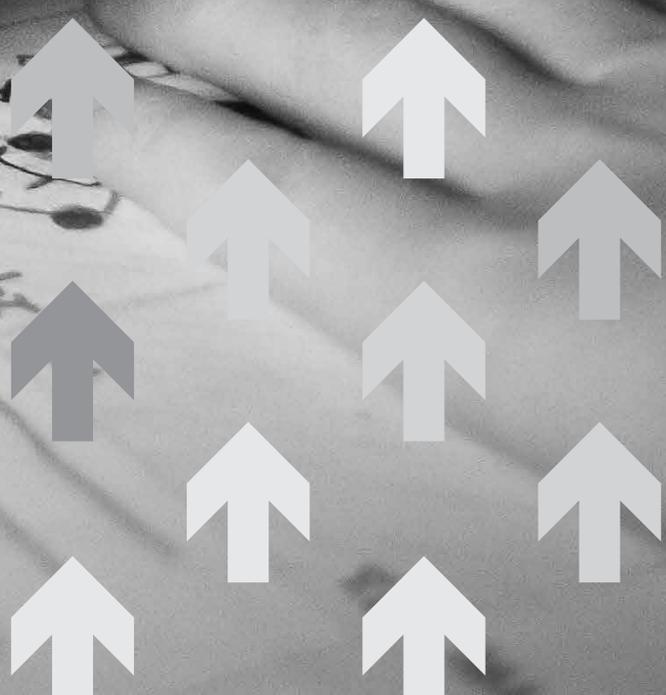


**INCLUSION OF  
OUT OF SCHOOL  
CHILDREN IN THE  
EDUCATIONAL  
SYSTEM**

RESEARCH  
REPORT







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Министерство  
за образование  
и наука



MACEDONIAN  
CIVIC  
EDUCATION  
CENTER

Pestalozzi Children's Foundation

Education and intercultural competence – worldwide



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The views expressed in this document belong to the authors and do not necessarily express the views of the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation, MoES and MCEC.

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INCLUSION OF OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN  
IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM  
Research Report

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Research problem and purpose

The Constitution and laws in the Republic of Macedonia guarantee the right to education of every citizen on equal terms. As a signatory to numerous international conventions, declarations and other documents, the state is committed to the consistent application of this right. In order to ensure equal access to education and quality education for all children, regardless of national, religious, ethnic or any other affiliation, competent institutions have developed affirmative strategies and action plans and taken more measures to improve the coverage and retention of students in the education system. In addition to all efforts, the problem of enrollment and early school leaving in the primary education is still not overcome and it is obvious that it is most dominant among the Roma population. Previous findings indicate that less than 60% of Roma complete primary education<sup>1</sup> and about 25% of Roma students do not continue their education after the fourth grade<sup>2</sup>.

In a number of international reports, the state is called upon to take more serious measures to improve the coverage of primary school students, as well as measures to retain them by the end of the primary education. As an example, as early as 2007, in the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Prevention

of Racial Discrimination<sup>3</sup>, despite the efforts made by the state to improve the access to education, concerns remain about the low participation and the high rate of early school leavers among Roma students in the primary education. The Committee recommended that the state intensify its efforts to increase the level of education of the Roma community by eliminating negative prejudices and stereotypes concerning Roma, providing financial assistance for poorer families, access to education in their mother tongue, and teacher training on Roma culture and tradition, as well as by facilitating the employment of Roma teachers in schools. In the fourth report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) for the Republic of Macedonia from June 2010<sup>4</sup>, ECRI strongly recommended that authorities intensified efforts to ensure access to quality education for each student, regardless of their ethnic origin. In the reports of the European Commission on the progress the Republic of Macedonia has achieved in the process of EU accession from 2013<sup>5</sup> and 2016 respectively, concerns are expressed towards the state for the fact that the rate of early school leavers among Roma children in the primary education remains quite high<sup>6</sup> and it is recommended that the state establish a mechanism for systematic collection of data on street children and

1 Analysis of the Education of Roma in the Republic of Macedonia, Open Society Macedonia, p.4, <http://soros.org.mk/dokumenti/analiza-na-obrazovaniето-na-romite.pdf>.

2 Promotion of Roma Education in Macedonia - Country Assessment and Strategic Directions of the Roma Education Fund, p. - [http://www.romaeducationfund.org/sites/default/files/publications/web\\_macedonia\\_report\\_macedonian.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.org/sites/default/files/publications/web_macedonia_report_macedonian.pdf).

3 Concluding observations of the Committee on the Occasion of the 2007 National Report on the Implementation of CERD, para. 17, <http://sim.law.uu.nl/SIM/CaseLaw/uncom.nsf/fe005fcb50d8277cc12569d5003e4aaa/c01c88edcb61bb7bc12572d6004f01ef?OpenDocument>.

4 Fourth report of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) for the Republic of Macedonia from June 2010. [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Former\\_Yugoslav\\_Republic\\_Macedonia/MKD-CbC-IV-2010-019-MKD.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Former_Yugoslav_Republic_Macedonia/MKD-CbC-IV-2010-019-MKD.pdf).

5 EC Progress Report from 2013, p.48 - [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2013/package/mk\\_rapport\\_2013.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2013/package/mk_rapport_2013.pdf). [https://ec.europa.eu/neighborhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key\\_documents/2016/20161109\\_report\\_the\\_former\\_yugoslav\\_republic\\_of\\_macedonia.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighborhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia.pdf). [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2013/package/mk\\_rapport\\_2013.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2013/package/mk_rapport_2013.pdf).

6 [https://ec.europa.eu/neighborhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key\\_documents/2016/20161109\\_report\\_the\\_former\\_yugoslav\\_republic\\_of\\_macedonia.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighborhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia.pdf).

Roma children (page 62) and improve access to quality education for all (p. 72).

Encouraged by these and other findings and remarks, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation and the Macedonian Civic Education Center jointly initiated a project aimed at determining the number of school-age children who are out of the education system as well as the main reasons for such an exclusion, in order to be able to propose specific subsequent measures for their inclusion.

## Conducting the research

In order to obtain knowledge that will be the basis for proposing and undertaking appropriate measures in this research, the following activities have been implemented:

- ▶ **Field data collection** for all children who are obliged to attend primary school (ages 6 to 17), and yet do not attend school in 12 municipalities known as municipalities with a considerable number of children who do not attend school. Field researchers visited a total of 604 families and recorded 1,144 school-age children who do not attend primary school (they either did not enroll or left school early). Parents were interviewed about the reasons that led to their children not attending school and asked about the support they as parents might need to enroll them or make sure they continue primary education. In addition, 111 parents whose children attend school regularly were also interviewed in the same settlements.
- ▶ **Interview with directors and student support services (pedagogue, psychologist or special education teacher)** from 7 primary schools (in environments where a significant number of children do not enroll in the first grade or leave school early) in order to gain in-depth knowledge of the problems that schools face in providing cover-

age, as well as to survey their opinions and experiences on how to increase the coverage of children.

- ▶ **Focus group discussions** with representatives of different institutions<sup>7</sup> that should/may be involved in providing greater coverage. In 3 focus groups, 37 participants presented their observations on the problem of coverage and the possible ways of overcoming it.
- ▶ **Analysis of normative acts** (laws and by laws) that regulate the issues of student coverage and assessment of their consistency and applicability.

For the purposes of this research, the following legal acts were analyzed: the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, the legal regulations, namely the Law on Primary Education, the Law on Educational Inspection and the Law on Pedagogical Service. In addition to the legal regulations, several strategic documents that have a direct impact on the subject of the research have been analyzed: namely, *the Conceptual Document on the Nine Year Primary Education, the Strategy, Steps towards an Integrated Education System and the Manual for Protection and Prevention against Discrimination*.

The collected data was grouped and analyzed in line with the issues the research was intended to address.

<sup>7</sup> State Educational Inspectorate; local self-government; Bureau for Development of Education; centers for social work and non-governmental organizations, schools.

## Basic research findings

### I. FIELD RESEARCH OBSERVATIONS

- 1 Children who are not enrolled in primary school
  - ▶ Municipalities do not keep systematic records on the children who are obliged to enroll in primary school and on the number of children who have enrolled, and there is no system regulating the flow of student-enrollment information among schools, municipal agencies and state institutions. This makes it difficult to have a policy of ensuring the coverage of all children at municipal level which would be based on accurate data.
  - ▶ The full coverage of children from the school's catchment area is sometimes incomplete because the data that schools receive from municipal services on children who, based on age, should enroll in school in the next school year are often not updated and not received in a timely manner. Also, they do not receive any data on unenrolled children who were absent from the place of residence for a certain period of time and have since returned. The failure to follow the principle of dividing children in school catchment areas in some municipalities makes it difficult for schools to provide enrollment for all children in primary education because schools do not dispose of data on children who are under legal obligation to enroll in a particular school.
  - ▶ The existing legal solutions for enrolling children without documentation, according to the opinions of the schools, are often an obstacle to school enrollment because no solutions are offered for keeping records on these children as well as for issuing documents to them for the education they have completed.
  - ▶ Schools have difficulties with the inclusion of children over the age of 9 who have not enrolled on time in regular first grade classes.
- ▶ Schools, in accordance with the existing legislation and pedagogical guidelines on student enrollment undertake various activities to cover all children. All schools where the interview was conducted inform the parents about the enrollment, and more than half of them pay visits to parents who have not enrolled their children on time in an attempt to persuade them to do so. According to their opinions, this is an effective practice. However, the majority of surveyed parents (76%) stated that no one had reminded them to enroll their child in school. For most of them, schools did not possess data that there were more children who were under the legal obligation of enrolling in school.
- ▶ According to the information coming from the schools, if the efforts of the school do not yield positive results, they usually (i.e. in 50% of the cases) inform the educational inspection, but only 2% of the surveyed parents had some experience with the inspection regarding the school enrollment of their child/children. Schools stated that it would be useful to them if they regularly received information about children who failed to enroll even after the school had informed the inspection as well as about the children who did not enroll after having returned from a temporary stay abroad.
- ▶ There is a mismatch between school data on unenrolled children and the actual situation on the ground. A significant number of children for whom schools had data were not found on the indicated addresses, and there were many children who were missing from the school records. This, to a good extent, is due to migrations (internal and external) of children who are under the legal obligation to enroll at school. At the time of the field research, 663 primary school age children who did not attend primary school at all and for whom schools most often lacked data were identified. Most of the unenrolled children are identified in Kumanovo.

Most of the identified children are 6-8 years old and without any legal impediments they can immediately be enrolled in the first grade.

- ▶ Most of the out of school children live in settlements with predominantly Roma population in poor social environments, in unfavorable living conditions, their parents are without education or have not even completed fourth grade, they are unemployed and without regular sources of income. The most common reasons why parents do not enroll their children at school are poverty and migrations.
- ▶ The parents of the majority of children who did not go to school (78%) would like to enroll their children in primary school and they are aware that education is important for their future.

## 2 Early school leavers in the primary education

- ▶ Municipalities do not dispose of accurate data on early school leavers and do not have the practice to regularly collect data about them, and such obligation is also not legally regulated.
- ▶ Schools have stated that they undertake various activities for keeping students in school, most often they hold counseling sessions with parents, but most of the schools where interviews were held consider that this does not yield the necessary results.
- ▶ As to the students who continue not to attend school even after the school has taken relevant measures, schools do not contact the Pedagogical Service, as provided by the law, but they report the non-attendance to the Educational Inspectorate. Educational inspectors mostly call parents for counseling sessions, and rarely file law suits.
- ▶ Schools have data about early school leavers but do not monitor what happens to them after they drop out. The data they dispose of does not coincide with the factual situation. There is no

system providing schools with regular information about their students (students under legal obligation to enroll in their respective schools) who have had a temporary stay abroad and then returned. This makes it difficult for schools to undertake activities to bring students back.

- ▶ According to the opinions expressed by the schools, some of the existing legal solutions hinder or prevent the readmission of students who left school early due to: (1) the complex and expensive process of foreign document validation, (2) there is no way to evaluate informally acquired knowledge, (3) there are no solutions for admitting students without documents, (4) there are no guidelines for bringing back students who have dropped out years ago.
- ▶ A total of 481 early school leavers who were in Macedonia at the time of the research have been identified. Most of them (59%) are now between the ages of 14 and 17. Most of the students (64%) dropped out of school during the class-based teaching. Most students who dropped out of school were identified in the municipality of Kumanovo.
- ▶ The majority of students who left school early have parents who are without education or have completed less than 4 years of schooling, are mostly unemployed, live in bad social and economic conditions and in an unfavorable social environment.
- ▶ The most common reasons for leaving school early are migration (69%) and poverty (39%), and less often the lack of student motivation for learning, child labor and early marriages.
- ▶ The parents of 56% of the identified children early school leavers would like to see their child return to school and complete primary education. They consider education important for the future of their children.

- ▶ The parents of a significant number of early school leavers (42%) believe that the children are already too grown up to continue their education from the grade where they left it off or replied that they would go abroad again.
- 3 Factors for student coverage enhancement**
- ▶ Parents' education and employment status, as well as the living conditions, are related to the regularity of school attendance. The parents of children who regularly attend school have a higher educational level (65% of the fathers and 58% of the mothers have at least primary education), a greater percentage of them are employed (permanently or temporarily), they live in more favorable social conditions, although in the same (unfavorable) social environment.
  - ▶ The parents of children who regularly attend school most often (in 72% of the cases) motivate children to attend school regularly by advising them and explaining that education is important. Their children are more successful in learning (had a better overall performance in the last grade) than the children who left school early.
  - ▶ The parents of children attending school have higher educational aspirations and most of them (over 80%) find that their children (both male and female) have to complete at least secondary education. On the other hand, the parents whose children do not attend school in large numbers consider that it is sufficient that their children (24% of the male children and 39% of the female children) have primary education.
  - ▶ Schools and institutions (state and local) providing educational support have a very positive opinion about the work of local NGOs in supporting Roma. However, many parents (33% of parents whose children do not attend school and 53% of parents whose children attend school) are not informed about their existence and their work.
  - ▶ Parents are not sufficiently informed about the state assistance they are eligible for (only 27% of the parents of children who attend school and 6% of the parents of children who do not attend school are informed)
  - ▶ Most (over 49%) of all groups of parents need assistance in the form of school necessities, clothing, food so that the child could attend school (or have a better performance at school), and a somewhat smaller number would like to receive financial assistance. The parents whose children attend school for the most part (65%) would like their children to be awarded scholarships.

## II. OBSERVATIONS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF THE LEGAL REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

- ▶ The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia and the Law on Primary Education guarantee the right to education under equal conditions for all. Discrimination based on sex, race, skin color, national, social, political, religious, property and social affiliation is prohibited.
- ▶ The exercise of the right to education is hampered for students who are not registered in the registry books because the keeping of pedagogical records and issuance of valid documents for the completion of a particular grade or the completion of primary education is not regulated.
- ▶ The data contained in the lists provided to municipalities and schools by the Ministry of the Interior, that is, by the services that keep records of school-age children are often wrong and not updated. This makes it difficult for schools to ensure coverage or enrolment of all children of primary school age.
- ▶ The division of schools in school catchment areas in certain municipalities covered by the research is very often the reason why parents do not enroll their children at school (either the school to which, according to the school catchment area division, their child belongs is far from their place of residence or the schools do not have accurate data on the children covered by their catchment area).
- ▶ The procedure for validation of a completed degree of education abroad, according to the opinion of the participants in the research, is complicated (many documents are required) and expensive. This is often the reason for children who have completed a part of their education abroad to stay at home instead of continuing their education in the Republic of Macedonia. The Law on Primary Education (Article 7) regulates the right to organizing lessons for the children of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia who had spent a certain amount of time abroad (and do not have sufficient knowledge of the language of instruction), so that they could learn the language of instruction but it does not envisage organizing such lessons for all students whose mother tongue is different from the language of instruction.
- ▶ Schools have a legal obligation to keep collections of data on enrolled students and a collection of data on parents or guardians of enrolled students (Article 15-b of the Law on Primary Education), but there is no legal obligation to keep a collection of data on school age children who are not enrolled in school and on students who have dropped out from primary school.
- ▶ According to schools' opinions, the after school care (extended stay) would be a part of the solution to the problem for students at risk of dropping out. However, this requires the consent of the Ministry of Education and Science and provision of additional financial resources.
- ▶ Counselling procedures and responsibilities of both schools and parents are regulated in detail in the programs for parent counseling and student counseling accordingly, but there is a need for additional measures for working with parents who did not enroll their children in primary school or parents whose children dropped out of school.
- ▶ There is a problem with the organization and delivery of teaching for children who for various reasons failed to enroll on time and finish primary

school, and their age hampers their inclusion in the existing classes following the regular curricula. Pursuant to Article 38, paragraph 2 of the Law on Primary Education, the Ministry of Education and Science, upon the proposal of the Bureau for Development of Education, can adopt summarized (reduced) curricula. This can be a temporary solution for the children like those identified with the field research.



## RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

### The right and access to education

- ▶ The state should find an adequate way of regulating the pedagogical record keeping and the issuance of valid documents for a completion of a grade or completion of primary education as a whole for those who are not registered in the registry books, which will ensure unhindered access to primary education.

### Enrollment of students in primary education and return to school of early school leavers

- ▶ The Ministry of Interior, i.e. the services in charge of keeping registry books, submit to the municipalities updated lists of children who are at the age of enrollment in primary education.
- ▶ In those municipalities where the ethnic balance is an additional criterion in the adoption of the catchment area plan, student transportation should be provided in line with the distribution of students made according to the distance from their places of residence to the school and back. Municipalities and schools should develop a strategy for informing parents of student enrollment in accordance with the catchment area plan.
- ▶ Municipalities should submit to schools updated lists of students by catchment area that schools need to enroll in the next school year. The lists should be submitted no later than March 31 of the current year.
- ▶ On the basis of the updated data received from relevant institutions, the municipalities should establish a database of children who are under legal

obligation to enroll, but failed to do so; early school leavers who have been out of school for a longer period of time and early school leavers who have permanently left school.

- ▶ State and local educational institutions and schools should intensify activities for informing parents about all types of educational support available to children from socially vulnerable groups.
- ▶ The Ministry of Education and Science should take measures that will enable simpler document validation procedures (part of the procedures referring to class-based teaching should be implemented by schools in which students plan to enroll) and reduction of financial costs.
- ▶ To task the Ministry of Interior with providing municipalities with quarterly lists of school age children who have left the country or have returned to the country.
- ▶ The centers for social work in their contacts with beneficiaries of social services should register children of school age and submit such lists to the municipality.
- ▶ The Ministry of Education and Science should share data with municipalities on children identified by this field research who did not attend primary school or left primary school early. Municipalities together with schools should develop a strategy and plan the dynamics of their enrollment/return to primary school. Children for whom there are no legal and pedagogical obstacles should enroll in the current school year, and for the others, an action plan regulating coverage and required support should be developed.

- ▶ The Ministry of Education and Science should prepare a pilot mechanism for provision of the indispensable support (clothes, school necessities, meals) to parents whose children do not attend school, but it should be conditioned with child enrollment and regular school attendance. Based on experiences acquired during this piloting stage, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy should develop a program for support of the socially and education-wise most vulnerable families whose children do not attend school.
- ▶ The Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for the Development of Education should propose pedagogical solutions for simpler verification and recognition of informally acquired knowledge of children who have not attended school for several years (have not been enrolled at all or have left school early).
- ▶ The Ministry of Education and Science and the Center for Adult Education should develop a strategy and program for education of parents of school-age children and have not completed primary education themselves. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy should develop measures to support parents completing primary education, including measures for their employment.
- ▶ Non-governmental organizations should continue and strengthen activities to support education of socially vulnerable groups, develop mutual cooperation and coordinate their activities with the activities of state institutions. It is better to inform parents of children outside the school system of the support they can receive.

### **Methods of teaching**

- ▶ To supplement the Law on Primary Education with the obligation of schools to organize language-of-instruction classes for the students who do not have a sufficient command of the language of instruction. The Ministry of Education and Science should provide financial means for implementing such a solution.
- ▶ It is recommended to introduce after-school care (extended student stay) in as many primary schools as possible, especially in areas where socially vulnerable families live, as well as to find ways to subsidize the costs for these categories of the population.
- ▶ The Ministry of Education and Science and the municipalities should promote and support schools in providing different types of assistance (tutors, mentors, volunteers, etc.) for children who are at risk of leaving school due to poor social conditions in the family and parents' inability to provide them with learning support.
- ▶ School staff should be trained to use inclusive approaches that will include support for students who are at risk of leaving school early, early school leavers who have returned to school, and students who have enrolled later. Parents should also be involved.

### **Involvement and cooperation with parents**

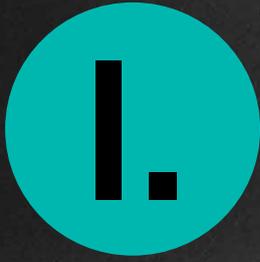
- ▶ It is necessary to strengthen the Pedagogical Service with professional staff who would implement programs for parent and student counselling.
- ▶ The procedure for schools that implement parent and student counseling programs should be simplified in order to adapt the counseling to the actual needs and conditions.

**Teaching (duration)**

- ▶ The Minister of Education and Science upon the proposal of the Bureau for Development of Education should adopt summarized (reduced) curricula (with limited period of application) for organizing and conducting classes for individuals who for various reasons failed to enroll and complete primary education on time, and are of age that makes it difficult for them to attend regular classes.







THIS SECTION PROVIDES BASIC RESEARCH-RELATED INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING:

social context;

subject of the research;

purpose of the research;

how the research was conducted.

More detailed information on the research methodology is given below.



## BASIC RESEARCH INFORMATION

## 1.

SOCIAL  
CONTEXT

According to the official data available, the coverage of students (6-14 years) in primary education has not increased in the past 10 years<sup>8</sup>. Throughout that period, the coverage is approximately 90% (+ -0.5)<sup>9</sup>. This means that about 10% of children under legal obligation to attend school are not regularly attending primary school<sup>10</sup>. Almost 2% of students enrolled in the school year 2014/2015 at the end of the school year were not in the education system<sup>11</sup>. For a significant part of them there is no accurate data on the reasons for leaving school early or giving up on school.

When it comes to student coverage and leaving school early/giving up on school, the vulnerable groups of students, especially Roma students, are most affected. Most educational indicators (attending pre-school education, timely enrollment, regularity, school performance, moving on to a higher level of education) for Roma students are less favorable compared to the general population<sup>12</sup>. Many of them drop out while in primary school. For example, in the school year 2014/15, 4,69% of the total number of students were Roma, and only 2,81%<sup>13</sup> of them finished primary school (and the situation is expected to be approximately the same).

In addition to the notable improvements in the exercise of the right to education, the problem of low educational achievements

8 From the academic year 2006/07 to the academic year 2015/16.

9 State Statistical Office, Primary and Secondary Schools at the Beginning of the School Year 2015/16, p. 11, <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.16.05.pdf>

10 Very few of them are included in private primary schools. Some children of this age may be abroad, but there is no data to support that assumption.

11 In the academic year 2014/15 at the beginning of the year there were 192165 students in primary schools, and at the end 188361 students (data from the State Statistical Office, Primary and Secondary Schools at the End of the school year 2014/2015, <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publications/2.4.16.06.pdf> and Primary and Secondary Schools at the Beginning of the School year 2015/16, <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.16.05.pdf>).

12 Roma Education Fond (2012) REF country assessment - Macedonia, p. 36-37 [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref\\_ca\\_2011\\_mac\\_english\\_screen.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ref_ca_2011_mac_english_screen.pdf).

13 Calculated according to the data from the State Statistical Office, Primary and Secondary Schools at the End of the School Year 2014/2015, <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.16.06.pdf>



10% of children under legal obligation to attend school are not regularly attending primary school

of Roma students<sup>14</sup> compared to the full student coverage and progress has been highlighted in several reports. And the latest European Commission progress report on the Republic of Macedonia<sup>15</sup> in the recommendations issued in the chapter on education refers also to education of vulnerable groups. It is recommended that a mechanism for systematic data collection on street children and Roma children (page 62) be established and that access to quality education for all is improved (p. 72).

As a result of the information collected on the situation of Roma in the Republic of Macedonia, a Strategy for the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020 was developed, which sets out the strategic goals and defines activities for their achievement. Among others, the following specific strategic goals bearing relevance for the primary education have been set:

- ▶ To include at least 98% of Roma children who are at the first-grade age of enrollment in the primary education;
- ▶ To improve student performance and achieve a minimum of 75% mobility from one grade into another by 2020<sup>16</sup>.

To achieve these goals, an adequate support system from the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, all educational institutions and schools is needed. The above-mentioned reports point out to difficulties in providing data on children who did not enroll in primary school and on early school leavers, which indicates that the existing sys-

tem for ensuring full coverage of children in primary education has weaknesses.

The slow provision of full student coverage and the improvement of student achievements<sup>17</sup>, especially among students from vulnerable groups, indicate that there is a need for a more detailed research into the reasons for such a situation. In doing so, it is necessary to identify the reasons for such a situation and the practices applied by schools and the community, and to review their effectiveness or need for improvement.

These conditions prompted the Directorate for Development and Promotion of Education in the Languages of Community Members within the Ministry of Education and Science, the *Pestalozzi* Children's Foundation and the Macedonian Center for Civic Education to undertake activities for examining the situation with the coverage of children outside the educational system, with an emphasis on Roma children in primary education.

14 UNICEF (2013) Equity for Children, Country Report, Analysis of the Situation of Girls and Boys in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, p. 58 – 59 [https://www.unicef.org/tfymacedonia/SITAN\\_MKD\\_LongVersion\\_Final.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/tfymacedonia/SITAN_MKD_LongVersion_Final.pdf).

15 EU Commission staff working document The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2016 Report [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key\\_documents/2016/20161109\\_report\\_the\\_former\\_yugoslav\\_republic\\_of\\_macedonia.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia.pdf).

16 Strategy for the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia 2014 - 2020, p. 43, <http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/strategii/Strategija%20za%20Romite%20vo%20RM%202014-2020.pdf>.

17 In the subsequent international measurements in which the Republic of Macedonia participated, the students achieved lower results. PIRLS - [https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2001i/pdf/P1\\_IR\\_Ch01.pdf](https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2001i/pdf/P1_IR_Ch01.pdf) [https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/PDF/P06\\_IR\\_Ch1.pdf](https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/PDF/P06_IR_Ch1.pdf) TIMSS [https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/timss1999i/pdf/T99i\\_Math\\_1.pdf](https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/timss1999i/pdf/T99i_Math_1.pdf) [https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/timss1999i/pdf/T99i\\_Sci\\_01.pdf](https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/timss1999i/pdf/T99i_Sci_01.pdf) [https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/PDF/t03\\_download/T03\\_M\\_Chap1.pdf](https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/PDF/t03_download/T03_M_Chap1.pdf) [https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/PDF/t03\\_download/T03\\_S\\_Chap1.pdf](https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/PDF/t03_download/T03_S_Chap1.pdf) PISA - [http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/pisa-2015-results-volume-i\\_9789264266490-en#page46](http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/pisa-2015-results-volume-i_9789264266490-en#page46) <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/programme-for-international-student-assessment-pisa/33690591.pdf>.

## 2.

SUBJECT OF  
THE RESEARCH

The subject of this research is to determine the number of children, primarily Roma school age children who are not included in the regular primary education<sup>18</sup> in 12 municipalities, to collect data on them, as well as to identify the reasons for their failure to attend school.

More specifically, the research should provide an answer to the following questions:

- ▶ How is the coverage of all children in primary education **legally regulated** and are there any gaps, any parts which are not clearly envisaged in the regulations or difficult to apply in practice, etc.;
- ▶ What is the **system of monitoring the enrollment, retention and advancement** of children from vulnerable groups, especially Roma students in primary schools, how is it being applied, which parts function well in practice, and where can difficulties be identified;
- ▶ How many school age children are there in the 12 selected municipalities with a larger Roma population covered by the research and **what are the reasons for their non-enrollment or leaving primary school early**;
- ▶ What are **the opinions of the stakeholders** (parents, schools, relevant institutions) about the reasons for students leaving school early and the practices of providing coverage and learning support for Roma students;
- ▶ What are the existing **good practices** that could be used in a wider context.

<sup>18</sup> It refers to children who are not enrolled in primary education, children who left the primary school before the age of 16.

### 3.

## PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH



The purpose of the research is to do the following on the basis of the obtained information:

- ▶ determine the number and identity of school age children who do not attend primary school;
- ▶ discover the reasons for the children's failure to enroll or for their leaving school early;
- ▶ propose specific measures to significantly reduce the number of unenrolled children and early school leavers;
- ▶ suggest solutions for improving the system and procedures for ensuring increased coverage of children who do not attend primary school.



## 4.

## HOW WAS THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED



In order to provide an answer to the research questions set above the following activities were carried out.

#### Field data collection

Prior to the start of the field research, a training was carried out for 20 interviewers (local NGO activists) who know the local community well, as well as the problems with children not enrolling and dropping out of the school. In May 2017, they visited families with children aged 6-17 who do not attend school in 12 municipalities<sup>19</sup>. A total of 604 families were visited and 1144 children aged 6 - 17 years who do not attend school were registered. For every child, the basic data (sex, age, whether they were enrolled in school at all and in which year of schooling/grade) they dropped out) was registered. Parents were surveyed on the reasons that led up to children not attending school, their desire to enroll the child in school, that is, to make sure their child continued attending school, as well as the support they needed. In addition, in the same municipalities and settlements, a survey was conducted with 111 parents whose children regularly attend school. They collected opinions and experiences related to the education

of their children and what they did to ensure that they regularly attended school. The responses of these parents were used to propose measures for the inclusion of children who are outside of the educational system.

#### Interview with directors and expert associates

From the 12 municipalities, 7 schools<sup>20</sup> were selected 20 in which the problem of non-enrollment and school leaving is more prominent. An interview was conducted with Directors and school associates regarding the problems they are facing with regarding providing coverage, their experiences and suggestions for increasing the scope. Interviews, were conducted with a help of previously prepared reminder for the interview, and led by researchers team. They were conducted in May 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Shuto Orizari, Centar and Chair in the City of Skopje, Prilep, Kumanovo, Bitola, Tetovo, Gostivar, Shtip, Strumica, Vinica, Kochani.

<sup>20</sup> Gjorgji Sugarev – Bitola; Dobre Jovanovski – Prilep; Dimitar Vlahov – Shtip; Tosho Arsov – Shtip; Hristijan Todorovski Karposh – Kumanovo; Goce Delcev – Tetovo and Brakja Ramiz Hamid – Skopje.

### Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were organized with representatives of various institutions, namely: the State Educational Inspectorate, local self-government, Bureau for Development of Education, centers for social work and NGOs, which can contribute to the process and efforts for ensuring greater coverage of children in primary schools. The discussion focused on the following issues:

- ▶ improving the provision and flow of information for students who are outside of the educational system, and
- ▶ improving the practices of student enrolment in the education system.

Discussions, according to a pre-prepared protocol, were moderated by the members of the research team. A total of 37 participants took part in the three focus group discussions (in Kochani, Kumanovo and Strumica) held at the end of May 2017.

