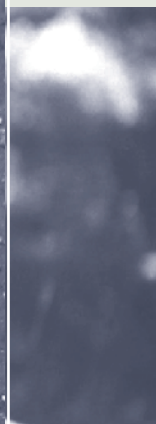


Country Assessment
and the Roma Education Fund's
Strategic Directions

Advancing Education of Roma in Macedonia



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Country Assessment
and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions

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Preface

*T*his document is part of a series of REF Country Studies. It seeks to provide an analysis of the education systems and the ongoing education reforms – from the perspective of the inclusion of Roma children – in the countries taking part in the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The document also reviews the different programmes and activities the Roma Education Fund (REF) has carried out since its establishment in 2005, and highlights the thematic and programme areas REF is planning to concentrate on during the coming three years. The REF hopes that this document will offer a useful instrument for:

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- ⇒ Policy-makers seeking to improve education policies that address the education outcome gap between Roma and non-Roma.
- ⇒ Civil society representatives who wish to improve the effectiveness of their educational programmes by making them more relevant to the overall education reform of their country.
- ⇒ The overall development and donor community, who needs to better understand the situation that Roma children are facing, so they can identify niche areas where support and contributions would be most needed and valuable.
- ⇒ REF, which needs to define the areas of policy change upon which it will focus.

The information presented in the document has been discussed with representatives of governments and civil society, through various consultative meetings, in order to ensure that the document realistically reflects the actual situation and the recommendations made are viable. This document reflects a situation at the time when the document was produced. Many countries are experiencing relatively fast changes and REF plans to update these assessments on a regular basis.

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Tom Popper did the language editing.

1. Executive Summary

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The Roma Education Fund (REF) has been very active in Macedonia: As of February 2007, it had received 30 projects proposals, and had approved funding of EUR 1,500,000 for six projects.

The largest project the REF finances is a comprehensive programme of scholarships for secondary school Roma students, managed by the Ministry of Education and Science and the FOISM. The project is progressing well and shows the importance of scholarships and mentoring to increase Roma student enrolment in secondary and tertiary education. This approach seems to be a good programme for extending to other cohorts.

Another project that will soon be completed focuses on capacity building of Roma Education Centers in Macedonia. The project is implemented by the Roma Educational Network with the involvement of national and local level officials. The main outcome of this project is a collection of best practices and a strategy for the Network of Education Centers, which are providing out-of-school support for Roma children as a basis for their development and for increasing their integration in the Macedonian education system. The sustainability of these centres remains an issue. They are entirely funded by external donors, but the preparation of the best practice guidebook and strategy has provided a forum for discussion of important problems related to support for Roma children in integrating pre-school-education and enrolling in primary education.

The REF has also financed two projects to support a campaign for Roma children's enrolment in schools, implemented nationwide by the National Roma Center. It has also financed a programme for TV debates and discussions on Roma education issues with the NGO Romano Vas and a national TV channel. Finally, REF is financing a programme to scale up the inclusion of Roma children in pre-school education with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The programme will help the Ministry to test an approach to supporting Roma children in enrolling and in avoiding drop outs from pre-school, a major issue in Macedonia.

Political, Economic and Social Context

Macedonia is situated in South Eastern Europe and has a population of around two million. The country's political and economic conditions are characterized by a sensitive ethnic divide between the Macedonians, who make up 64 percent of the population, and Albanians, who make up 25 percent. Violent open ethnic conflicts have been avoided, but the situation is often tense, and the government has undertaken major reforms to ensure better representation and access to cultural rights for various minorities. Roma, who comprise 5-6 percent of the population in Macedonia, make up one of the groups that have recently gained visible political representation as part of the government's efforts to ensure better representation of ethnic minorities. However, acceptance and support for Roma continues to largely depend on the evolution of Macedonian-Albanian relations.

Economically, Macedonia is burdened by substantial pockets of poverty, even though it is classified as a lower-middle-income country, with a gross national income per capita of around \$2,830 in 2005 (GNI, Atlas method). The latent internal conflict has not allowed Macedonia to benefit from the opening up of its economy. The government is maintaining a restrictive fiscal policy that

it introduced in 2004, and expenditures for education, which were already low, have been reduced even more. Most of Macedonia's development programmes, including the programmes to support Roma, became almost exclusively donor dependent. An active civil society sector has developed, and it partially replaces functions that weak state institutions are unable to fulfill.

The situation of Roma in Macedonia has improved in recent years. The number of Roma students enrolled in primary and, especially, secondary schools has increased somewhat. Affirmative action policies introduced by the government have had a positive impact on the number of Roma students enrolled in, and graduating from, the tertiary education system. Roma participation in the political and public administration spheres has also improved, and considerable cooperation between the government and the Roma communities has been achieved. A new government, representing the opposition of the past four years, was elected in August 2006, leading to a change in the senior management in all relevant ministries. It took up the goals of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and is expected to continue the actions started along those lines.

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Education

The education system of Macedonia has been experiencing a prolonged transition. Developments have been introduced in most areas of the system, but significant reforms are still needed. Education in general receives low priority, with public expenditures for education cut back to where they are among the lowest in Eastern and Central Europe, both in actual spending and as a percentage of GDP. The existing and available social assistance is not adequately tied to education. There are no incentives for improving the quality of teaching, and serious quality problems exist at all levels of the education system. A major decentralisation effort has started and will be carried out during 2007. It will give local governments more important education-related rights and responsibilities but it also contains some major risks for the education of Roma.

The most important problems threatening the quality of the education of Roma in Macedonia are the following:

- ⇒ Inadequate education financing, and insufficient financing mechanisms, bring about the following consequences:
 - There is virtually no social support promoting wider participation in education. Support instruments, such as stipends, scholarships, textbooks, free meals, exemption from pre-school attendance fees, etc., are only available through programmes financed by international donor agencies, and or available only for those in special education.
 - The traditional education system does not allow for providing additional attention to children with low scholastic achievement. Parents, sometimes with the support of donors, must pay for such services like extracurricular activities, mentoring, individual tutoring, or preparation for entry exams.
 - The current funding mechanism is based on the number of eligible classes a school provides. Thus, it encourages schools to minimize efforts and avoid admitting students who would require special attention. These students, if admitted, tend to drop out by themselves after a couple of years of schooling, due to the lack of attention from the school. There has been no pilot programme to establish a per-student financing formula, and there has been not enough discussion of this idea in the framework of the new decentralisation law yet. There seems to be a high risk that this situation will deteriorate even further, if decentralised

education financing is introduced without the elaboration of a new financing formula and compensation mechanisms.

