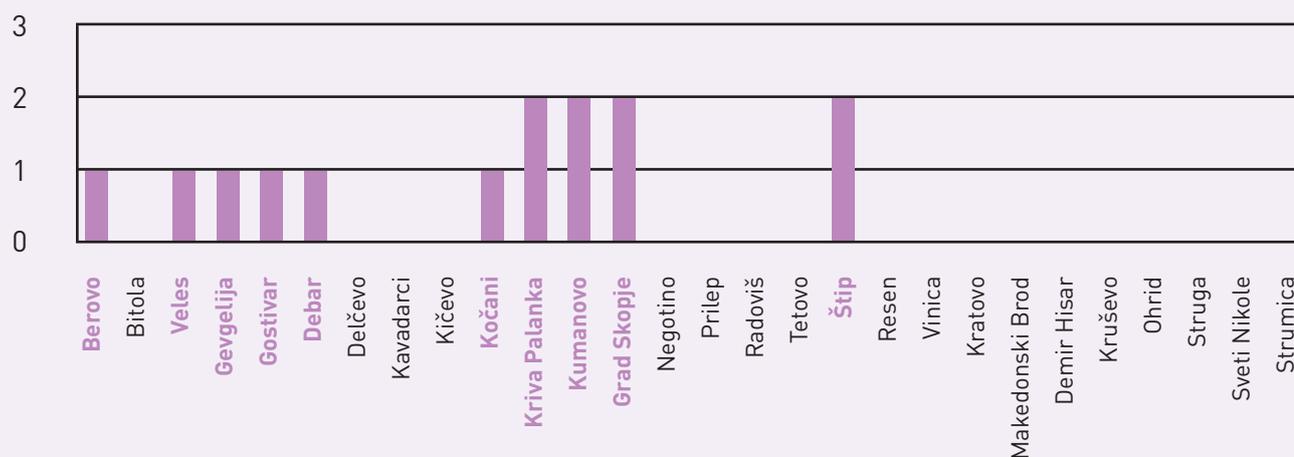
⁹ The information was received from the Administration Agency, the Communities' Rights Agency, the Entrepreneurship Support Agency, the Employment Service Agency and the Education Development Bureau. The information was not submitted only by the Administration for Education Development and Promotion in Communities' Languages.

2.6

Social work centres

Half of the social work centres across the country do have Roma staff members. In terms of shares, social work centres employ the most Roma persons compared to the other state institutions, and out of the total of 1,169 employed staff, 34 belong to the Roma community, or 2.9%. In terms of gender representation, 41.2% of the employed Roma are women, in contrast to 58.8% men. In this case, too, not a single social work centre has a Roma man or woman holding a managerial position, out of the total of 69 such positions.

Chart 3: The Number of Employed Roma Women in the Social Work Centres in 2019



2.7

Employment centres

Only two Roma persons are employed in the 30 employment centres across the country, or 0.5% of the total of 437 employed staff, which constitutes the lowest share of Roma employment compared to the other categories of state institutions. Only the Gostivar and Negotino employment centres have Roma staff. Not a single Roma woman is employed in the employment centres of the Republic of North Macedonia.

3

Roma women and the rate of use of the active employment measures

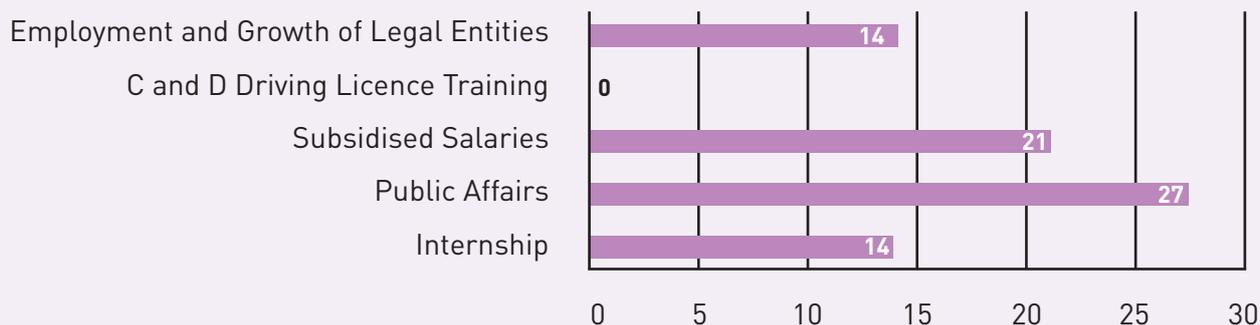
The data analysis concerning the rate of use of the employment measures has been made from the public information collected from the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia. The information gathered relates only to the first six months of 2020.