### Analysis of legal acts

All laws and bylaws in the field of education containing provisions relevant for the enrollment and retention of children in primary education were identified. The solutions contained in the relevant laws and by-laws, i.e. in the articles which either directly or indirectly regulate the enrollment and progress of students in laws were presented and analyzed. The strategic documents adopted by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia or the Ministry of Education and Science referring to the commitments made to create conditions for the enrollment and coverage of all children in the primary education were analyzed. The content, interrelation and consistency of the relevant provisions and their applicability were also analyzed. The analysis was conducted in the period May - June 2017.

The findings from the various sources were processed quantitatively and/or qualitatively and were analyzed according to the issues that the research intended to answer.







THIS PART CONTAINS  
RESEARCH DATA ORGANIZED  
IN THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

Children not yet enrolled in  
primary school;

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Students dropping out of  
primary school;

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Factors for improving  
coverage.

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The insights from the parents survey can be taken as relevant for the Roma population not only in the 12 municipalities where the survey was conducted, but also wider, because the data from the last census (2002) show that 72% of the Roma population in the Republic of Macedonia live in these 12 municipalities. The survey covered almost all parents whose children do not attend primary school, who lived (were present) during the survey in these municipalities.



**FIELD**

**RESEARCH**

**RESULTS**



Field surveyors have managed to identify 663 children who lived in May 2017 in the 12 municipalities, and who were not enrolled in first grade.

# 1.

## CHILDREN NOT ENROLLED IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

### 1.2. Number of children not enrolled in primary school

Data was requested from the education sectors in the 12 surveyed municipalities and from the 49 primary schools in them where the problem of early school leaving is more pronounced, regarding the number of children who did not attend school in the period from school year 2012/2013 to school year 2016/2017<sup>21</sup>. Data on children who have not been enrolled were received from only five municipalities, and they were proven inaccurate in the field. This is an indicator that municipalities do not have systematic monitoring of student enrollment. Discussion participants in the focus groups in three municipalities<sup>22</sup> stated that there is no database of children who are obliged to attend school, which would be regularly updated with information on the enrollment and progress of students, in any of their municipalities and, to the best of their knowledge, in no other municipalities as well. This is not a legal obligation, but the existence of such data would provide municipalities a more systematic monitoring of enrollment.

Only 16 out of 49 schools submitted data on children who are obliged to attend school who have not enrolled in their schools since 2012/2013. There are 1,108 such children, according to their data. Although the lists of children who are obliged to attend school do not contain information on ethnicity, according to the statements of principals and student support services interviewed, most of the children that have not enrolled are from the Roma minority. Some of the children that have failed to enroll (approximately 15%) did not live on the received addresses since the time they were supposed to enroll in schools. After multiple unsuccessful attempts to enroll children in first grade, the schools most frequently have no knowledge of what happened with them.

<sup>21</sup> Since school year 2012/13 there is a practice of schools receiving data on children who are obliged to attend school from the Ministry of Interior, which facilitates the task of the municipalities for monitoring the enrollment.

<sup>22</sup> Kumanovo, Strumica and Kochani.

Field surveyors have managed to identify 663 children who lived in May 2017 in the 12 municipalities, and who were not enrolled in first grade. They live in 378 families<sup>23</sup>. The data on their structure according to gender and age are provided in Table 1.

► **Table 1.**  
**Students not enrolled in school according to age and gender**

Age in years	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
6	31	23	54
7	52	52	104
8	29	34	63
9	34	34	68
10	30	35	65
11	31	28	59
12	30	31	61
13	22	19	41
14	17	18	35
15	19	25	44
16	27	15	42
17	9	15	24
no data	1	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>663</b>

Dividing the age scale into three year intervals, it is evident that most children that have not been enrolled in primary school are at the ages of 6-8 (33%) and that their number reduces in each subsequent age interval. There are no differences between the number of girls and boys who were not enrolled.

The numbers of children who were not enrolled by municipality (Table 2) show that they are most prevalent in Kumanovo, and then in Bitola, Shuto Orizari, Shtip and Kochani. The number of unenrolled children detected in the field is disproportional to the number of Roma population in the municipality. Regarding the numbers of the Roma population, there are significantly more unenrolled children in the municipalities Kumanovo and Skopje - Center, and significantly less in the municipality Shuto Orizari.

<sup>23</sup> For easier identification of the children, the field researchers received the lists of children who did not enroll in primary school in the 25 schools and 6 municipalities that submitted such data. In many cases, the children they found in the field are not the same ones that schools supplied data on. This is largely due to impermanent living addresses and migrations. On the other hand, it is an indicator that the data the institutions have at their disposal and which they should update.

► **Table 2.**  
**Children not attending school by municipality**

Municipality	Number of unenrolled children	%	Number of Roma inhabitants*	%
Bitola	67	10,11	2 613	6,73
Vinica	11	1,66	1230	3,17
Gostivar	15	2,26	2 237	5,76
Kochani	54	8,14	1 951	5,03
Kumanovo	195	29,41	4 256	10,96
Prilep	44	6,64	4 433	11,42
Strumica	56	8,45	147**	0,38
Tetovo	30	4,52	2 357	6,07
Centar	42	6,33	974	2,51
Chair	34	5,13	3 083	7,94
Shtip	52	7,84	2 195	5,65
Shuto Orizari	59	8,90	13 342	34,37
<b>Total</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>38 818</b>	<b>100</b>

Remark:

\* - The data are according to the 2002 population census

\*\* - In Strumica many members of a socially vulnerable group declare themselves as Turks

In most of the families in which children do not attend school the parents are without education (46% of fathers and 65% of mothers) or with less than four grades (23% of fathers and 19% of mothers)<sup>24</sup>.

► **Table 3.**  
**Education of parents whose children do not attend school**

Education	Father		Mother	
	Number	%	Number	%
No education	278	46,03	393	65,07
Four grades or less	141	23,34	116	19,21
Primary school		21,19	73	12,09
High school	21	3,48	7	1,16
University	0	0,00	1	0,17
no data	36	5,96	14	2,32
<b>Total</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>100</b>

The unemployment situation is even worse: 86% of fathers and 96% of mothers are unemployed, and only some of them work occasionally (green market sales, collection of bottles and other secondary raw materials, cleaning).

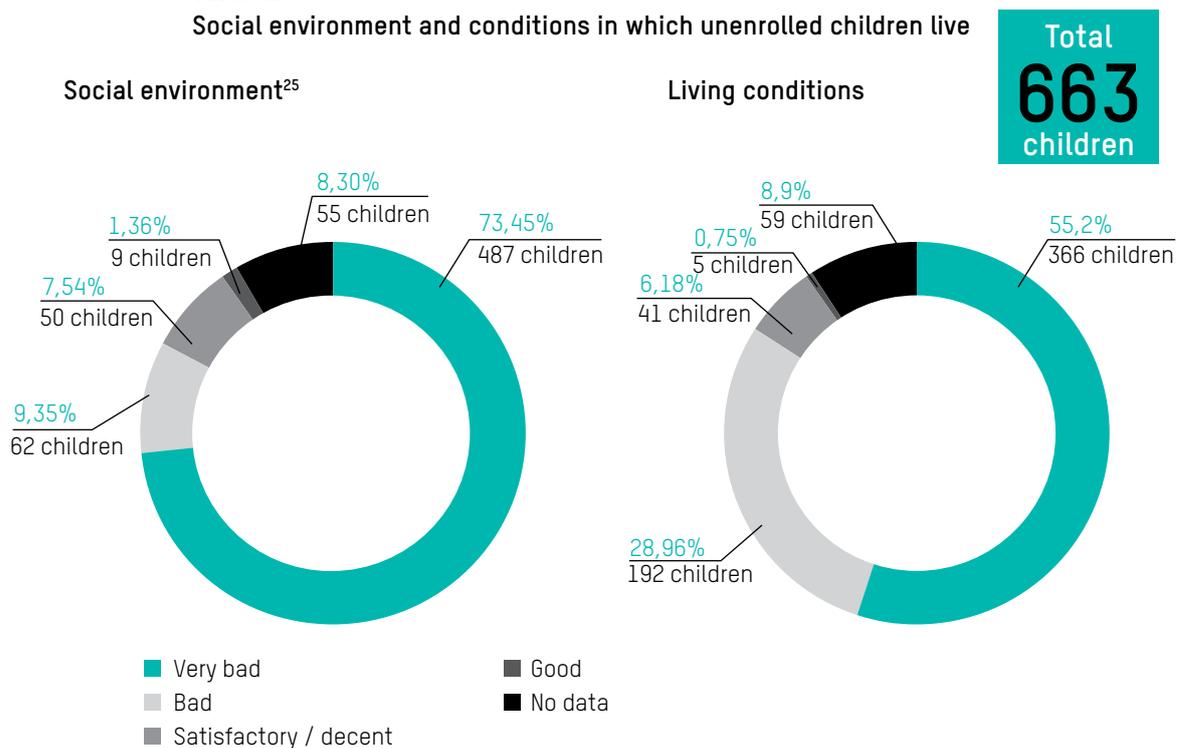
<sup>24</sup> The social structure (education and employment of parents, the social environment in which they live, living conditions) of the surveyed families is given for all parents with children who do not attend school (604 families), because in many families there are, or were, children who were not enrolled and early school leavers.

► **Table 4.**  
**Employment of parents whose children do not attend school**

Employment	Father		Mother	
	Number	%	Number	%
Does not work, housewife	348	57,62	537	88,91
Works occasionally (cleaning, sales...)	174	28,81	40	6,62
Has permanent job	33	5,46	5	3,64
No data	49	8,11	22	0,83
<b>Total</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>100</b>

Most of the unenrolled children (73%) live in very unfavorable social environments: ghettos without sewerage, basic infrastructure and poor hygiene. Less than 10% live in environments that meet basic needs: infrastructure is present albeit poorly maintained, satisfactory hygiene and homes made of solid materials. Family living conditions are similar: 55% of children live in very poor conditions, without income, frequently without one of the parents, in substandard dwellings and without basic household appliances, whereas a further 29% are poor and live from social aid, which is insufficient, or from occasional low paid jobs (Table 5).

► **Table 5.**  
**Social environment and conditions in which unenrolled children live**



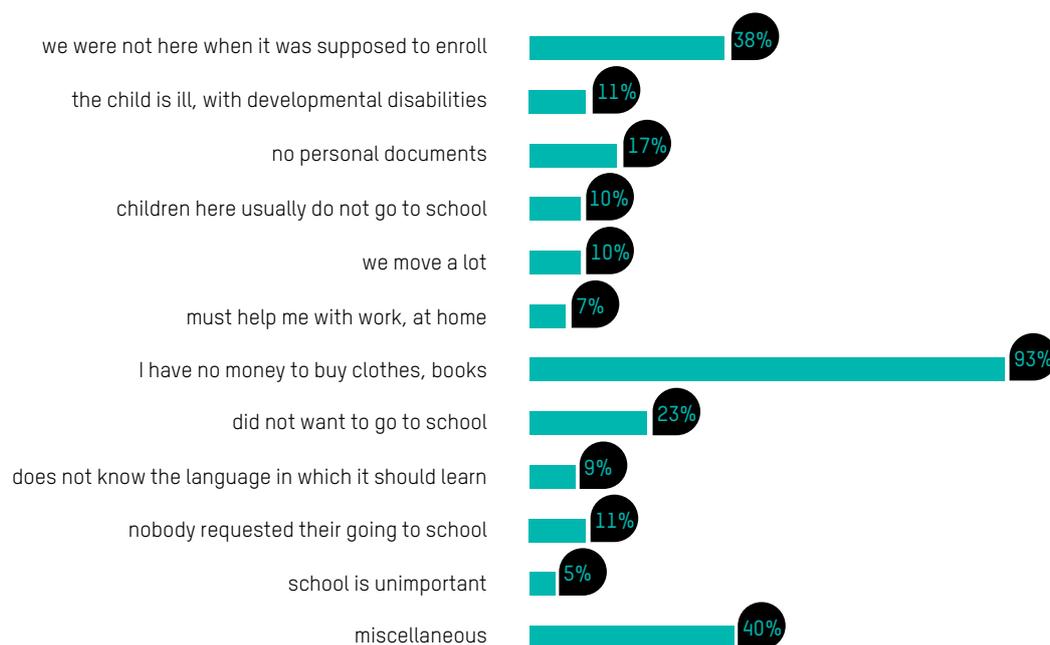
25 - Social environment and living conditions are described through the following categories:  
 Very bad  
 - substandard, ghetto settlement, no pavement, no stores in the vicinity, low voltage, no sewerage, prevalent littering, houses are "patched up" with inadequate materials.  
 - single parent, one parent in prison, child abandoned by parents, no income, no social aid, living in housing in a very poor condition, no basic household appliances.  
 Bad  
 - no sewerage, damaged streets, small homes in disrepair, poor hygiene.  
 - poor, receive social aid or allowance for a third child, which is not sufficient, work occasionally, live in bad conditions.  
 Satisfactory/decent

- there is appropriate infrastructure, but it is not maintained, homes are made of solid materials, they are being maintained and hygiene is average.  
 - one parent has a steady job, they meet basic living needs, have a small home made of solid materials, have basic household appliances  
 Good  
 - appropriate infrastructure, well maintained, homes made of solid materials with well-kept yards, good hygiene, all municipal objects in vicinity (store, school, hospital...)  
 - they have a constant source of income, which is sufficient, the house is large enough for the family's needs and is well maintained and equipped

## 1.2. Reasons for not enrolling in primary school

We determined the reasons for Roma children not enrolling into primary school through the answers of the parents and the opinions of the principals and student support services interviewed. The following graph contains their answers.

► **Graph 1.**  
**Reasons for not enrolling in school**



**Comment:** Parents were given the option of providing more than one reason. The percentages have been calculated regarding the total number of parents with unenrolled children. The reasons given under "miscellaneous" usually are poverty, unemployment, lack of conditions.

Parents usually provide several different reasons for not enrolling their children in school. Almost all parents (93%) list as one of the reasons the lack of money to buy the children what they need for school: clothes, books, school materials etc. Every second parent has stated that a reason for not enrolling the child is that they move a lot and that they were out of the country when the child was supposed to go to school, and 17% give the lack of needed documents for enrollment as a reason. The child not wanting to attend school was also a reason for 23% of the

parents. Reasons related to parents' opinions on education were given more rarely ("school is unimportant"; "Roma children usually do not go to school").

Schools have similar information on the reasons. The most frequently given reasons in the interviews with principals and student support services and in the focus group discussions were poverty (inability of the parents to provide food, clothes and school materials for the children) and migrations within the country for season-

al work<sup>26</sup> or abroad, because of the assistance that asylum seekers receive while residing in Western countries. The insufficient awareness of the parents regarding the importance of education for children was mentioned much more rarely.

A frequent problem of parents and schools are children without appropriate documents. According to the statements by principals and student support services, schools usually take such children in, but they are faced with difficulties recording their attendance, grades and, in particular, when issuing diplomas at the end of the school year.

Information shows that schools and other education entities have similar opinions to the parents' on the reasons why children from Roma families do not enroll in school.

### 1.3. What is done for the enrollment of all children

Pursuant to the instructions received by the competent bodies and positive pedagogical practices, schools (should) undertake various activities to ensure the enrollment of children who are obliged to attend school in first grade.

According to the statements of student support services, the process of coverage of first grade students is most frequently as follows:

- 1 Every year schools receive data from the municipality on the children who should enroll in first grade according to their calendar age.
- 2 Schools use different means (announcements in public locations, flyers, meetings with parents) to inform the parents of the enrollment (deadlines, necessary documents).

- 3 Schools send written invitations and/or visit parents who have not enrolled their children until the beginning of the school year.

- 4 Schools inform the competent (or state) education inspector on the children who have not enrolled in first grade.