- State-provided education is, to a considerable extent, complemented by nongovernmental organisations, which are financed through grants by the international donor community. For the Roma, most of the shortcomings of the official state system are partially compensated for through activities of Roma NGOs. Although this work has created a vibrant civil society dealing with education, it also unwillingly contributes to a further decrease in attention devoted to Roma children in schools and pre-schools. An implicit “division of labour,” is developing. A situation that is already financially unsustainable and can, in the long run, pose obstacles to the development of the education system.
- ⇒ Administrative barriers for enrolling into pre-school and primary education still exist, given that many Roma families lack the necessary documentation and social support from the state. The announced partial privatisation of pre-school institutions and the consequences to be introduced might further jeopardize the access of Roma to pre-school.
- ⇒ Segregation in special schools and separate classes is still common in Macedonia, and there is not much reaction to this problem – even from the Roma communities.
- ⇒ Despite supportive policies, schools are generally unwelcoming and unsupportive of Roma children. These children are confronted with systemic and multifaceted obstacles, which contribute to their poor achievement, high dropout rates, and low enrolment in the higher levels of the education system. These obstacles include the following:
 - Discrimination through all levels of the system: There are no operational and commonly accepted mechanisms for combating discrimination in schools, and in some cases this can lead to more comprehensive segregation. The school curricula do not favor multiculturalism, and the assessment system is based on grading without standards and objectively measurable criteria, providing an ample source for possible biased and discriminatory evaluations of Roma children.
 - Roma parents are seriously under-represented in school boards, and cannot participate in the schools’ decision making processes. School policies remain insensitive to Roma students’ needs, and cooperation with Roma NGOs is rarely supported.
 - The quality of education for Roma in many cases is substandard, especially in the early stages of education, and Roma children simply get transferred to the next grade without needing to fulfill the minimum requirements. As a consequence, Roma students face tremendous difficulties in integrating into higher grades, a situation that leads many students to repeat grades or drop out.
 - There are no policies to attract and support Roma in pre-service teacher training, so there is a shortage of Roma teachers at the pre-school and primary school levels. Non-Roma teachers are often burdened with negative ethnic stereotypes and prejudices towards Roma. There is also an insufficient number of qualified teachers and/or teacher trainers who are fluent in the Roma language. Furthermore, there is neither a university chair for Romology nor other institutional structures that could ensure the supply of qualified Roma teachers.

REF's Activities in Macedonia in 2005-2006

Since its establishment in 2005, the Roma Education Fund (REF) has been remarkably active in Macedonia. The fund has built up a useful dialogue with the government of Macedonia—in particular with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Social Affairs—on issues of Roma education.

REF's largest project is a comprehensive program of scholarships for Roma students in secondary school. It is managed by the Foundation Open Society Institute – Macedonia and the Ministry of Education and Science. The project has been successful in demonstrating the importance of scholarships and mentoring in helping increase Roma students' enrollment in secondary and tertiary education.

Another REF project aims at strengthening the capacities of the Roma Education Centers in Macedonia. The project is implemented by the Roma Education Network, with the involvement of national and local-level officials. The main outcome of this project is a printed collection of best practices and the creation of a strategy for the Network of Education Centers, which provide “out-of-school” support for Roma children, to facilitate the children's integration into the mainstream Macedonian education system. The sustainability of these centers remains an issue, because they are entirely funded by external donors. Nonetheless, the preparation of the strategy and the best practice guidebook have both provided a forum to review and discuss important issues on the subject of integrating Roma children into pre-school and primary school.

REF has also supported two projects implemented by the National Roma Center, which sponsored a campaign promoting Roma children's school enrollment. Furthermore, REF has financed televised debates and discussions on Roma education issues that have been produced through the cooperation of the NGO Romano Vas and a national TV channel. And in one more project, REF is supporting a program with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy to scale up the inclusion of Roma children in preschool education. The program is intended to help the ministry pilot an approach to support Roma children's enrollment and to increase the number of Roma attending public kindergartens, which is a very important issue in Macedonia.

Strategic Directions for Future REF Activities in Macedonia

REF's medium-term strategic objectives in Macedonia are as follows:

1. Strengthen the capacities of local governments and municipalities to fulfill their new duties and responsibilities in formulating education policies – potentially through the competition of local governments in areas with significant Roma populations.
2. Help increase the quality of education for Roma students, through several measures, including:
 - ⇒ Supporting mentoring in the transition grades – grades four and eight – to increase progression rates.
 - ⇒ Offering textbook provision support for disadvantaged students.
 - ⇒ Supporting teacher and mentor training.
 - ⇒ Building on the work of Roma Education Centers in connecting parents with schools, demonstrating best practices in the beginning grades of primary education, and carrying out public awareness raising campaigns.
 - ⇒ Applying the lessons learned from the “Tanoda” case of Hungary to find ways to provide additional classes and after-school activities.

3. Scale up scholarships and mentoring programmes at the secondary level.
4. Organise a donor coordination conference.

REF has several policy analysis and research related strategic objectives in Macedonia. The most urgent among these are as follows:

1. Conduct an analysis of education expenditures, from government, donor and NGO resources, to assess possible restructuring to improve the impact of these expenditures on Roma children.
2. Carry out an analysis of the necessary incentives, such as alternative work schedules and extra financing, to provide for mentoring services and additional classes needed for underachieving children.
3. Prepare an economic benefit analysis to help strengthen the central and local governments' financial commitments to support Roma education.
4. Analyse the existing scholarship and social assistance schemes in Macedonia, in order to help develop models that ensure higher attendance and lower dropout rates – and in order to assist policy makers in adopting and implementing these models.

2. Country Profile

According to the latest census,¹ the population of Macedonia is 2,022,547, of which 64.18 percent are ethnic Macedonian, 25.17 percent are Albanian, 3.85 percent Turkish, 2.66 percent Roma, 1.78 percent Serb, 0.84 percent Bosnjak, and 0.48 percent are Vlach. Almost 60 percent of the population is urban.