The 2020 National Operational Plan for active employment programmes and measures and labour market services includes a total of 15 measures and programmes for the inclusion of unemployed persons on the labour market. In the first half of 2020, as many as 9 out of 15 measures were not implemented; in general, the rate of use of the employment measures and labour market services is rather low.

In the first half of 2020, 3,113 registered unemployed persons used any of the national employment measures. A total of 306 of these beneficiaries were Roma (9,8%) and,

compared to the entire 2019 (8.5%), this number increased by 13% in the first half of 2020. However, in terms of gender representation, only 76 Roma women, or 2.4% of the total number of registered unemployed persons, used an employment measure in the first half of 2020, marking a slight increase compared to 2019 (2.02%). The highest rate of use of the employment measures by the Roma women was seen in the area of Public Affairs (35.5%) and Subsidised Salaries (27.6%), whereas the lowest rate of use, equally high each, was seen in the area of Internship and Employment and Growth of Legal Entities (18.4%).

Chart 4: The Number of Employment Measures Used by Roma Women in the First Half of 2020



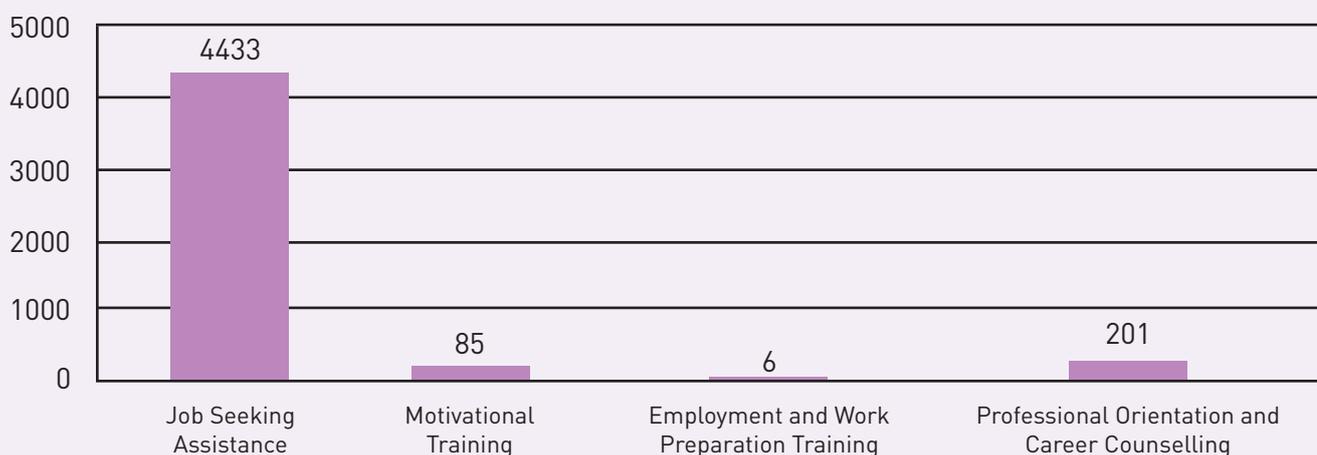
4

Roma women and the rate of use of employment services on the labour market

The data analysis concerning the rate of use of the employment services on the labour market has been made from the public information collected from the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The information gathered relates to the entire 2019 and the first half of 2020.

The employment services offered to unemployed persons, including (1) job seeking assistance, (2) motivational training, (3) employment and work preparation training, and (4) professional orientation and career counselling, covered 5,012 Roma women throughout the entire 2019, out of the 113,454 persons who used these services, or 4.4%. Almost 90% of the demand for services had to do with job seeking information/assistance, whereas the least demanded service, with a share of only 0.1% concerned the employment and work preparation training.