The following issues occur during this process, according to the answers of the principles and student support services:

- ▶ the data on children who are obliged to attend school received from the municipalities are not divided by school areas, so the schools have to individually or in mutual cooperation identify the children who are obliged to attend school in their area;
- ▶ sometimes schools do not receive data on time (schools believe that it would be best to receive information in May the latest, when enrollment is performed for future first graders), so that they can undertake all necessary measures to secure the enrollment of all children who are obliged to attend school;
- ▶ in certain municipalities (e.g. Kumanovo) there is no area division based on the principle of school vicinity<sup>27</sup>, which is why schools lack accurate data on the children that should be enrolled in the appropriate school, and in other municipalities (e.g. Tetovo), the area division is changed frequently or is not properly respected, which creates difficulties for schools in monitoring whether the children have enrolled in a different school, or have not enrolled at all;
- ▶ schools usually do not receive follow-up information on the children they have reported to the education inspector and which have not enrolled into school even after that.

<sup>26</sup> This is a characteristic for the municipalities of Shtip and Strumica

<sup>27</sup> The regional division is related to the school's obligation to enroll all children living in a predetermined region in which the school is located.

The data received from 16 schools show that they have sent written invitations for 64% of unenrolled children to their parents. In addition to this, some schools, especially those with large numbers of Roma students, make multiple visits to the families of children who should be attending school and talk to them and try to convince them to enroll the children. In 53% of the cases of unenrolled children who are obliged to attend school, the schools have informed the competent or state education inspector. Education inspectors state that they organize counseling for such parents, and that they rarely submit complaints to court. However, all efforts for enrollment in first grade have failed with a significant number of children who are obliged to attend school.

Schools frequently prolong the enrollment period until October in order to cover as many children as possible. They also take into first grade children who have not enrolled on time, but it is a problem if they are 9 or more years of age. These children find it difficult to involve in classes made of 6 year old first graders, in spite of the fact that there are no legal obstacles for this. The interviews and discussion in the focus groups pointed out the need of devising an appropriate solution for the enrollment and progress of these children.

All interviewed principals and student support services believe that most effective in the enrollment of Roma children is visiting their families and talking with their parents. They also believe that non-governmental organizations that work on supporting the Roma provide an important contribution in the education of parents and persuading them to enroll their children in school. Some schools point out as positive the cooperation with public health institutions, which submit to them their record on vaccination that is very up to date. However, the number of children being vaccinated is falling lately, which is why the public health institutions' records are incomplete.

On the other hand, 76% of surveyed parents whose children were not enrolled in first grade have stated that nobody has reminded them that they should enroll the child in school, and only 15% have stated that they were visited by the school. This discrepancy between the answers of the schools and parents may be due to the discrepancies between the lists of children that the schools had data on and the children identified in the field. Schools most probably did not have data on many of the children identified in the field that they are legally obliged to go to their school.

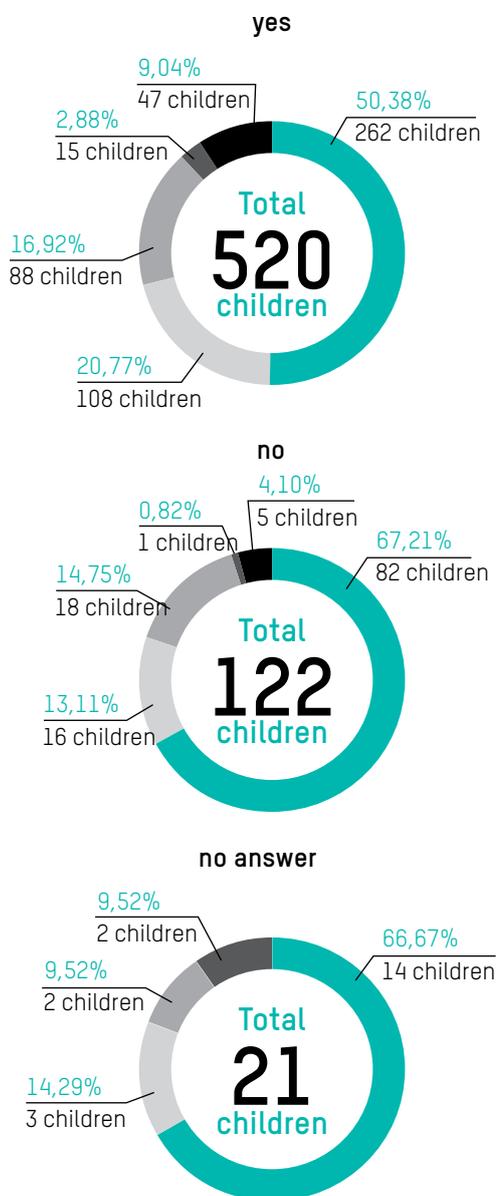
If the school has called and/or sent invitations and the parents still could not (would not) enroll the child, the problem most frequently (in 38% of the cases) resulted in a repeat conversation with school representatives, and many parents (16%) signed a statement that they will go abroad. Only 2% of surveyed parents have had any experience with the inspectorate.

Some principles and student support services have stated that the schools have a practice of telling parents to inform the school when they come from abroad and enroll the child then. Some schools collect information from neighboring students to check whether some families have returned, and then they visit the families and make attempts to have the child enrolled. Schools do not receive information from relevant institutions on children returning from abroad who have not been enrolled in school, but are still legally obliged to attend school, and they believe that receiving such information would be useful.

Parents of most (78%) of the identified out of school children, would like their child to enroll in primary school. They most frequently explain this by saying that children need education (in life, to find a job, etc.).

► **Table 6.**  
Desire to enroll children in school according to the fathers' education level

Whether he wants to enroll his children in school



**Education of the father**

- No education
- Four grades or less
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- No data

► **Table 7.**  
Desire to enroll children in school according to the mothers' education level

Whether he wants to enroll his children in school



**Education of the mother**

- No education
- Four grades or less
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- Higher education
- No data

Parents (fathers and mothers) without any education have answered more frequently than parents who have some education that they do not want to enroll their children in school (see tables 6 and 7). Those who have stated that they do not want their child enrolled in primary school have also most frequently said that they will go abroad again, or that the child is too old to enroll in primary school for the first time.

## Findings

- ▶ Municipalities do not keep systematic records of children who need to enroll in primary school and how many of them have enrolled. The data received by schools from municipal services on the children who are the calendar age for enrollment are frequently not updated and are not being sent on time.
- ▶ Violations of the regional division in certain municipalities, makes it more difficult for schools to provide enrollment of all children in primary schools because they lack data on which children are obliged to enroll in a particular school.
- ▶ There are no legal obstacles to enrolling children in first grade, but schools have difficulties organizing classes when they need to include a child older than 9 in a first grade class.
- ▶ 663 school age children have been identified in the field who have not attended primary school at all, and for which schools frequently did not have any data. Most unenrolled children have been identified in Kumano-vo. Most of the identified children are aged 6-8.
- ▶ Most of the unenrolled children live in a poor social environment have unfavorable living conditions at home and their parents have no education or less than four grades of primary school education.
- ▶ Poverty and migrations are the most frequent reasons why parents do not enroll their children in school.
- ▶ The parents of most of the (78%) children who do not attend school would like to enroll them in primary schools and are aware that education is important for the future of their children.
- ▶ According to school information, all schools inform parents on enrollments, and more than half try to persuade parents to enroll their children in school. They believe that the practice is effective. However, most of the surveyed parents (76%) have stated that nobody has reminded them that the child should be enrolled in school.
- ▶ According to school information, if the school's efforts are futile, they frequently (in 50% of the cases) inform the education inspectorate, but only 2% of surveyed parents have had any experience with the inspection regarding the enrollment of their child/children in school.
- ▶ Schools have stated that it would be useful if they regularly received information on the children who did not get enrolled even after the inspectorate was informed, and on children who have returned after a temporary stay abroad and have not reported to the school.

## 2.

# STUDENTS WHO HAVE LEFT PRIMARY SCHOOL

### 2.1. Number of students who have left primary school early

Only three municipalities (Kumanovo, Shtip and Skopje - Chair) have sent data on students who drop out of primary school before completing it. According to their information, there were 46 students in a five year period<sup>28</sup> that left primary school. It can be assumed that the municipalities which did not submit the requested data actually do not have such data. The participants in the discussions of the focus groups concluded that municipalities do not have a practice of regularly collecting data on students who have dropped out of school. Data on students dropping out from or leaving school have been sent by 16 primary schools. According to their records there are 554 students who have left school within the given period. Schools have their identification data, but most frequently do not know whether the children still live at the addresses that

they have. According to information from the schools, the most frequent reason for leaving school is moving abroad.

The field surveyors in the 12 municipalities in May 2017 identified 481 student leaving primary school early in 332 families. Data is shown in Table 8.

<sup>28</sup> The same period was used as for the data of unenrolled students, i.e. from school year 2012/2013 until school year 2016/2017, since the beginning of the practice of municipalities (and schools) receiving information on children who are obliged to attend school from the Ministry of Interior.

► **Table 8.**  
Overview of students leaving school according to age, last completed grade and gender

Grade completed	Age in years											Gender		Total	
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	6.o	M		Ж
1	4	7	5	13	4	9	9	9	4	9	2		49	26	75
2	1	5	3	12	7	5	12	14	6	2	4		38	33	71
3		1		7	5	15	14	7	14	5	8		41	35	76
4			1	3	6	7	13	16	14	19	7		46	40	86
5				2	3	4	5	11	18	8	5		31	25	56
6					3	3	6	9	10	13	12		25	31	56
7							3	3	14	12	15	1	24	24	48
8							1	1	3	2	1		4	4	8
9									2		2	1	3	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>481</b>

Most students (59%) who have not completed primary school are now aged 14 to 17. Most students (64%) have left school during the first four grades, and then in the next three grades (V-VII grade). There are very few students leaving school in VIII or IX grade. Most of the children leaving primary school are boys (54%). Boys, a bit more frequently than girls, leave school during the first four grades.

► **Table 9.**  
Students leaving primary school by municipality

Municipality	Children who are obliged to attend school who have left it	%	Number of Roma population*	%
Bitola	39	8,11	2 613	6,73
Vinica	20	4,16	1 230	3,17
Gostivar	10	2,08	2 237	5,76
Kochani	63	13,10	1 951	5,03
Kumanovo	86	17,88	4 256	10,96
Prilep	61	12,68	4 433	11,42
Strumica	38	7,90	147**	0,38
Tetovo	10	2,08	2 357	6,07
Centar	20	4,16	974	2,51
Chair	5	1,04	3 083	7,94
Shtip	65	13,51	2 195	5,65
Shuto Orizari	64	13,31	13 342	34,37
<b>Total</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>38 818</b>	<b>100</b>

Remark:

\* - The data are according to the 2002 population census

\*\* - In Strumica many members of a socially vulnerable group declare themselves as Turks

The municipalities of Kumanovo, Shuto Orizari, Shtip, Kochani and Prilep have the most students leaving education (Table 9). Regarding the numbers of Roma population in the 12 municipalities, a significantly larger percentage of children have left primary education in Kumanovo and Shtip. A significantly lower number of children have left school in the municipalities of Shuto Orizari, Chair and Tetovo. In the school interviews and focus group discussions it was pointed out that there is particularly strong trend of migrating from Kumanovo to Western European countries

for asylum seeking purposes, and that in Shtip there are strong economic migrations for seasonal agriculture work, during which parents take their school children with them.

We previously showed the education structure and employment of parents with children who do not attend school (Tables 3 and 4) and it was evaluated as unfavorable. Below are indicators on the social environment and living conditions of students leaving school.

► **Table 10.**  
**Social environment and living conditions of children leaving school**

	Social environment		Living conditions	
	Number of children	%	Number of children	%
Very bad	268	55,72	190	39,50
Bad	61	12,68	131	27,23
Satisfactory / decent	83	17,26	75	15,59
Good	19	3,95	23	4,78
No data	50	10,40	62	12,89
<b>Total</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>100</b>

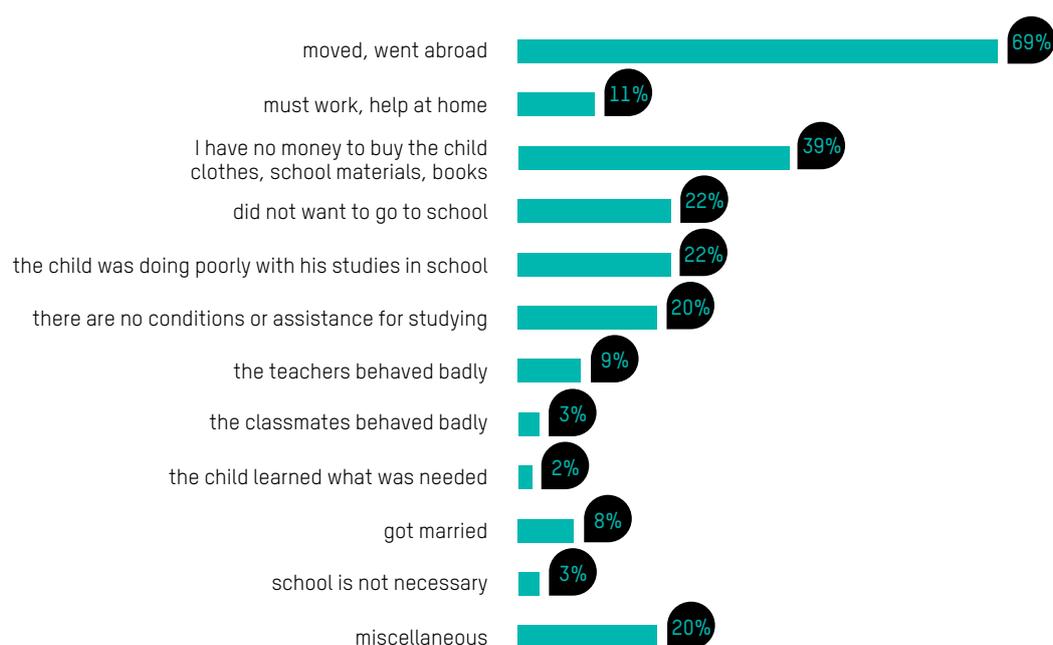
Data shows that most (almost 70%) students leaving school live in bad social conditions: the parents do not have a decent job, live off social aid which is insufficient, live in substandard housing, in bad conditions and in an unfavorable wider living environment (ghettos without basic infrastructure and unsatisfactory communal hygiene).

## 2.2. Reasons for leaving primary school early

Parents of students who had been enrolled in primary school and have left it were asked on the reasons for the child leaving school. Frequently there are several reasons for leaving school. Most often the reasons are socio-economic: moving abroad (69%) and poverty (no funds to buy the child clothes, school materials, food

- 39%), after which come learning experience related reasons: the children did not have sufficient conditions for leaning nor anybody to help them study, they were doing poorly in school, did not want to go to school any more (given by approximately 20% of the parents). The other reasons were given more rarely.

► **Graph 2.**  
**Reasons for leaving primary school**



The answers of the schools coincide to a great extent with the answers of the parents. Interviews with principals and student support services in schools and the focus group discussions most frequently point out migration and then poverty (inability of the parents to provide food, clothes and school materials for the children) and engaging the older children to work (seasonal work, collecting bottles, etc.).

The biggest problem of returning students to school after they have left it is the lack of data on what happens after they leave school. When looking at leaving the country for asylum seeking purposes abroad, there are no mechanisms to keep the schools informed on whether the students have really left the country and whether they have returned (which most often happens). According to the opinions of non-governmental sector representatives

*“the parents may be ashamed of reporting that they have not left”* if they fail to go abroad (representative of an NGO from Kumanovo). According to statements by principals and student support services quite frequent are problems with accepting children returning from abroad who do not have any documents on the education they received there; problems with document validation on education completed abroad; lack of funds for validation of documents; and the difficulties of again including students who have not attended school for several years in the grade they were before leaving. *“The biggest problem is children without documents. The state should simplify the procedure. Parents do not want to be bothered by it”* (education inspector, Strumica).