The cohort of 7-year-olds is about 28,700 children, and it is on a slightly decreasing trend: The cohort of children at the age of 6 is 28,100.

Gross domestic product per capita in 2005 was \$2,219. Macedonia's public debt in 2006 was 41 percent of the GDP, which is 2.8 percent less than the previous year, but still much higher than in 1999 – the year before the outbreak of the armed conflict in Macedonia.² In 2004, the total expenditure on education was 3.6 percent of the GDP, compared to 3.7 percent in 2002.

Roma Population in Macedonia

The official census from 2002 recognizes 53,879 Roma inhabitants in Macedonia, which would mean Roma constitute 2.66 percent of the total population. But, like in other countries in the region, the census seriously under-represents the actual size of Macedonia's Roma community, according to political representatives of the Roma and Roma nongovernmental organisations. The actual Roma population in Macedonia is believed to be between 80,000 and 130,000. In addition, there are about 2,800 Roma from Kosovo who have been living in Macedonia as refugees since 1999, waiting for the solution of their status. In 2000, unofficial estimates suggest that their number was as high as 7,000 to 8,000³ and a number of them went back afterwards.

Approximately 80 percent of Macedonian Roma speak Romanes. Most of the rest speak Macedonian, Albanian or Turkish,⁴ and a portion of the refugees speak Serbo-Croat.

According to the official census of 2002, the Roma cohort size at age 7 is a little more than one thousand, and the same applies to the cohort size at the age of 6. Unofficially, these numbers should be doubled.

Housing

The majority of the Roma population in Macedonia lives in 70 settlements, 65 of which are in towns and five of which are located in villages. In 82 percent of these settlements, Roma constitute the vast majority of the population. Some 10 percent of the settlements are ethnically heterogeneous, and in 8 percent, another ethnic community is the dominant majority.

¹ Data refer to 2002 Census in Macedonia.

² Source: Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office, 2006.

³ Maria Koinova: *Minorities in Southeast Europe: Roma of Macedonia*, CEDIME-SE, <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/pdf/cedime-se-macedonia-roma.doc>, p. 2.

⁴ State Statistical Office, 2005.

Ninety-five percent of the country's Roma live in urban areas and 5 percent in rural areas. Almost half (48 percent) of the Roma households are in the Skopje region. Only 2 percent of the country's Roma live in apartment buildings, 15 percent live in new houses, 46 percent live in older houses with acceptable living conditions, and 38 percent of Macedonia's Roma live in accommodations without minimum living standards. The majority of Roma living in urban areas are concentrated in poor ghettos or in suburban parts of towns, without minimum infrastructural conditions. These communities lack access to electricity, water, sewage system, roads, etc. According to estimates, about 70 percent of Roma have no legal documentation of ownership for the house in which they live, although 88 percent of them claim that they own their home.⁵

The Roma population in Macedonia is significantly poorer than the country's population in general. Official data from 2002⁶ show that rate of poverty among Roma is nearly three times the national average: Some 88.8 percent of Roma live below the poverty line, while the overall national average is 30.2 percent below the poverty line. Furthermore, 96 percent of the Roma families do not own land, which indicates that they have no alternative way of providing food. The poverty of Roma is mainly due to lower levels of education and higher rates of unemployment.

Employment

The rate of unemployment among Roma in Macedonia is double the national average and comes to 70-80 percent. According to Roma NGOs, the actual figure is more than 90 percent. They make this estimate based on their assessment that not all Roma are registered in the employment agencies and that 85 percent of Roma families are social welfare beneficiaries. A recent survey on vulnerable groups⁷ shows that only 8.3 percent of the working-age Roma (older than 15) are employed or self-employed, in either the formal or informal economy, and only 7.2 percent of Roma in this age group have full-time employment. In other words, one full-time employed Roma has to provide for about 13 other people. The same survey found that about 68 percent of the employed Roma are poorly qualified workers. This is not surprising, given that illiteracy affects an estimated 24 percent of all of Macedonia's Roma older than 25 – and about half of the women in this group. Although joblessness among Roma decreases with the increase of educational level, unemployment is still at more than 65 percent for all educational levels, a figure that indicates that discrimination is another barrier to employment for Roma.

Health

Only 34 percent of Macedonia's Roma have not had any illnesses.⁸ The extent of the health problems experienced by two thirds of the Roma population affects regular school attendance of children and decreases the working ability of adults.

⁵ Taken from the data reference base for the *Report of the Republic of Macedonia on Millennium Development Goals*.

⁶ Data for preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2002; World Bank assessment of poverty in Macedonia in 2002-2003: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSCContentServer/WDSP/IB/2005/12/21/000090341_20051221144229/Rendered/PDF/343240MK.pdf.

⁷ UNDP research on vulnerable groups, 2004.

⁸ *Ibid.*

3. Political, Economic, and Social Situation

Government Structure, Mandate, and Finance

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In the past 15 years, Macedonia has been through serious political challenges. The country's secession from the Yugoslav federation in 1991, and its new constitution, brought to the surface the grievances and frustrations of the ethnic Albanians. Their struggle for equal status with ethnic Macedonians escalated with an armed conflict in 2001, which ended with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. This agreement resulted in an amended constitution, which recognized not only ethnic Albanians as a constitutional nation, but also Roma people, among other smaller ethnic communities. The constitutional change set the foundation for proportional representation of Roma in the public sector, and allowed Romanes to be acknowledged as the third official language (along with Macedonian and Albanian) in one municipality in Macedonia.

The current Government of Macedonia consists of 21 members: the prime minister, four deputies and 16 ministers. The four coalition partners are: VMRO-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), New Social Democratic Party (NSDP), and the Liberal Party of Macedonia (LPM). With support of a number of smaller parties, the coalition partners have more than 65 (out of 120) seats in the parliament/assembly.

There are two major political opposition parties represented in the current parliament:⁹ the left-wing Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia (SDSM) and the ethnic Albanian oriented Democratic Union for Integration (DUI). They were coalition partners in the government, with a majority of seats, in the period between 2002-2006.