Chart 5: The Number of Roma Women and the Used Employment Services in 2019



A total of 623 persons of the Roma community were covered with the unemployed persons activation services, of which, 287 were women, or 46.06%. Of these, only 39 Roma women (14%) successfully completed the active employment measures.

Even though the 2016-2020 National Action Plan on Employment has provided for the training of 90 staff members of the employment centres who would further provide assistance to the unemployed Roma when seeking jobs, we received no information as to whether and how these trainings had been implemented and how many of their staff members received this kind of training. The employment centres have designated staff members who are in charge of providing information to the unemployed Roma persons in cooperation with the Roma information centres, their mentors and the civil society organisations.

Moreover, out of the 447 Roma women, only 192 (43%) have benefited from the employment counselling and mentoring service, which falls significantly behind the set target – 2,500 Roma persons by the end of 2020 (14%). In the course of 2016 and 2017, these services were provided with the UNDP support by implementing the measure “Activation Services for Individuals at Risk of Social Exclusion”, and in the course of 2018 and 2019 by implementing the measure “Ac-

tivation of the Unemployed Roma”. These services were provided through onsite motivational activities carried out by the employment centres’ mentors, with the purpose of informing the Roma persons about their employment opportunities or professional skills development opportunities, as well as their referral to appropriate active employment measures and labour market services. Even though the Action Plan has provided for 60 information sessions with the unemployed Roma to be organised by the end of 2020, in order to promote their employment opportunities, no information could be received as to whether and how many of these events had been organised by the employment centres.

As regards the Roma information centres, which are situated in the social work centres, there was a single Roma informer engaged in 2019 on the territory of the City of Skopje, however, he did not carry out employment-related activities. On the other hand, in the course of 2019, the Roma informers outside of Skopje provided 297 employment-related services. In the first half of 2020, the towns of Bitola, Gostivar, Kočani and Delčevo provided a total of 37 employment-related services to Roma persons, however, same as with the City of Skopje, these towns keep no records on how many Roma women benefited from the employment information.

5

Conclusions and recommendations

The employment of Roma women in state institutions in our country is still insufficient. **Long-term gender-sensitive approaches should be applied in each institution** so as to increase their participation in the public administration. This is particularly true for the national institutions that have not a single Roma woman on staff, above all, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Local Self-Government and the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning. At the level of local self-government units, too, municipalities should provide within their action plans measures for the employment of Roma women within their administration, particularly in those communities where the Roma population is rather significant, and yet they have not a single Roma woman on staff (Butel, Prilep, Berovo, Veles, Kočani, etc.).

The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia should continuously monitor the employment of members of the smaller ethnic communities in the state administration and, to this end, should use a gender-sensitive approach. When developing the future long-term **Roma social inclusion strategies, the employment of Roma women in state institutions**, being one of the socially most vulnerable group of citizens in the country, should be included **as a specific objective for improving the conditions and opportunities** for unemployment reduction in the Roma community.

Even though the number of Roma persons who have used the active employment measures has seen a slight increase over the last two years, the number of Roma women using these measures is persistently low. The Employment Service Agency should **adapt the criteria for the active employment measures and services for the Roma women**, so that they can better correspond to the needs of Roma women on the labour market. Moreover, a **new measure** should be launched for the vulnerable categories of women, including the Roma women, and it should be **adapted to their interests**. In line with this, it is recommended that the Employment Service Agency **carries out a research into the interest of the Roma women to learn crafts and develop new skills**, the findings of which will be used for the future planning of measures and services that will include **professional qualification training courses** (for example, taking care of the elderly persons or children with disabilities). Bearing in mind that Roma women spend most of their time taking care of their homes, when the new employment measures and services are developed, it is recommended to ensure the provision of an **enabling package of free childcare services for the socially vulnerable groups**. This is expected to result in a greater rate of use of the employment measures by the Roma women, as the availability of this package will allow the women to spend their time on using the employment measures or services.

To encourage a greater registration level of the unemployed Roma women, and thus support their opportunities to use the employment measures and services, the Employment Service Agency should strengthen the **promotion and approximation of these measures and services** to the Roma-pop-

ulated communities. **Roma informers** may play the key role in these activities, which is why **the process of their employment pursuant to the gender equality principles should be completed** as soon as possible, and the visibility of their role in the community should be raised.



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