Principles and student support services indicate in the interviews as reasons for leaving school that *“some children do not live with their parents, but their grandparents, and they are more difficult to influence”*, and that some children *“do not come regularly to school since they are under insufficient parent supervision”* who are sometimes too busy with work trying to earn a living. In one school they also said teachers are insufficiently trained for inclusive work. In two schools

they also talked about cases of early marriage, due to which students leave school in the higher grades. Amongst the identified students, there were 27 cases of marriage being the reason to leave school.

A possible reason for leaving school is the feeling of discrimination. Parents do not usually explicitly mention it (they mentioned it in about 10% of the cases), but some of the more frequent reasons (e.g. lack of clothing, school materials, not wanting to go to school) can indirectly show a feeling of being discriminated against. The interviews included the topic of discrimination of parents and children from other ethnic communities in their schools. In five schools they stated that such occurrences do not happen, and in one that it used to happen, but not anymore. One school is facing the problem of Macedonian parents who do not want to enroll their children in a school in which 70% of the students are Roma. However, the school believes that there is no discrimination with the children already enrolled in the school and their parents.

## 2.3. Measures undertaken for bringing back children to school

The interviewed principals and student support services (in seven schools) stated that various activities are undertaken for students who do not come regularly to school, who have left it or who have a tendency to leave it, in order to return and retain students until the end of primary education, such as:

- ▶ teachers (in 5 schools) go several times a year to the homes of students who have been absent for over a month and try to persuade them in continuing their education;
- ▶ schools inform students who provide a statement that they are leaving abroad on the possibilities of continuing their education after they come back (in 3 schools), get information from other children whether their classmates have returned from abroad, and accept returned students even before the completed validation of the documents for education abroad.
- ▶ provision of learning support: tutoring (all 7 schools), children up to third grade stay in day care to do their homework with help from the teacher, organization of class exams for children who have been absent more than 30 days (2 schools), adaptation of the success criteria (2 schools), do not transfer to other schools children who have many marks for unjustified absence, have an inclusive team and work on the inclusion of Roma children.
- ▶ material support - provision of clothes, learning materials, free meal for the poorest (5 schools).

All schools in which the interview was conducted have a significant number of Roma students, and they have their representatives in the parents' council and the school board in 3 schools. However, all schools stated that they are not very active because "*parents are working all day, they do not have time*", which leads to these parents missing the opportunity to exert greater influence on school policies and practices, and related to that to help reduce the number of Roma students leaving school.

According to legislation,<sup>29</sup> schools should organize counseling for parents of students who do not attend classes regularly and who leave. The 16 schools have said that they have all organized counseling for the parents of 62% of the students who have left school (Table 11). When counseling is ineffective, schools usually report parents to the National Education Inspectorate.

<sup>29</sup> Law on Primary Education, Chapter V-a, Counseling of parents and the Program for counseling of parents of primary school students ["Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 4/2012].

► **Table 11.**  
**Measures that school have undertaken for students who have left**

measures undertaken by the school	Number of students	
	number	%*
Counseling of parents	346	62.5
Report to the National Education Inspectorate	210	37.9
Information to the Center for Social Work	65	11.7
Conversation with the parents	5	0,9

\*Percentages are calculated on the basis of the total number of students that the schools have submitted a report on – 554. In certain cases schools have undertaken several measures.

Student support services and principals of 4 schools in which the interview was conducted believe that counseling *“do not have effect on the attendance and success of students, although parents come to them”*, whereas in two schools they believe that *“counseling improves attendance, parents are afraid of penalties”*, and in one school they believe that *“it has effect only with children where the problem is sporadic and not chronic”*, whereas in another school they believe that *“counseling of the same parents without effect (for purely administrative purposes) should not be repeated”*. According to statements from the interviews, counseling of parents is performed regularly, and some schools even have internal rule-books on counseling and organize counseling in small groups (4-5 parents).

After ineffective counseling the schools usually inform the National Education Inspectorate (NEI). No school has cooperated with the Pedagogic Service in the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) regarding issues of absenteeism, although this is prescribed by law. Municipal and state educational inspectorates most frequently organize counseling with parents that have been reported by the schools, but they rarely submit complaints to court. According to their statements during the focus group discussions, parent come to counseling, but if the issue is dropping out or leaving due to migration or early marriages, the activities undertaken are ineffective.

However, according to the answers of most (59%) surveyed parents, schools have not done anything when the child stopped attending school. Almost every third parent (31%) was invited for counseling, but the number of parents who stated that the schools have undertaken other measures is negligible. It is probable that during counseling the schools offered parents all the other possibilities at their disposal for returning the child to school.

Almost half (46%) of the parents who were contacted resolved the problem of leaving school by signing a statement that they will be moving abroad, while the others provided explanations (no documents, the child is grown-up now) and everything usually ended with the conversation with the school representatives. Only 4.5% of surveyed parents whose children have left school have had any experience with inspections.

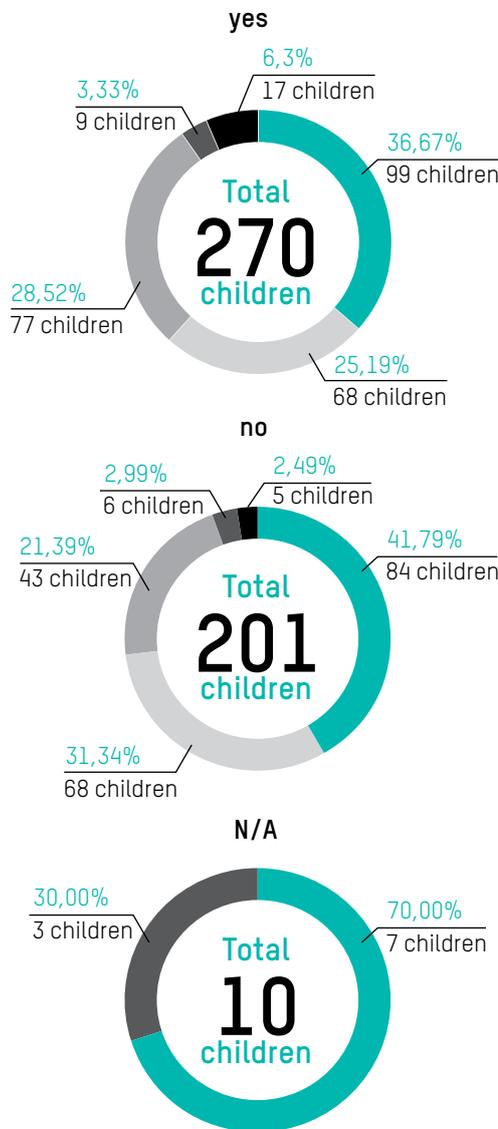
During the focus group discussion, all participants indicated the problem of lack of records on the children who have left school. Most of them leave school due to temporary migrations, mainly abroad, but there is no system to provide schools with information that the children obliged to attend their school have returned home. In some municipalities (e.g. Kochani), there is a good practice where the Center for Social Work informs the schools if any of the social aid or other social service users who have school age children have returned from abroad. In other cases, social care centers request from social users a

certificate that their children are attending school, although this is not a legal obligation. According to statements of student support services in schools this has a positive effect on the attendance of students whose families receive social aid.

Key to the planning of activities that would enable children obliged to go to school and who have not completed primary school to go back into the education system is the desire of their parents for them to continue their primary education. The parents' answers are provided in Tables 12 and 13.

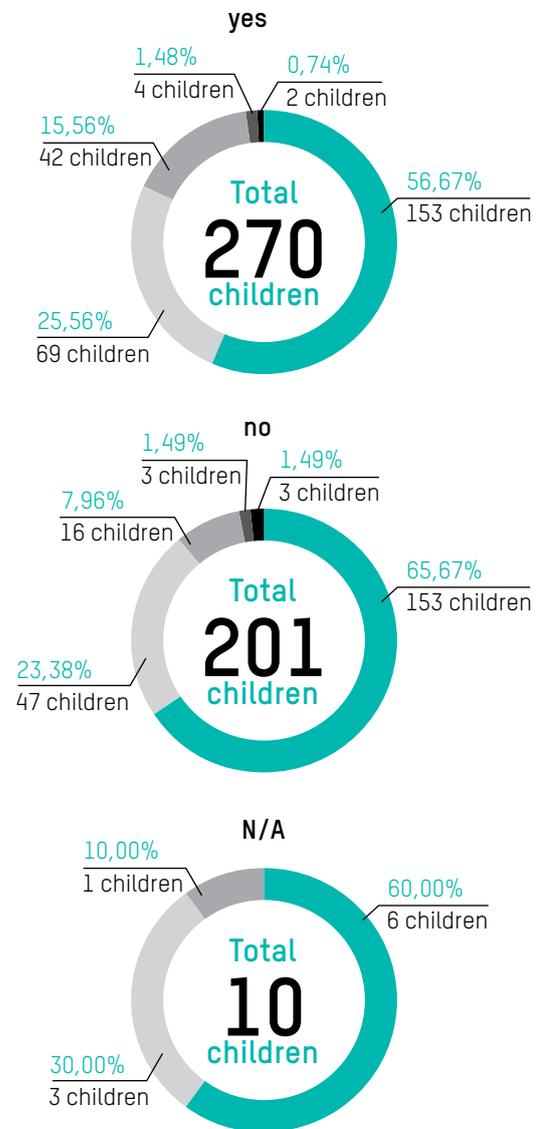
► **Table 12.**  
Desire to enroll children in school according to the fathers' education

**Does he want to enroll his children in school**



► **Table 13.**  
Desire to enroll children in school according to the mothers' education

**Does she want to enroll his children in school**



■ no education  
■ four grades or less  
■ primary school

■ high school  
■ no data

The parents of slightly more than half (56%) of the identified children who have left school would like for their children to continue with primary education. The usual explanations are that the children need education for their future life, to find a better job, etc.

Parents who have completed primary school are slightly more in favor of their children continuing primary education

than the parents with lower education. A large number of parents (42%) have answered that they would not want their child to return to school. The most frequent explanation is that they will either go abroad or that the child is too old to continue from the grade in which it was, and some are married or are working.



### Observations

- ▶ Municipalities do not have accurate data on drop-out students and do not have the practice of regularly collecting data on them, which is also not regulated by law.
- ▶ Schools have data on students leaving school, but do not monitor what happens to them after they leave school. Their data does not match the situation in the field.
- ▶ 481 children have been identified in the field as leaving primary school early, and were in Macedonia during the survey. Most of them (59%) are now aged 14 – 17. Most students (64%) have left school in the first four years of education.
- ▶ Students who leave school have parents that have no education or less than 4 grades, are most often unemployed, living in poor socio-economic conditions and in socially unfavorable environments.
- ▶ Children most often leave school due to migrations (69%) and poverty (39%), and more rarely due to the students' lack of interest in studying, work or early marriage.
- ▶ Schools state that they undertake various activities to keep students in school and most often they organize counseling with the parents, but some of them believe that this does not give the required results.
- ▶ For students who do not attend school even after the school has undertaken certain measures, the schools do not contact the Pedagogical Service as prescribed by law, but submit reports to the education inspectorate. Inspectors most frequently invite parents for counseling, and rarely submit complaints to court.
- ▶ There is no system to provide schools with regular information on their students who have temporarily migrated abroad and have returned since.
- ▶ Parents of 56% of identified children who have left school would like their child to go back to school and finish primary education. They believe that education is important for the future of their children.
- ▶ Parents of a significant number of children who have left (42%) believe that children are already too old to continue education in the grade in which they stopped, or have answered that they will travel abroad.
- ▶ According to the schools, some of the existing legal regulations make it difficult or impossible to reintegrate students who have left school due to the complex and expensive process of validation of documents from abroad, no way of evaluating informally acquired knowledge, lack of legal solutions for accepting students without documents, lack of legal regulations and/or guidelines for returning students to school after a several year leave.

# 3.

## FACTORS FOR IMPROVING COVERAGE

### 3.1. Social and economic factors

In environments where families whose children do not go to school have been identified there are also families whose children attend school regularly. Comparing these families according to certain socio-economic characteristics, as well as their experiences in educating children can provide useful information for planning activities to increase the coverage of Roma children.

#### **Socio-economic status of the family (education, parents' employment and living conditions)**

Research<sup>30</sup> on students' success shows that it is connected to the socio-economic status of the family. In this regard, it is also expected to influence the enrollment in school and its completion. In this research, socio-economic status has been presented through education, parents' employment and living conditions of the family.

Tables 14 and 15 provide a comparison between the education and employment of the surveyed parents whose children attend school regularly and parents whose children do not attend school. It can be concluded that parents of children who go to school regularly have significantly

higher education (65% of the fathers and 58% of the mothers have at least primary education in comparison to 25% of the fathers and 13% of the mothers of children who do not attend school), more of them have full-time or occasional employment (62% of fathers and 16% of mothers as opposed to 34% of fathers and 10% of mothers of children not going to school) and less of them live off social aid or the assistance of other people (24% in comparison to 32%).

30 Willms, J. D. (2006). *Learning Divides: ten policy questions about the performance and equity of schools and schooling systems*. Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Hattie, J. A. C. (2009). *Visible learning*. London: Routledge.

Havelka, N. (1990). *Effects of primary education*. Belgrade: Institute of Psychology.

► **Table 14.**  
**Education of parents whose children regularly attend school and of parents whose children do not attend school**

Education	attend school				do not attend school			
	father		mother		father		mother	
	num- ber	%	num- ber	%	num- ber	%	num- ber	%
no education	25	22,73	32	28,83	278	46,03	393	65,07
four grades or less	12	10,91	19	17,12	141	23,34	116	19,21
primary school		48,18	45	40,54	128	21,19	73	12,09
high school	19	17,27	9	8,11	21	3,48	7	1,16
higher education	1	0,91	1	0,9	0	0,00	1	0,17
no data	0	0	5	4,5	36	5,96	14	2,32
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>100</b>

► **Table 15.**  
**Employment of parents whose children regularly attend school and of parents whose children do not attend school**

Employment	attend school				do not attend school			
	father		mother		father		mother	
	num- ber	%	num- ber	%	num- ber	%	num- ber	%
not employed, housewife	40	36,04	88	79,28	348	57,62	537	88,91
works occasionally (cleaning, sales...)	47	42,34	9	8,11	174	28,81	40	6,62
has full-time employment		19,82	9	8,11	33	5,46	5	3,64
no data	2	1,8	5	4,5	49	8,11	22	0,83
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>100</b>

The children covered in this research that regularly attend school and live in the same social environments as the identified children who do not attend school, live in better family living conditions (compare the data from Tables 6 and 10 and the ones from Table 16).

► **Table 16.**  
**Living conditions of the children who attend school**

Living conditions	Attend school	
	number of children	%
very bad	15	13,51
bad	20	18,02
satisfactory	34	30,63
good	0	0
no data	42	37,84
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>

#### Parents' experience with education

Research<sup>31</sup> shows that parents' educational aspirations influence the educational aspirations of students and their success in education. This research investigates educational aspirations of parents indirectly, through their opinions on the importance of education for their children.

The general conclusion is that very few parents (less than 5%) believe that education is not important and that only a few primary school grades are enough. However, when the question is how much children need education, there are significant differences between parents whose children attend school and parents whose children do not attend school (Table 17). Parents whose children regularly go to school believe in significantly greater numbers that children should at least graduate from high school. Half of them

believe that children should also graduate from university. There are no differences with them regarding their opinions on the importance of education for male and female children. On the other hand, many parents whose children do not attend school believe that primary education is enough (39% for girls and 24% for boys). This is under the legal level of mandatory education in the Republic of Macedonia<sup>32</sup>.

31 Khattab N., 'Students' aspirations, expectations and school achievement: what really matters?' *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 41, No. 5, October 2015, pp. 731–748 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/berj.3171/epdf>  
Eric Jon Reed (2012) An examination of the educational aspirations parents have for their children, University of Iowa, <http://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3119&context=etd>

32 Secondary education is also mandatory in the Republic of Macedonia. Law on Secondary Education – consolidated text – Article 3. [http://www.mon.gov.mk/images/Закон\\_за\\_средно\\_образование07.pdf](http://www.mon.gov.mk/images/Закон_за_средно_образование07.pdf).