Government Finance and Administration

From 2001 to 2005, the GDP has increased from \$3.723 billion to \$4.519 billion, which represents a growth in GDP per capita from \$1,830 to \$2,219.¹⁰ In the last five years, the state budget was the highest in 2002, when it reached \$71.700 million, after which it started to decline, to as low as \$66.327 millions in 2005. In terms of percentages of GDP, the state budget declined from 29.4 percent in 2002 to 23.9 percent in 2005. In 2005, the highest percentage of the budget was spent on social protection and social security (25.8 percent). Education received 14.9 percent of the total state budget.¹¹

Public administration suffers from inefficiency and overstaffing. Previous attempts to decrease the number of budgetary employees have not been successful, and instead staff has grown: New measures introduced with the Ohrid Framework Agreement require fair representation of ethnic communities in public institutions, so the number of employees whose salary has to be covered by the budget has increased.

⁹ Last parliamentary elections took place in June 2006.

¹⁰ State Statistical Office, 2006.

¹¹ Ministry of Finance: *Bulletin* – October 2005 & January/February 2006.

Local government in Macedonia is territorially divided into 84 municipalities, 10 of which belong to the capital, Skopje. One of the municipalities in Skopje, Šuto Orizari, has a majority Roma population (79.1 percent, according to the 2002 Census), and its local government is headed by a Roma mayor.

Currently, Macedonia is undergoing an extensive decentralisation process. A new Law on Local Government was adopted in January 2002, setting the stage for decentralisation. According to this law, municipalities have general competences in all local matters. The list of municipal responsibilities became fairly comprehensive, including: social welfare services, child protection, education, health care, urban and rural planning, communal activities, and sports and recreation. The law calls for the development of about 80 new legislative acts to devolve these tasks to the municipalities. The law included a transition period for adopting the legislation, running from 2002 to January 2007, when full implementation was to start. Before 2006, municipal responsibilities mainly comprised urban planning, some local services, and infrastructure.

According to the Law on Local Government, financial participation of the central government in the local budget will be reduced. This change will place a major burden for financing on local governments. Currently, there is great concern about how this process will work, since local finance is a major weakness of municipalities in Macedonia. The law states that municipalities receive taxes on property and property transfers, inheritance tax, and various other minor taxes, as well as fees. Furthermore, municipalities are entitled to a share of the value added tax, a grant for delegated state tasks, subsidies available for less-developed areas and investment subsidies. They can also ask for contributions/loans from the central government if these sources do not provide sufficient funding for their normal functioning. It is expected that an equalization scheme will also be introduced. Still, the quality of further development of the municipalities – and the quality of services provided at the local level – will depend on the quality of strategic planning, strengths of the local economy, and consistency in implementing the tax policy. There is a concern that these conditions will not be met, especially in municipalities with substantial populations of Roma living in poverty.

Implementation of the Law on Local Government started in 2005, and the preparation is expected to be finished in 2007. In addition to developing the supportive legislation, the transitional period has been used for strengthening the human capacity of local governments. Various training sessions for administration have been conducted, mainly with the support of the international community.

Responsibility for Education (Administrative/Political)

Currently the Ministry of Education and Science is still fully responsible for the entire education system, from pre-school to university level, including adult and informal education. The only exception is some responsibilities for pre-school education, which lie with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The Ministry of Education and Science performs activities aimed at organisation, financing,¹² development and promotion of education at all levels.

The minister and all of the senior management of the Ministry of Education and Science are representatives of the ruling coalition, and the current minister comes from the Democratic Party of Albanians. Specific questions concerning education of Roma are normally referred to the Directorate for Development and Promotion of Education in the Languages of Ethnic Minorities

¹² The responsibility for the optional pre-school education is co-shared between the Ministry of Education and Science (in charge of the curriculum and teacher training) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (financing).

– a separate body that operates within the ministry. Its current head, appointed recently, under the new government, is Roma by nationality.

Roma Representation in Government/Parliament

There are six registered political parties of Roma in Macedonia, and two of them currently have their presidents elected in the parliament: the Union of Roma in Macedonia, which is a member of the broader ruling coalition, and the United Party of Roma in Macedonia, which was a member of the broader coalition for the previous government. In the current, as well as in the previous government, Roma parliamentarians were members of the Committee on the Political System and Inter-Ethnic Relations.

In the last 15 years, Roma political parties have almost always been part of the ruling coalition, and Roma have regularly been represented in the government at the senior level, as deputy ministers, assistant ministers and directors of directorates.

As a result of the last elections for local governments in 2005, Roma have one mayor and 18 members of municipal councils. Half of these councilors were elected in Šuto Orizari, the Roma municipality in Macedonia.

Although the rate of Roma employment within public institutions shows a progressive trend, and Roma are present in the political bodies at the national and local level, their participation is still minimal and without major impact over the decision making process.

All major political parties, regardless of whether they are in power or in opposition, have almost identical positions on Roma issues.

Responsibility for Roma Affairs and the Decade

The national coordinator for the Decade of Roma Inclusion is the minister for labour and social policy, who provides a direct connection to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. A National Committee was established in 2004, and it set up a Working Group that drafted four action plans, related to education, housing, employment, and health care for Roma in Macedonia. The National Working Group consists of representatives of the ministries of Labour and Social Policy, Education and Science, Transport and Communications, and Health; members of Roma NGOs; the Roma parliamentarian; and the Roma mayor. In November 2005, the National Working Group received the status of a governmental coordinating body in charge of preparation, implementation and monitoring of all activities connected to the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the National Strategy for Roma. According to the strategy, the government is expected to establish a Secretariat for Roma, as an operative office in charge of implementation of the strategy, as well as a National Council for Inclusion of Roma, as a managerial body of the secretariat. This body is expected to cooperate with governmental structures, independent experts, representatives of the Roma community, potential donors, and other stakeholders. Until now, however, neither the secretariat nor the national council has been established.

With the new decentralisation law, some of the responsibilities in the implementation of the National Action Plans were redirected from the central to the municipal level, so that these responsibilities will need to be elaborated and implemented locally. Embracing the action plans on the municipal level means that mayors must seriously engage in Roma issues: This involves establishing local teams – including representatives of municipal councils, local Roma NGOs and

other local stakeholders – in charge of adjusting the action plans, to reflect the local needs and requirements and to start implementation of the plans. This process has, however, not yet begun.