► **Table 17.**  
Parents' opinions on the importance of education

How much education should children have	Parents whose children do not attend school				Parents whose children regularly attend school			
	for female children		for male children		for female children		for male children	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
education is not important	19	3,15	10	1,66	0	0	0	0
at least 4 (5) grades	18	2,98	13	2,15	0	0	0	0
at least primary school	236	39,07	145	24,01	13	11,71	8	7,21
at least secondary school	203	33,61	289	47,85	45	40,54	47	42,34
university	89	14,74	107	17,72	50	45,05	51	45,95
did not answer	39	6,46	40	6,62	3	2,7	5	4,50
<b>Total</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>

Parents whose children regularly attend school were interviewed on the learning experience of their children and how they bring them up to ensure their attendance at school. Starting from the fact that they live in unfavorable socio-economic conditions, the parents were asked about the problems their child has faced. According to their answers (Table 18), most children who regularly attend school (84%) do not have problems that would affect their learning. If there were problems, they are most frequently of a material nature (5%) and the fact that they did not have anyone to help with their studies at home (6%).

► **Table 18.**  
Problems faced by children regularly attending school



\* Percentages were calculated based on the total number of surveyed parents - 111. More than one answer was possible for the question.

Comparing to children who have left school (see Chart 2), children who regularly attend school are faced significantly less with socio-economic issues or negative experiences at school. This is probably due to the better educational structure of their parents, better employment and better family conditions.

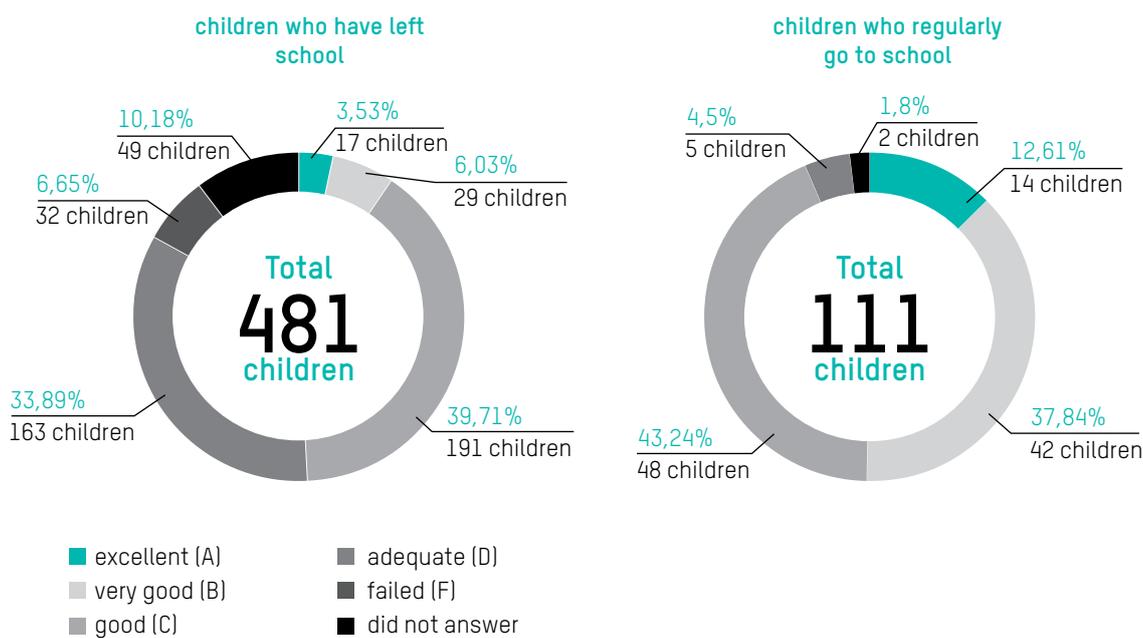
Parents whose children regularly go to school have stated that they manage this by advising and explaining to their children that education is important (72% of

the parents), and every third parent has said that the child itself wants to go to school. Very few parents (3%) use punishment as means to make the child attend school.

Children who regularly go to school achieve better success than children who left school. Half of the children who regularly go to school are in their last school grade very good or excellent (B or A mark), whereas only 10% of the children who left education had such success.

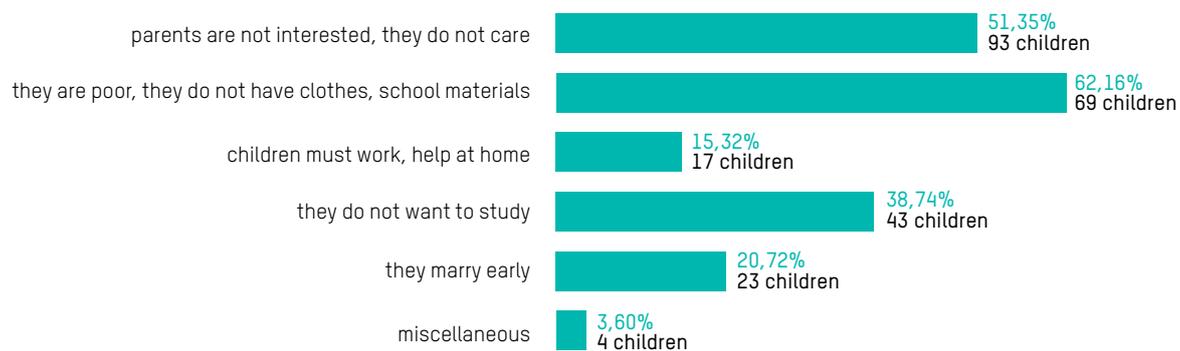
► **Table 19.**  
Grade point average of children leaving school and children who attend school

**Grade point average in the last school grade**



Parents whose children regularly go to school were asked regarding their perception on why many Roma children do not attend school. They see the reasons for not attending school as divided equally between socio-economic factors (poverty, family obligations) and the lack of interest for studying by the parents and children both (Table 20).

► **Table 20.**  
**Perception of the reasons for Roma children not attending school**



\* Percentages were calculated based on the total number of surveyed parents - 111. More than one answer was possible for the question.



### 3.2. Support for greater student coverage

In the last 15 years various activities have been undertaken to support the education of Roma children, both by the state and through the activities of many international and non-governmental organizations. It is very difficult to find clear data on how much the most vulnerable Roma families have used this aid and what

where the effects thereof. That is why we asked parents of both children who do not attend school and who do questions on their knowledge and usage of aid by non-governmental organizations and the state. The answers are provided in the table below.

► **Table 21.**  
**Knowledge of non-government organizations that support Roma**

Knowledge	Parents whose children do not go to school		Parents whose children regularly go to school	
	number	%	number	%
Know some NGOs	404	66,89	52	46,85
Do not know any NGOs	199	32,95	59	53,15
Did not answer	1	0,17	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>

A significant number of parents from both groups (67% of parents of children who do not attend school and 47% of parents of children who go to school) know some non-government organizations working to provide assistance for the Roma. Sometimes they know them by name, but much more frequently they know the names of their activists. Parents of children who do not go to school are much better informed (20% more) on NGOs working with Roma, probably because they have had some interaction with them regarding the enrollment of children or their retention in school.

Parents are most frequently informed by activists and then by friends or relatives on the assistance they can from NGOs. They rarely receive such information from schools, and very rarely from social care centers or the media.

Many positive experiences and opinions were presented during the interviews with principals and student support services regarding the local NGOs that work with Roma children and/or their families. All schools have cooperated with one or more Roma NGOs regarding coverage and study support for Roma children. In the focus groups, NGOs working with Roma showed very good knowledge of the issues regarding coverage of Roma students, the support that they need and expressed their willingness to work on these questions in the future. According to the statement of one school principle *"Enrollments are very satisfactory, thanks to the non-governmental organizations"*. The fact that many parents, especially ones whose children do not go to school, are not informed of the existence and work of these organizations indicates a need for

their further engagement in working with the most vulnerable Roma families.

Parents are even less informed on the support they can receive from state institutions. Only 6% of the parents whose children do not go to school and 27% of parents whose children regularly go to school are informed on the assistance they can receive from the state in the education of their children. Those who do know mainly mention the scholarships for Roma children in high schools. They are most frequently informed of them through schools or the media.

In the interviews with school representatives and in the focus group discussions there was much talk on whether certain types of state financial assistance (social aid, third child allowance) should be

attached to children regularly attending school, as it was done with the conditional monetary transfers for high school students. Opinions were divided: attaching them might lead to greater attendance, but it might lead to the most vulnerable families losing even that financial support, which will lead to worsening of their social status without any positive effects on the education of their children.

Parents of children who do not attend school were asked what kind of assistance they need to enroll their child in school, i.e. for their child to continue its education. Parents of children who attend school were asked on the assistance necessary for the child to have better success in school. Their answers are provided in the table below.

► **Table 22.**  
**Type of assistance is needed for parents in the education of their children**

Type of assistance	Parents with unenrolled children		Parents with children who have left school		Parents who have unenrolled children and children who have left school		Parents whose children regularly go to school	
	number	% <sup>1</sup>	number	% <sup>2</sup>	number	% <sup>3</sup>	number	% <sup>4</sup>
school materials, clothes, food	187	68,75	110	48,67	74	69,81	60	54,05
monetary assistance	131	48,16	105	46,46	49	46,23	39	35,14
accommodation in a dormitory	2	0,74	0	0,00	3	2,83	1	0,90
scholarship*	/	/	/	/	/	/	69	62,16
someone to help with studies*	/	/	/	/	/	/	28	25,23
other	32	11,76	33	14,60	13	12,26	2	1,80
<b>Total</b>	<b>272</b>		<b>226</b>		<b>106</b>		<b>111</b>	

Multiple answers were possible for the question. Answers marked with \* were only offered to parents whose children regularly go to school.

1 - The percentage was calculated in regards to the total number of parents who have unenrolled children - 272

2 - The percentage was calculated in regards to the total number of parents whose children have left school - 226

3 - The percentage was calculated in regards to the total number of parents who have unenrolled children and who have children who have left school -106

4 - The percentage was calculated in regards to the total number of parents whose children regularly go to school - 111

Most parents (over 49%) would primarily like to receive assistance with items the child needs to attend school in normal conditions: school materials, clothes and food. A bit less (46%-48%) of the parents whose children do not attend school and 35% of the parents whose children attend school answered that they need monetary assistance. Very few parents believe that accommodation of the child in a dormitory would be a good way of assisting them. Many parents (62%) whose children go to school regularly would like their children to have a scholarship, and 25% of the parents would like to have somebody helping their children in their studies.

During the interviews, principals and student support services were asked what kind of assistance schools need to increase the coverage of Roma students. The following answers were the most frequent:

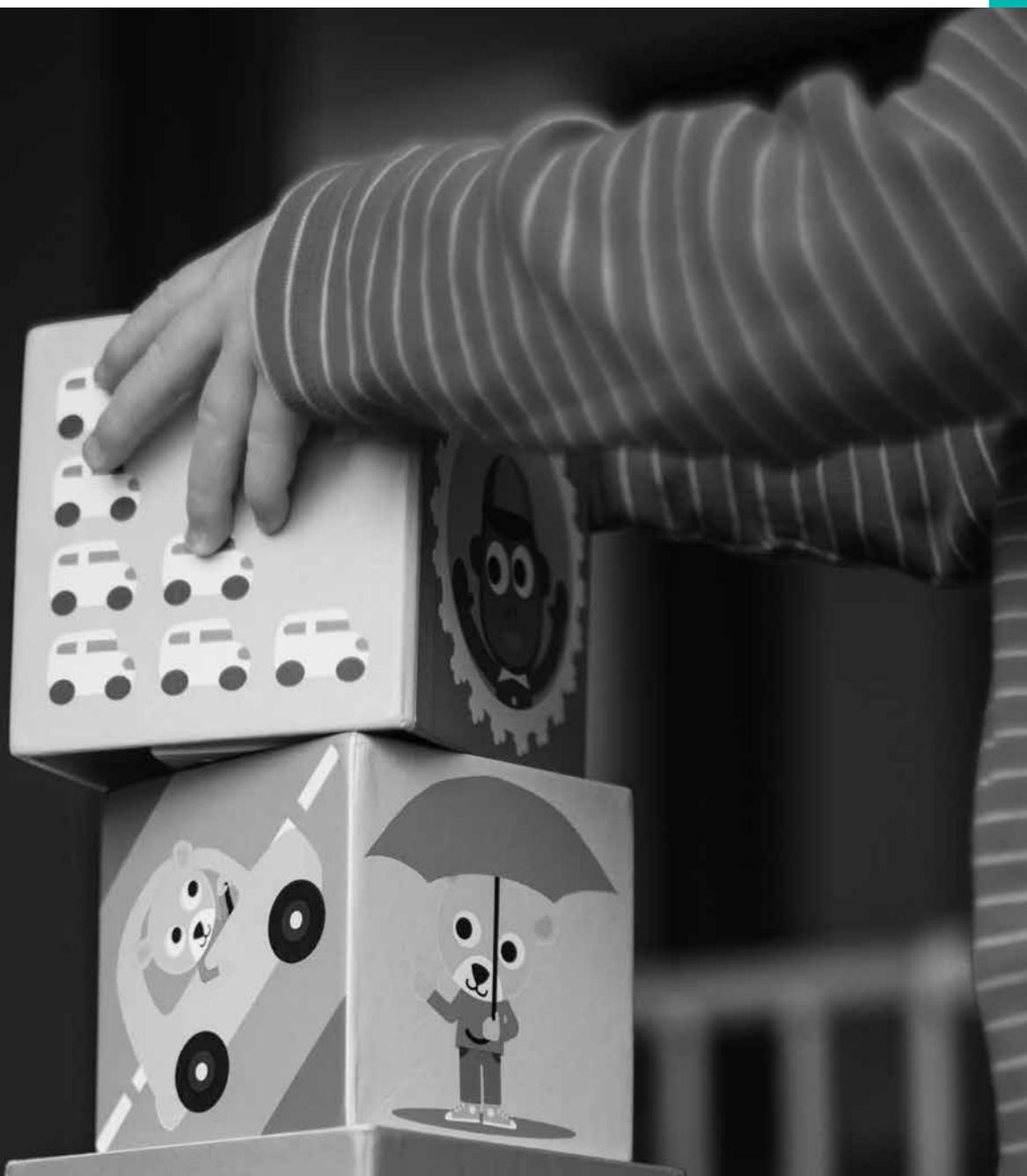
- ▶ material assistance for the poorest children (clothes, uniforms, food) – 3 schools
- ▶ free day care for children with socio-economic difficulties – 2 schools
- ▶ education of the illiterate parents, work with parents – 3 schools
- ▶ day care teachers to help children in their studies – 2 schools

Regarding the provision of free day care, meals or clothes, certain schools stated that care should be taken not to separate the Roma children from other poor children, which would create a new type of discrimination, and that the using of this type of aid should not stigmatize the children.