Hence, although much has been done, new structures need to be set up, both at the national and municipal level. The capacity of these structures needs to be built up, and the local governments need to ensure their commitment in order to overcome the implementation gap in Roma policy that existed in 2006.

Status With Key International and Regional Partners

Macedonia has been a member of the United Nations since 1993 and the Council of Europe since 1995.¹³ The country has also joined the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and NATO's Partnership for Peace. Together with Albania, Croatia, and the United States, Macedonia created the Adriatic Charter, as a mechanism for promoting regional cooperation to advance each country's NATO candidacy.

In April 2001, Macedonia became the first country to sign the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union. This agreement aims at enhancing regional cooperation and establishing free-trade areas with EU and the countries of the region, while encouraging countries to approximate EU legislation. In December 2005, Macedonia gained the status of a candidate for EU membership, though there is no date set for a start to membership talks. This support came after successful implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which introduced changes in the constitution and legislation, to better reflect the multi-ethnic character of the country. Formal accession negotiations are expected to begin after Macedonia makes further progress on a number of reform fronts, including combating corruption and enacting judicial, administrative, and economic reforms.

Macedonia receives financial aid from the EU. The instrument for assistance until now was the CARDS programme, which is managed and administered by the European Agency for Reconstruction office in Skopje. Macedonia is also eligible for some of the EU instruments aimed at education, such as Tempus and Erasmus Mundus, in cooperation with applicants from EU countries.

Anti-Bias and Anti-Discrimination Legislation

Macedonia subscribes to the following international commitments: the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education.¹⁴

¹³ Its membership in both organisations goes under the provisional name "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia," since the negotiations with Greece over the name dispute have not yet resulted with a mutually agreeable solution.

¹⁴ Macedonia is the only country that has provided translation of most of these documents in Romanes.

However, the country has no domestic legislation against discrimination, and discriminatory behavior is only mentioned in the constitution, which says discrimination is forbidden, and the Criminal Code, which treats discrimination as a criminal act. Two versions of a law against discrimination have been prepared, one by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Macedonia and the other by the Institute for Sociological, Political, and Juridical Research, but neither of these has yet been officially brought to the parliament.

The existing legislation in education does not raise discrimination issues. The laws do not make clear reference to discrimination in schools, and, in the absence of a general law against discrimination, there are no mechanisms to combat it. If there were anti-discrimination legislation covering education, it still would not be easy to ensure proper implementation. Implementation gaps exist, for example, in the Law for Primary Education, which forbids physical and psychological abuse of students and determines financial penalties. Despite this law, abuse exists, and schools and/or teachers are rarely punished in cases of abuse.

Civil Society

Structure of the Roma Community: Traditional, Civil, and Political

The History and Language Characteristics of Roma in Macedonia

Roma are believed to have arrived in the area of Macedonia for the first time in the Byzantine period.¹⁵ Larger waves of Roma came together with the conquering Ottoman army, around the end of the 14th century and after. The Ottoman Empire discriminated against Roma, mainly in financial and administrative terms. Nonetheless, persecution, forced assimilation and forced relocations of Roma – which was typical of Western Europe at the time – was less present in the Ottoman Empire. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, at the time of the Balkan wars (1912-1913) and the subsequent partitioning of Macedonia among Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, the Roma lived through the serious political and economic hardships experienced by the rest of the population.¹⁶

Following the Second World War, when Macedonia became a republic within Yugoslavia, Roma were allowed to have their cultural institutions, education and media, in accordance with the country's multicultural policy. The development of the Romanes language was also allowed. However, Roma were only given equal status with the two other big minorities in Macedonia, the Albanians and Turks, in the 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. Roma in Macedonia are mostly Muslim. Both Muslim and Christian Orthodox Roma have no problems with professing their religion.¹⁷

At present, Macedonia has representatives of several Roma groups, including: Kovaci, Dzhambasi, Topaanila, Barutchia, Bugurdzhia, Gilanlia and other smaller Roma groupings.¹⁸ Macedonia also has a group who identify themselves as Egyptians, who are recognized as a separate ethnic group from the Roma. After 1999, several thousand Roma, Egyptian and Askalian (REA) refugees arrived from Kosovo. Approximately 80 percent of Macedonian Roma speak Romanes, while the rest speak

¹⁵ Maria Koinova, Center for Democratization and Information on Minorities in Europe-Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE).

¹⁶ Maria Koinova: *Minorities in Southeast Europe: Roma of Macedonia*, CEDIME-SE, <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/pdf/cedime-se-macedonia-roma.doc>, p. 43.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Macedonian, Albanian, or Turkish. Arlija is the most widely spoken dialect among the Macedonian Roma, and it is used by Roma who live in Skopje, Štip, Kočani, and Kumanovo. The Bugurdzija and Dzhambasi dialects are spoken in northern Macedonia. The Roma who live in western Macedonia – in Ohrid, Struga, Resen and Debar – speak Albanian, while those in Kicevo speak Macedonian. Roma who live around Bitola speak Macedonian and Turkish as their first languages,¹⁹ while REA from Kosovo speak Romanes, Albanian, and Serbian.

Civil Society

During the last 15 years of democratic development in Macedonia, approximately 200 associations of citizens engaged in various issues concerning the Roma community have emerged. Among these, 120 are Roma NGOs – founded by Roma citizens and dedicated to Roma issues. Some of these organisations started with humanitarian missions, but, with support of international donors, they later grew into organisations dealing with women's issues, human and civic rights, cultural and educational problems, etc. In the mean time, capacity building measures helped them develop a core of trained activists, who form a critical mass of Roma people with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to accept the challenges in their own community and assist in the search for solutions to current problems.

The two national foundations, the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation and the Foundation Open Society Institute – Macedonia, have Roma programmes on their agenda and continuously support Roma and non-Roma organisations with work on Roma issues.

The major support in this area goes to the sphere of education. About 48 percent of NGOs have a mission to improve the educational status of Roma and, consequently, to contribute to overcoming the extremely unfavorable socio-economic situation of the Roma community. At the same time, about one-third of Roma NGOs are focused on protection of human rights, raising awareness among Roma citizens about their rights and protection mechanisms, and offering them legal protection in cases of human rights violations. The rest of the Roma NGOs are either women's, children's or youth organisations, or they deal with language and cultural issues.

Roma organisations have undertaken several initiatives to cooperate, as a means of coordinating and increasing the effectiveness of their work. Currently, there are two registered Roma networks operating in the country: RNGO Roma 2002, which focuses on representing and lobbying for Roma issues, and the Roma Education Network, which acts in the educational sector. In addition, there are a couple of other informal networks – one including several Roma NGOs dealing with human right issues and assisting Roma with legal documents and regulation of citizenship, and the other coordinating the activities of 10 Roma NGOs in the eastern part of Macedonia.

For the last two years the following major initiatives concerning Roma issues in Macedonia have been undertaken through a joint effort of the governmental and nongovernmental sector:

- ⇒ Elaboration of the National Strategy for Roma included initiating coordination of the Roma NGOs, which formed the “NGO Roma 2002”, and resulted in active participation of Roma NGOs and Roma political parties in the public debate on the strategy. Meanwhile, Roma NGOs took part in the activities of the National Working Group and, together with representatives of the relevant ministries, prepared the Action Plans for the Decade of Roma Inclusion and

¹⁹ Maria Koinova: Minorities in Southeast Europe: Roma of Macedonia, CEDIME-SE, <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/pdf/cedime-se-macedonia-roma.doc>, pp. 31-32.

the operational plans for their implementation.

- ⇒ Recently, the Roma Education Network took up an initiative²⁰ to formulate a strategy for future work of Roma Education NGOs in Macedonia and to elaborate cooperative mechanisms between the NGOs, education institutions, and local administrations.

Roma in Macedonia freely use electronic media to address all the issues that concern them. There are two private TV channels and three radio channels that broadcast programmes in Romanes on a local level. The second channel of the state TV (MTV2), which operates in the languages of the ethnic communities, offers a 90-minute programme weekly and a 60-minute programme monthly in Romanes, on a national level. The state radio broadcasts at least three hours and 30 minutes weekly of programmes in Romanes on a national level. In addition, the Macedonian Institute for Media has trained Roma journalists and sent them to work voluntarily with the other private TV channels that broadcast their programmes nationwide. Their contribution is already visible: More Roma issues are present in the media, and they are watched by more people in the country.

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Other Key Actors in Civil Society and Relations to Roma

The secession of Macedonia from Yugoslavia, ethnic grievances and the development of democratization processes framed the areas of concern for numerous NGOs, which focused on human rights and conflict resolution. At first, most of these NGOs were mainly addressing Albanian-Macedonian relationships, in an attempt to prevent ethnic conflict and preserve the integrity of the country. In parallel the major NGOs in Macedonia added Roma issues to their agenda. Currently, a considerable part of the country's civil society is addressing discrimination against Roma and assisting the integration of Roma in society.

²⁰ Through a REF funded project (MAC014).

4. Education System

Governance Structure

The Ministry of Education and Science is in charge of national policy on education: It prepares education regulations, which are verified by the Parliament, and it is responsible for their implementation. It also organises the financing of education and takes care of matters affecting this area.

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The internal organisation of the Ministry is divided by levels of education, with various divisions headed by deputy or assistant ministers. The Directorate for Development and Promotion of Education in the Languages of Minorities, which is part of the Ministry and is headed by a director assigned by the government, is responsible for initiating and coordinating activities aimed at improving the educational status of smaller ethnic groups in the country, including the Roma community.²¹

The Ministry of Education and Science has been undergoing considerable restructuring during the last years. With the National Program for Development of Education (2005-2015), adopted by the Government and the Parliament, some of the previous bodies within the Ministry have been abolished, some have been transformed, and some new sections are planned. Changes include the following:

- ⇒ The role of the *State Education Inspectorate* has been strengthened. It is going to monitor and evaluate the fulfillment of educational standards, efficiency in providing quality of education, and implementation of laws and other regulations in all levels of the education system.
- ⇒ The *Bureau for Development of Education* has remained, with narrowed competences, but it is still focused on four areas:
 - developing curricula in pre-school, primary, general secondary, and adult education;
 - professional development of teachers;
 - publishing textbooks and other teaching material; and
 - creating databases for information and documentation.
- ⇒ The newly established *Center for Vocational Education and Training* is in charge of ensuring the quality of vocational education by adjusting it to the labour market.
- ⇒ The responsibilities of the *State Examination Center*, formerly a unit within the Bureau for Development of Education, are concentrated around permanent control of the quality of primary and secondary education, setting standards for student's achievements, and organizing national examinations.
- ⇒ The *Center for Training of School Principals* focuses on strengthening the managerial skills of school principals.

Recently, the Ministry hired two Roma professionals as employees, one within the Bureau for Development of Education and the other within the Directorate for Development and Promotion of Education in the Languages of Minorities.

²¹ The Directorate is currently headed by a Roma national.

With the decentralisation process, the Ministry of Education and Science will decentralize major education responsibilities to local governments. On the local level, education will be governed by a Commission for Education, which will be established within each municipal council. Municipalities will become responsible for establishing, financing, and administering primary and secondary schools. Municipalities will own the facilities and participate in governance of schools, and mayors will appoint school principals recommended by the school boards. Local government units will be responsible for suggesting changes in the school network and proposing new vocational training. Decentralisation is also expected to strengthen the pedagogical, administrative, and financial autonomy of schools, which are to be governed by school principals appointed by school boards that include parents, teachers, and municipal representatives. These changes might allow stronger participation of Roma in decision-making in education issues. However, massive local-level capacity building will be needed for municipal councils, commissions for education, school boards, and parents, to ensure positive effects on education outcomes of Roma children.

Financing

In 2003, the budget for education as a percentage of GDP was 3.5 percent, indicating a decrease of 0.8 percent for the period 1996-2003. In 2004 and 2005, the percentage of GDP spent on education was 3.6 percent. This is quite low in comparison with other European countries.

More than half of the total education budget usually goes for elementary education; secondary education receives less than one quarter of the budget, and higher education receives a little more than 10 percent. Less than 10 percent of the budget is spent on improvement of students' standards. Schools use almost 80 percent of the money they receive on salaries, while universities spend more than 90 percent for this purpose. The Ministry of Education and Science supports the development of education with additional funding, based on the National Program for Development of Education. The budget planned for reforms in education for 2005 amounted to \$1.4 million, and 81.5 percent of this amount originated from loans, mainly from the World Bank. This figure constituted 0.55 percent of the overall planned expenditures on education.