During the discussion, ideas were presented on providing Macedonian language classes for Roma children before they go to school, taking care of children whose parents have seasonal work, providing health care for all children, and to have Roma mediators located in schools and working with children. Proposal measures were also presented that need prior legislative amendments, such as: finding a solution for the students that cannot be graded due to long term absence (2 schools); recognition of informally acquired knowledge or education abroad that the students do not have supporting documents for should be done in the schools for students until the fourth grade; systemic resolution of the issue of inclusion of children that are “too old” who are coming back from abroad (2 schools); and more primary schools getting licenses for adult education in places where no such schools exist (e.g. Kumanovo). The focus groups also discussed a lot the issue of the most appropriate support for Roma students. Different ideas and suggestions were presented. The prevalent opinion was that the best way of reducing the number of children not enrolling and leaving primary school is to resolve the employment issues of their parents. *“Unemployment is the problem. Work should be done on employing parents. Even if we enroll them, they do not have the many for validation of documents... school snack...”* (NGO representative). Ideas were also discussed on the provision of material support such as clothes, school materials and meals; possibilities for providing day care or another type of after school care for children where they could study/do their homework with the help of a teacher; modifying the mediator program and placing mediators in school to help children in

their studies and in the resolution of other existential issues. Although almost all participants in the interviews and focus groups have stated that inter institutional cooperation is good, it has been shown to largely depend on the good will and informal good relations between responsible persons. Many of the proposals are aimed at improving formal cooperation, primarily for the establishment of a records system for temporary migrating children. This dictates defining the flow of information

between the institutions, and primarily between the Ministry of Interior, local self-government, schools and social care centers. This will give schools basis for timely interventions in returning children to school. *"The Border Police should keep records of returnees and provide monthly information... It would be good to establish procedures with social care centers in order to process the information (NGO representative – Kumanovo).*



### Observations

- ▶ Education and employment of parents and living conditions are related to regular school attendance. Parents of children who regularly go to school have higher education (65% of the fathers and 58% of the mothers at least have primary education), more are employed (stable or occasional work), and live in more favorable social conditions, but in the same (unfavorable) social environment.
- ▶ Parents of children who regularly go to school most frequently (72% of the parents) motivate children to go to school through advice and explanations that education is important. Their children are more successful in their studies (had a higher grade point average in their last grade) than children who leave school.
- ▶ Parents whose children attend school have higher educational aspirations and most of them (over 80%) believe that children (both male and female) should at least graduate from high school. On the other hand, parents whose children do not go to school mainly believe that it is sufficient for children to only have primary education (24% for male and 39% for female children).
- ▶ Schools and institutions (state and local) that support Roma education were very positive regarding the work of local NGOs in supporting the Roma. However, many parents (33% of parents whose children do not attend school and 53% of parents whose children attend school) are not informed of their existence and work.
- ▶ Parents are even less informed regarding the assistance they can get from the state (27% of parents whose children attend school and 6% of parents whose children do not attend school).
- ▶ Most parents (over 49%) require assistance in the form of school materials, clothes and food for the child to go to school (or to be more successful), and a slightly smaller number would like to receive monetary assistance. Parents whose children go to school would want the most (65%) for their children to have scholarships.



## LEGAL REGULATIONS AND STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

This part of the report analyzes the legal regulations regulating enrollment and instruction. The purpose of this analysis is to present the existing legal regulations and indicate problems therein, with specific recommendations on removing certain barriers, i.e. regulating certain issues that are not covered in the laws and by-laws. In addition to this, the legislative analysis also regards issues arising from international instruments that the Republic of Macedonia has adopted as a state, and for which it regularly reports to international institutions.

### Right and access to education

Article 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia guarantees the right to education. This Article provides that everyone [including persons of different ethnicities] has the right to education. Additionally, it is provided that everyone should have access to education under the same conditions, and that it is mandatory and free.

Article 2 of the Law on Primary Education provides that “every child has the right to education”. Paragraph 2 of the same Article provides that “discrimination is forbidden on the basis of gender, race and skin color, national, political, religious, economic and social background in the realization of the right to primary education”.

One of the basic principles of the Concept on nine-year education<sup>33</sup> is democracy, according to which primary education is mandatory and available to all children

regardless of their gender, social or cultural background, nationality or different physical and mental capacities. Another important principle is the principle of non-discrimination, which should provide for the successful inclusion of all children in primary education.

In 2010 the Ministry of Education and Science prepared a Manual for protection from and prevention of discrimination in the educational system of the Republic of Macedonia<sup>34</sup>. The purpose of this document is improving and strengthening cooperation and coordination between all competent institutions and individuals included in the educational system, with the goal of providing equal conditions and opportunities for quality education of all students regardless of religious, national or any other background.

Further, Article 8 from the Law on Primary Education is relevant regarding the equal right of education for all. According to this Article, children who are foreign nationals or have no nationality and which are residing in the country have the right to primary education under the same conditions as children who are citizens of the Republic of Macedonia.

<sup>34</sup> Manual for protection from and prevention of discrimination in the education system of the Republic of Macedonia. By decision of the Ministry of Education and Science number 23-4707/1 this publication is approved for use by primary and secondary schools, school managements and in the work of the education inspectorate.

<sup>33</sup> Concept of nine-year education, Bureau for Development of Education, <http://bro.gov.mk/#>.

This Article is especially relevant for persons situated on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia who have not been recorded in the birth records (including members of the Roma community). These persons have an equal right to education, and the schools are obliged to provide it.

This research has shown that in regards to this Article schools have issues keeping records and documents for children that have no personal identification documents.

#### **Enrollment of students in primary education and return of students who have left school early**

Article 5 of the Law on Primary Education provides for an obligation of the parents or guardians to enable their child, i.e. student, to fulfill their obligation for mandatory primary education. The parent or guardian who will not enable the child to fulfill this obligation shall be punished with a fine in the amount of 300 - 400 Euros, pursuant to Article 172, paragraph 7 of the Law.

Enrollment of children as an obligation of the parent is regulated in Article 47, paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of the Law. According to this Article, the parent of a child who will turn six years old by the end of the calendar year is obliged to enroll him in first grade, and as an exception may enroll the child in first grade if it turns six until the 31 January the following year, on request of the parent and after receiving a positive opinion from the student support services in the school. Failure to meet this obligation will be fined with 60 - 80 Euros according to Article 172, paragraph 4 of the Law.

Further, Article 49, paragraph 1 of the Law predicts that attending first grade classes can be postponed for one year for health

or other reasons, or on proposal of the teacher who is leading the class, the pedagogue or psychologist in the school and with consent of the parent. This provides an opportunity for parents who have failed to enroll their children on time in first grade to do this one year later in order to avoid the sanctions provided by law.

Regarding the selection of school, parents have the right to enroll the child in the primary school in the area where they live or are accommodated. This is regulated in Article 50, paragraph 1, whereas paragraph 2 gives parents the right to enroll the child in another primary school in the area, or in another area, if the school where they would like to enroll them agrees to this, i.e. if there are free places for students. Paragraph 3 of the same Article concerns the list for enrollment of children in a school in the area, which is received from the competent services in the local self-government unit.

The research has shown that enrollment of students in first grade is performed according to the area division adopted by municipal councils at the local level, which determines the neighborhoods from which students will enroll in a particular school. Municipalities frequently make the area division guided by the principle of enrolling the child in the school nearest its place of living or accommodation, and lately in some municipalities<sup>35</sup> care is also given to the issue of achieving ethnic balance. The area division in certain of the researched municipalities is the reason why parents do not enroll their children in school (most frequently these are member of the Roma community, because the school they should enroll in according to the area division is far away from their home).

Another issue in enrollment is the list of data<sup>36</sup> that schools receive from municipalities for school-age children who need to enroll in first grade. In certain municipalities these lists are submitted according to the coverage area of future students, whereas in certain municipalities schools receive the full lists of children, after which school services need to find the children belonging to their area.

School representatives covered in the interviews and focus groups pointed out that the lists they receive with data on future students are frequently inaccurate and out of date, which realistically makes their job more difficult in identifying and enrolling students in their region.

According to Article 52, after enrollments are completed the primary school is obliged to inform the competent education inspector for the municipality of the children that have failed to enroll or children that are absent from classes for more than 30 days without justification.

After the schools informs the inspector or he determines during regular supervision that there are students who are not enrolled or have been absent for more than 30 days without justification, according to Article 168-a of the Law he is obliged to write a report detailing the violation, with a recommendation for remedying it within 8 days' time and through submitting an invitation to education. If the person fails to appear for education at the set time, it is considered as being fulfilled.

If it is determined during control supervision<sup>37</sup> that the violation has been remedied, the inspector adopts a decision to stop the procedure.

If during the control supervision it is determined that the irregularity was not remedied, the inspector submits a request for initiating a misdemeanor procedure in front of a competent court.

The National Education Inspectorate or the competent education inspector who performed the inspection maintains records on the conducted education in a manner prescribed by the Minister.

<sup>35</sup> An example of this is the municipality of Kumanovo.

<sup>36</sup> Data on school-age children is given to the municipalities by the Ministry of Interior, i.e. the birth records service.

<sup>37</sup> According to Article 22 of the Law on the Education Inspectorate, the inspector determines the timeframe for action.

Bearing in mind that the lists of school-age children that schools receive are not up to date, the research has shown that for many children no measures were taken to include them in the education system.

In certain municipalities there is a good practice according to which inspectors, before filing charges to the court, educate the parents who have not enrolled their children in education or whose children have left school early (although they are not legally obliged to do so).

Inspectors have stated that some of the charges filed to the courts are not being processed on time.

Related to this, schools do not receive feedback from the inspectorate on submitted and processed court cases.

Regarding persons who have completed their education or a part of it abroad, Article 150 of the Law on Primary Education provides that such persons have the right to request validation of documents, i.e. recognition of equivalence.

Citizens covered in this research who have been abroad and whose children have completed a certain grade of primary education there (and some of them had attended school in the Republic of Macedonia), complain that the procedure for validation of documents in the Ministry of Education and Science is very complicated, that too many documents are needed and that the costs of document validation per class per student are very high. This is frequently a reason for children not to continue education.

### Manner of instruction

Regarding the manner of instruction, Article 7 of the Law on Primary Education provides for assistance in learning the mother tongue “for children of citizens of the Republic of Macedonia who have lived abroad and have returned to the Republic of Macedonia where they start or continue their primary education”.

For part of the students attending classes in a language different from the one spoken at home, the lack of knowledge of the language of instruction is a learning difficulty, and is sometimes the reason to leave school early.

The Law on Primary Education does not provide support in learning the language of instruction for these children.

The relevance of knowing the languages used in instruction and what was said above is discussed in the strategic document “Steps towards integrated education in the educational system of the Republic of Macedonia<sup>38</sup>” of the Ministry of Education and Science. This document is a comprehensive governmental strategy for an integrated educational system adopted in 2010. The first two thematic areas are relevant for this and they concern integration through joint activities of students studying in different languages and integration through increased mutual knowledge of languages of students and adults, with the goal of improving communication between representatives of different communities.

Article 15-b of the Law on Primary Education obliges schools to maintain data collections on students enrolled in primary school (point 1) and data collections of parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school (point 2).

38 “Steps towards integrated education in the educational system of the Republic of Macedonia”, <http://arhiva.vlada.mk/registar/?q=node/423>.

Research shows that there is a problem with early school leaving, frequently for travel abroad. Schools are not always informed that these students are going abroad and they also lack information on when they are coming back so that they can include them in primary education again.

There is a good practice in one municipality<sup>39</sup> for the social care center to inform schools of families that use some social right and have returned from abroad, and have school-age children.

According to Article 27, paragraph 1, primary schools are obliged to organize additional classes for students who continuously have poor learning results, especially if they have two lowest grades, show poor results on a specific subject, are absent from the lectures on a specific subject, or at the request of a student, his parent or guardian.

Information received from schools on the activities undertaken for students who have left school early shows that additional classes are rarely used.

After school care is regulated in Article 33, paragraphs 3 and 4 in the Law on Primary Education, according to which schools can organize after school care for first to fifth grade students after receiving approval from the Ministry of Education and Science. During after school care students do their homework and other school tasks, participate in cultural and artistic activities, etc.

Some schools stated that after school care can be used as a measure to provide support for students who have slower progress and are under the risk of leaving school early. However, schools cannot organize after school care without approval for employment of teaching staff from the Ministry of Education and Science.

This measure is especially important for parents who are illiterate and are unable to help in writing homework or other school tasks, or belong to socially vulnerable categories. Some schools have stated that these parents frequently take their children to work and that they are unable to complete their school obligations.

It was pointed out that a meal needs to be provided for students for it to be successful with socially vulnerable students<sup>40</sup>.

### **Inclusion and cooperation with parents**

Participation of parents in school operations and their care for the students' progress is very important. According to Article 64-a of the Law on Primary Education, parents or guardians are obliged to answer an invitation for counseling by the school. Reasons for counseling the parent or guardian can be failing grades on three or more subjects, more than 10 unjustified or 100 justified absences from class, low discipline, or immoral or unethical behavior of the student.

Counseling is performed according to the program for counseling parents of primary school students, which is adopted by the Minister on proposal by the Pedagogical Service of the Ministry. The program at professional information, support and counseling of parents for better identification and resolution of certain specific problems that their children might face, as well as to educate them on the ways of improving child raising skills and bettering family relations. Counseling is provided by student support services in schools and, pursuant to Article 64-d, if the parent has been invited more than 4 times a representative of the Pedagogical Service of the Ministry should also be present during counseling.

If the parent does not answer the third consecutive summons for counseling, the

39 Municipality of Kochani.

40 In certain schools meals for these students are acquired through donations.

social care center must be informed, and the Pedagogical Service of the Ministry is obliged to submit a proposal the National Education Inspectorate for initiating a misdemeanor procedure against the parents who have not come for counseling and have not justified their absence. This is provided in Article 64-e and f. In addition to these measures, Article 171, paragraphs 5, 6 and 8 provide for fines for parents in the amount of 80 to 280 Euros in denar counter-value.

In addition to the program for parents' counseling, the Ministry of Education and Science has also adopted a program for primary school students' counseling No. 19-13464/1 from 12 November 2013, Official Gazette of RM No.160. This program is complementary with the parents' counseling program and they should be viewed as a single whole.

The manner of regulation of the role of the Pedagogical Service<sup>41</sup> in the implementation of the programs for counseling students and parents is not appropriate to the real needs (bearing in mind the large number of schools and students in the Republic of Macedonia).

According to statements of student support services from certain schools, the programs are not always implemented in practice in full accordance to the needs of the parents and students.

Ensuring the attendance of parents and their involvement in school operations remains a big challenge for schools.

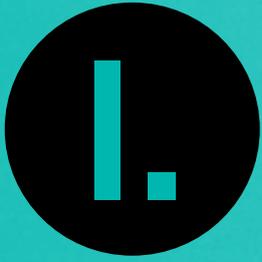
### Delivery of teaching (duration)

The duration of teaching is the next important question. Pursuant to Article 38, paragraph 2 of the Law it lasts for 18-school days in primary education. Paragraph 5 provides an exception to this, whereby teaching can go on for less than 180 school days, but no less than 100 and only with the approval of the Ministry of Education and Science, according to a special teaching program adopted by the Minister on proposal of the Bureau for Development of Education.

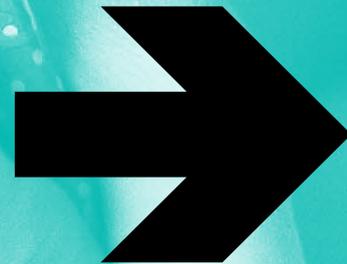
This Article of the Law provides a possibility to the Ministry of Education and Science, on proposal of the Bureau for Development of Education, to adopt shortened curricula which can be used to organize and deliver teaching for persons who due to different reasons were unable to enroll into and complete primary education. This is especially important bearing in mind that the field research identified many children who were not included in or left primary education early, and the schools have difficulty including them in regular classes due to their age.

<sup>41</sup> Body under the Ministry of Education and Science.