Schooling in public schools is free of charge at the elementary and secondary level. As of the 2006/07 school year, the last year of pre-school education (so-called "year zero") became a compulsory component of regular elementary schools.

Until now, salaries and investments have been funded from the national budget, based on the number of eligible classes and teachers – not on a per-student basis.

Under the new Law on Local Government, school investment, maintenance, supplies, and teacher-training costs have to be covered from the municipal budget. At first, teacher salaries will remain the responsibility of the central government, but later on this cost will be transferred to local governments as well. The Law on Financing the Local Government Units regulates the methodology of transferring funds from the central to the local governments, but not all criteria for distribution of funds have been developed and/or fully implemented in practice.

The number of students is only taken into account when determining the distribution of national funds to the municipal level for educational investment and maintenance costs. This distribution also depends on the density of the population in the municipality. Schools and local governments can supplement educational costs with their own resources, and most of the time these additional funds are necessary to cover school maintenance costs. A major risk regarding education of Roma stems from the fact that Roma most often live in poor municipalities, which are unable to supplement additional revenues for education.

In addition to the national and local government budgets, there are two other major sources for financing pre-school, primary, and secondary education:

1. In general, parents are held responsible for purchasing textbooks and all other school supplies for their children paying participation fees for pre-school education, and for subsidizing their children's meals and extracurricular activities. Very often, parents are also asked to contribute to school maintenance or innovations. Private tutoring is a common practice, especially in towns and cities, and it is paid for by parents who can afford it. School teachers themselves often work after hours as private tutors. Not only are extra payments for such tutoring beyond the reach of the vast majority of the Roma population, but a large percentage of Roma families do not even have the resources to provide textbooks or the necessary school supplies for their children. There was a previous attempt by the Ministry of Education and Science to organise donations of books from previous generations, but, with the frequent changes in textbooks and the new policy of school-level textbook selection, this practice has become impossible. Given the lack of a systemic strategy, several NGOs have tried to address this issue by ensuring provision of textbooks for Roma students who participate in their programmes.²²
2. The Roma NGO sector in Macedonia is actually performing a major share of educational activities that the state is not providing – including organizing pre-school, afternoon classes, adult education, parental involvement, vocational training, support for secondary education for students who have dropped out, language classes, information and communication technology classes, etc. These activities are funded through donations and provided free of charge by the NGOs. Given the fact that almost half of Macedonia's Roma civil society is engaged in supporting the education of Roma through these venues, and given the donor funds available in the country, these resources amount to a considerable portion of financing for education in the country.

Educational support is also available for a small percentage of tertiary education students, who pass a set of competitive criteria. A much larger percentage of students co-fund their studies and are charged tuition fees.

Facilities

School and pre-school facilities are state-owned, but ownership is expected to be transferred to municipalities in 2007. The existing network of schools still reflects the demographic situation of the '60s and '70s, and there are major discrepancies in the current network of school facilities. The eastern part of the country has become less populated, while some regions in the west, especially those inhabited by a majority of ethnic Albanians, have grown overpopulated and have poorer, more crowded school buildings. There are also discrepancies in the quality of facilities within towns – with older parts of some towns fairing much better than newly established suburban areas, where Roma settlements are mostly located.

²² For example, during a 3 years period, funded by the Dutch Embassy in Macedonia, FOSIM has provided textbooks to around 1,500 Roma primary school children from 10 primary schools with highest concentration of Roma dispersed all over Macedonia.

Many of the buildings are seriously dilapidated. Even though a lot of them have been renovated with international support – with priority going to schools catering to three shifts – a sizable portion of Macedonia’s school buildings need intervention for basic safety reasons.

Due to government action and international support, all schools received computers, though not all of them have access to internet. Nonetheless, the majority of Macedonia’s schools still lack other modern equipment. Classes are most often organised in two shifts, and sometimes even three shifts, a situation that limits time and space for extracurricular activities or additional classes for students in need.

Language of Instruction

For 64.6 percent of students in primary education, the language of instruction is Macedonian; for 32.7 percent, it is Albanian; for 2.5 percent instruction is in Turkish; and for 0.2 percent, it is in Serbian. According to the legislation, Romanes can be a language of instruction, but this provision is not put into practice in schools. Currently – due to the lack of qualified teachers and the lack of support for providing textbooks and other teaching materials – Romanes is an optional subject taught only in two elementary schools. Thus, most Roma students attend classes in Macedonian, and some in Albanian or Turkish, depending on the region where they live. The same applies to secondary education: Roma students who continue their education are taught in Macedonian, which is the language of instruction for 79.4 percent of the total secondary school student population, Albanian (19.6 percent), or Turkish (1 percent).²³

There are three state universities in Macedonia, one with Macedonian as the only language of instruction, one that primarily uses Macedonian but also offers in-service teacher training and study of Albanian language and culture, and one that primarily offers Albanian as a language of instruction. Roma students can be found in all three universities. At the university level, there is no department of Romology to prepare future teachers in Roma language and culture.

Education Cycles, Progression Criteria, and Examination System

Education is provided in four cycles: the pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Pre-primary education, which lasts up to age 7, used to be optional. But, as of fall 2006, the last year of pre-primary has been added to primary education, as a compulsory pre-school year that is organised within schools. Thus, nine years of compulsory education (for ages 6-14) are replacing the previous eight-year model. It is expected that the “zero year” will also help Roma students better cope with the requirements of regular primary education.

Primary education, the nine years from grades zero through eight, is class-based in grades zero through four and subject-based in grades five through eight. The transition from the fourth to the fifth grade is harsh: one or two teachers are replaced by several teachers with a different attitude, curriculum requirements increase rapidly, and the policy that excludes repetition of a school year during the first four grades is abandoned. As a result, students in grades five through eight are faced

²³ Source: State Statistical Office, 2005. Data refer to the 2003/04 school year.

with much stricter requirements and negative experiences, which result in an increased dropout rate among vulnerable categories, including a big proportion of Roma students.