# APPENDIX



**RESEARCH  
METHODOLOGY**

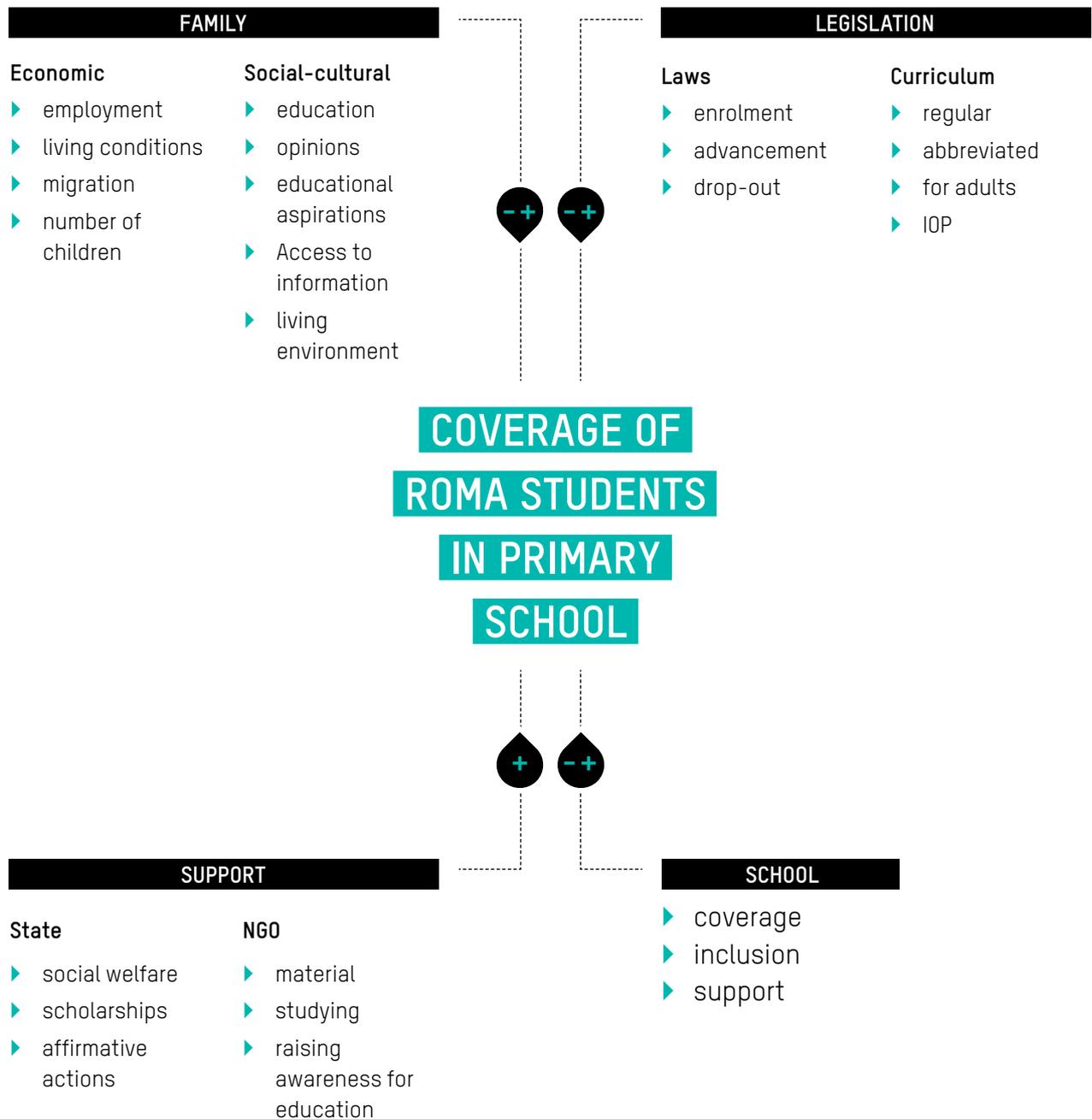
# 1.

## CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Although there is no accurate data, the observations from various sources that many Roma children do not enroll in primary school or leave school early can be considered quite relevant. However, in order to plan fact-based activities, it was necessary to conduct an action research that would first determine the situation in the 12 selected municipalities, and on the basis of the obtained knowledge, subsequently plan adequate activities to increase the coverage.

In order to plan future measures for overcoming detected gaps, it is important to analyze the factors that can positively or negatively affect the coverage of Roma students. These factors are grouped in the following areas:

- ▶ family conditions - economic; social and cultural;
- ▶ legislation - opportunities/constraints stemming from the legal regulations and curriculum-related opportunities/constraints;
- ▶ the school - activities that the school undertakes or fails to undertake in order to provide full coverage of students;
- ▶ other support systems - above all, support from NGOs for Roma and the affirmative action measures of the state in support of Roma students.



- ▶ **Chart:**  
Factors determining the coverage of Roma children in the primary education

In order to provide coverage, it is also important to have an uninterrupted flow of information among the various institutions that dispose of relevant information on children who are obliged to attend school, such as: the Ministry of Interior, schools, parents, the Education Inspectorate, centers for social work. The information flow should be multidirec-

tional and at any moment in time institutions must know where is the child who is obliged to attend school and yet does not. This will create greater opportunities for timely and appropriate intervention.

Therefore, the conducted research focused on the following areas:

- 1 **The factual situation with Roma children who are obliged to attend school and are not in the educational system:**
  - ▶ number of children and their relevant addresses of residence
  - ▶ children's sex and age
  - ▶ whether they were enrolled in primary school and when they left school
  - ▶ support they need for their children's education
  - ▶ education of parents
  - ▶ employment and provision of basic living needs
  - ▶ social and cultural environment in which they live
  - ▶ living conditions
  
- 2 **Experiences and attitudes of parents whose children do not attend school about the education of their children,** an area in which the research focus was on the following:
  - ▶ school and inspection experiences regarding non-enrollment/early school leaving
  - ▶ reasons for non-enrollment/early school leaving
  - ▶ parents' views on the children's need for education
  - ▶ interest of parents for children's enrollment at school or continuation of their education
  - ▶ information on the support from NGOs and the state
  
- 3 **Social and economic status of the family,** an area in which the research focus was on the following:
  - ▶ education of parents
  - ▶ employment and provision of basic living needs
  - ▶ social and cultural environment in which they live
  - ▶ living conditions
  - ▶ support that children need to attend school
  
- 4 **Experiences and attitudes of parents whose children attend school about the education of their children**
  - ▶ parents' views on their children's educational needs
  - ▶ experience with their children's education
  - ▶ information about the support from NGOs and the state
  
- 5 **Legal regulations**
  - ▶ regulations concerning the enrollment and progress (laws and by laws)
  - ▶ regulations concerning the roles of different institutions in providing coverage
  - ▶ regulations concerning the support students get from the competent institutions
  - ▶ curricula and programs as prerequisites for progress
  
- 6 **School activities and experiences on the provision of student coverage when it comes to:**
  - ▶ enrollment of students who are under legal obligation to attend school
  - ▶ retention of students by the end of primary education
  - ▶ cooperation with other relevant institutions (MoI, Pedagogical Council, Education Inspectorate, centers for social work) and the NGO sector
  - ▶ possible solutions for improving the situation
  
- 7 **Activities, experiences and suggestions of relevant institutions for ensuring student coverage in reference to:**
  - ▶ practices to ensure coverage of all students who are under legal obligation to attend school
  - ▶ application and suitability of certain legal solutions
  - ▶ information flow on students who are under legal obligation to attend school, but fail to do so
  - ▶ cooperation among the different institutions

## 2.

# METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

According to the conceptual framework, for the purposes of this research data was collected through content analysis of legal acts as well as through fieldwork, which included registration of children who are under the legal obligation to attend primary school, but do not; a parent survey; interviews with primary school directors, and focus group discussions with representatives of relevant institutions.

Subsequently, the following documents were developed: a protocol and templates for child registration, interview questionnaires, interview checklists and a focus group management protocol. They were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data.

The table below gives a description of each instrument used in the research.

► **Table 1.**

*Description of the instruments used in the research*

Instrument	Short description
<b>Protocols for registering children who are under legal obligations to attend primary school, but do not</b>	<p>There were two protocols: one filled out by the schools and the other filled out by the field interviewers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Data from schools               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- name and last name of the parents and the child</li> <li>- address and telephone number</li> <li>- age and sex of the child</li> <li>- date from which the child does not attend school</li> <li>- what measures has the school undertaken to ensure enrollment/ continuation of education</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Field data               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- name and last name of the parents, address and telephone number</li> <li>- name, sex, age of the children in the family</li> <li>- data on whether they attend school, and if not, date from which they do not</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Questionnaire for Parents Whose Children Do Not Attend School</b>	<p>The questionnaire consisted of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 24 questions: open-ended, closed-ended and combined (closed-ended questions with a requirement to provide explanation of the answer). Four of the questions were clustering questions. Five questions referred specifically to children who were not enrolled in school, and six questions referred to early school leavers. Other questions concerned parent opinions on the education their children received as well as social and demographic data on parents.</li> <li>- The questionnaire was used in a field survey with parents which was conducted by trained interviewers.</li> </ul>

<b>Questionnaire for Parents Whose Children Regularly Attend School</b>	<p>The questionnaire consisted of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 20 questions: open-ended, closed-ended and combined (closed-ended questions with a requirement to provide explanation of the answer). Three questions were clustering. The questions concerned parent experiences and opinions on the education their children received as well as social and demographic data on parents.</li> <li>- The questionnaire was used in a field survey with parents which was conducted by trained interviewers.</li> </ul>
<b>Interview Checklist for Directors and Student Support Services (Pedagogue, Psychologist, Special Education Teacher, etc.)</b>	<p>The interview checklist consisted of 15 questions that served the purpose of triggering conversation. The interview included questions about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the actual situation with the number and progress of Roma students</li> <li>- practices to ensure enrollment and coverage of all children from the specific school catchment area and challenges they are facing</li> <li>- cooperation with state and non-governmental institutions to ensure coverage of Roma students</li> <li>- opinions and suggestions on measures that can improve the situation.</li> </ul> <p>The questions served the purpose of triggering conversation, and the answers were recorded in detail.</p>
<b>Protocol for Managing Focus Group Discussions with Teachers</b>	<p>The protocol contained guidelines on managing focus group discussions and five orientation questions for discussion on topics related to the enrollment and retention of Roma students in primary education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- existence of a database on children who are under legal obligation to attend school, but do not</li> <li>- cooperation among institutions and information exchange</li> <li>- activities undertaken by different institutions (good practices, challenges, suggestions)</li> </ul>



# 3.

## SAMPLE

### 3.1. Municipalities

There are 80 municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia, in which, according to the last census, there were 53879 Roma<sup>42</sup>. These 12 municipalities<sup>43</sup> were deliberately selected for the purpose of this research since 38818 Roma people live there, which is 72% of the Roma population in the Republic of Macedonia. The education authorities in all of these municipalities were requested to submit data on children who were under legal obligation to attend primary school, but failed to do so in their respective municipality. Only six municipalities submitted such data.

Field interviewers collected data on all children who were under legal obligation to attend primary school, but failed to do so, and lived at the time of the research in the respective municipality in settlements with predominantly Roma population.

### 3.2. Schools

In the selected municipalities, a total of 49 elementary schools located in settlements with a significant Roma population were singled out. They were requested to provide information on children who were under legal obligation to attend school, but failed to do so. Twenty-five<sup>44</sup> schools submitted the requested data.

Seven schools with a significant number of Roma students (between 8% and 99%)

<sup>42</sup> Page. 34, <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/knigaXIII.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> Shuto Orizari, Centar and Chair in the City of Skopje, Prilep, Kumanovo, Bitola, Tetovo, Gostivar, Shtip, Strumica, Vinica, Kochani.

<sup>44</sup> Schools in which most Roma students study are more likely than others to respond to the request and submit data.

were deliberately selected for the interviews. These were also schools for which there was information available that they could share knowledge of relevant positive practices for ensuring coverage of this group of students. The sample consisted of the following schools: *Gjorgji Sugare* - Bitola; *Dobre Jovanovski* - Prilep; *Dimitar Vlahov* - Stip; *Tosho Arsov* - Stip; *Hristijan Todorovski Karpos* - Kumanovo; *Goce Delchev* - Tetovo and *Brakja Ramiz Hamid* - Skopje. All schools have been involved in projects related to the provision of support to Roma students. Six schools have been involved in more than one project. The Tutor Teaching Project is being implemented in all of the schools; the Inclusive Education for Marginalized Children Project supported by UNICEF is being implemented in three of the schools, and some schools are involved in projects implemented on a local level together with Roma NGOs. All schools cooperate with NGOs on issues related to the education of Roma students. In two of the schools, one of the priorities in the last development program is an issue relevant to the inclusion of Roma students.

This profile of selected schools is rooted in the assumption that they have experiences with the provision of targeted support for Roma students and can share relevant opinions and suggestions on this issue.

In all selected schools, the interview was conducted with the director, which means that there are 7 directors covered by the interviews. For some questions in the interview, student support services were involved - a total of 15 members of student support services were involved.

### 3.3. Parents

The research covers the entire population of parents of the identified children who are under legal obligation to attend school, but fail to do so in the 12 municipalities, who in May 2017 lived in settlements with predominantly Roma population. A total of 604 families have been identified. Within the identified families, the Questionnaire for Parents Whose Children Do Not Attend School was filled out by one or both parents, and exceptionally, by another family member living in the same home (grandmother, grandfather, brother, etc.).

The social and demographic characteristics of parents (education, employment) are given in Tables 3 and 4 of this report.

A sample<sup>45</sup> of 111 parents was selected in order to survey the experiences and opinions of those parents whose children attended school regularly. Primarily, the number of these parents was determined by municipality, so that they represented 20% of the identified parents of children who did not attend school. The specific selection of parents on the ground was carried out by interviewers, taking into account that they were from the same social environment and with similar living conditions as the parents of the children who did not attend school. These parents are in a sense a “control” group that was expected to provide information on positive factors and practices relevant for ensuring regularity of Roma students in primary education.

### 3.4. Representatives of relevant institutions and organizations

Representatives from all relevant institutions were invited to three focus group discussions, which in some way were related to the provision of coverage of all children who are under legal obligation to attend school: the State Educational Inspectorate;

local self-government; Bureau for Development of Education; centers for social work and NGOs. The discussions included: 19 participants in Kumanovo and 9 participants in Kochani and Strumica. Some focus groups, for example, the one in Kocani, included representatives of all institutions, while others included representatives of only some of the institutions.

### 3.5. Legal acts

The following legal acts related to the enrollment and retention of pupils in primary education was analyzed:

- ▶ Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia with the amendments to the Constitution I - XXXII, Skopje 2011;
- ▶ Law on Primary Education;
- ▶ Law on Educational Inspection;
- ▶ Law on the Pedagogical Service;
- ▶ Program for Counseling Parents of Primary School Students;
- ▶ Student Counseling Program;
- ▶ Rulebook on the Form and Content of Training Invitations, the Manner of Conducting a Training and the Manner of Keeping Records on a Conducted Training in Primary Schools;
- ▶ Concept Document of the Nine-Year Primary Education;
- ▶ Steps towards an Integrated Education System Strategy, and
- ▶ Manual for the Protection and Prevention of Discrimination in the Education System.

These documents contain an analysis of all the articles regulating the issues of student enrolment and retention in primary education.

The analysis of the legal regulations referred to:

- ▶ the right and access to education;
- ▶ enrollment of students in primary education;
- ▶ methods of teaching;
- ▶ involvement and cooperation with parents, and
- ▶ Delivery of teaching (duration).

<sup>45</sup> Data on education and employment of parents is given in Table 18 and 19 of this report.

# 4.

## DATA COLLECTION, PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

The collection of data from schools, interviews, focus group discussions was done by the research team members. The registration of children who are under legal obligation to attend primary school, but fail to do so, was done by especially trained field collaborators from the local community. They also carried out surveys with parents. One-day training was primarily organized for them.

Data collection was carried out in May and June 2017.

Questionnaire data was entered and processed in Excel. Given the nature of the research, descriptive statistics procedures were used.

Detailed notes were kept during the interviews and focus group discussions, which were then processed with a thematic content analysis.

A content analysis was made for the legal regulations.

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