After compulsory primary education, children are encouraged, but not obliged, to continue on to secondary schools. A variety of secondary schools are on offer, including four-year high schools with a more academic orientation and four- or three-year vocational schools, which are intended to qualify students for the labour market. However, part of the schooling offered at the secondary level is highly inefficient and consists of a network of vocational education and training schools that teach unemployable professions.

Macedonia's tertiary education system is in transformation, to achieve alignment with the Bologna process. So far, the faculties within the public universities have changed their study programmes and curricula, and have also made minor changes in the structure of education, which still requires four-to-five years of study for a basic diploma. The same applies to pre-service teacher education institutions, the pedagogical faculties that produce future pre-school and elementary school teachers (grades zero through four), the Institute for Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy, which educates future elementary school teachers, and all other faculties that educate teachers of various subjects in primary and secondary education.

Currently, there are no external school leaving examinations, and enrolment into secondary and tertiary education is based on the students' achievements at previous levels, as reflected in school diplomas. Some very attractive schools also organise entry exams. Students' achievements are based on a grading system that lacks objective standards²⁴ and allows subjective grading, which is a widespread practice in Macedonia's schools that affects Roma students to a great extent.

A final examination (matura) for four-year secondary schools is expected to be introduced in the near future (2007 or 2008).²⁵ The exams will be overseen by a new body, the State Examination Center within the Ministry of Education and Science. Final examinations for primary education are also anticipated for the near future. The State Examination Center has already developed minimum achievement standards for mathematics and language/literature for grades one through four.

Affirmative action for Roma students exists both on the secondary and tertiary level. For the last several school years, the government issued an act to allow all Roma students who applied for secondary education to be enrolled. The state universities, especially the one in Skopje, have defined quotas for enrolment of Roma students that reflect the proportion of Roma in the overall population. But the legal status of affirmative action is not set in a sustainable way, and no budgetary financial benefits have been attached to Roma enrolment – the NGO sector involved in Roma issues, mainly the Foundation Open Society Institute – Macedonia, serves as a basis for providing stipends and fees to support Roma students on both levels.

There has been reported misuse of affirmative action quotas for the Roma community, involving cases in which non-Roma students claimed to be Roma, in order to obtain enrolment and avoid participation fees. In response, the Ministry of Education and Science accepted the suggestion from Roma intellectuals to include an official articulation of ethnic membership in school diplomas at the end of secondary education, beginning from 2004/05. The information on the student's ethnic background in secondary-school diplomas is also meant to be used as a helpful tool to prevent misuse of grants intended for stimulating tertiary education of Roma students.

²⁴ The State Examination Center is expected to develop grading standards for all subjects.

²⁵ Originally the plan was to organise final exams from June 2007. But, according to a new decision by the minister of education, the state matura has been postponed for a year.

Special Schools

Forty-five primary schools, four secondary special schools,²⁶ and 66 classes within regular primary schools are assigned for students with learning disabilities and other special needs. These schools cater to 1,143 primary students and 308 secondary students. In addition, there are six institutes for education and rehabilitation that accommodate children and youths in grades one through 12: one of them for students with impaired hearing, one for students with impaired vision, one for physically disabled students, and two for children and youths with behavioral and social problems. Curricula for these schools and classes are reduced, and the class size is smaller than in regular school classrooms.

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In comparison to children of any other ethnicity, Roma children are disproportionately more represented in schools and classes for children with learning disabilities. Unofficial school data show that almost 30 percent of students in special primary schools, special classrooms within regular schools, and the institutes for education and rehabilitation are Roma. The proportion of Roma in special schooling goes far beyond the percentage of Roma in the overall population in the country, a situation that indicates a serious bias in the enrolment procedure, and in the distribution of social benefits and aid to families.²⁷

Children enter special schools or classes after a team of professionals from the Mental Health Institute for Children have approved that they have special educational needs. These assessments take place before first grade or based on referrals from schools. The referral and enrolment procedures applied in Macedonia have not been questioned as they have been in other countries.²⁸ Nonetheless, the issue calls for further scrutiny. With the new decentralisation law, the responsibility for categorization of special education students is being moved from the Mental Health Institute for Children and transferred to the municipal level. The lack of professional staff at this level, and the need for redesigning the enrolment procedures due to the change, could create an opportunity for tackling the issue of special education in a novel way.

So far, only some pilot projects have been undertaken to bring about inclusive education in schools throughout the country, but this has not become a widespread practice yet. Thanks to a Ministry of Education and Science project called “Inclusion of Children with Special Needs in Regular Schools,” which has been implemented on a small scale for five years, there are 73 primary schools and 13 kindergartens where children with special needs are included. Another project, led by UNICEF, managed to deinstitutionalise 24 children with special needs through the development of community services that help take children out of institutions and place them in families.²⁹

Social Support for Students

A small number of scholarships for secondary and tertiary students are supplied from the national budget. The amounts range from EUR 35, for secondary students; to EUR 50, for talented university students; to EUR 70, for students in professions that are lacking on the labour market. The basic

²⁶ State Statistical Office, 2006.

²⁷ Only students in schools for children with special needs receive certain benefits, like free meals and school supplies for children and social aid for families. This acts as an incentives for poor Roma to accept the referrals that their children get when their teachers want to avoid dealing with them in regular classes.

²⁸ Especially in the Czech Republic and Bulgaria.

²⁹ Education Policies for Students at Risk and Those with Disabilities in South Eastern Europe, 2006.

criterion for awarding scholarships is a student's achievement, based on grade average. There are no provisions for educationally and socially deprived families, which leaves Roma students with almost no opportunities for accessing this kind of financial support. The ambiguity of all other minor criteria included in the selection process also allows for the possibility of manipulation, and adds to discrimination against Roma with respect to providing social support.

While very few Roma students have had access to scholarships from the national budget, almost all of the Roma students who have enrolled in secondary schools in the 2005/06 school year have been awarded scholarships through a joint project of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Foundation Open Society Institute – Macedonia (with Roma Education Fund financial support). Even though the end results cannot be assessed yet, there are obvious positive effects already: The project brought a noticeable increase in the number of Roma students who entered secondary education, and absenteeism and dropout rates decreased.

Since 2001, Romaversitas and the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program, in coordination with the Foundation Open Society Institute – Macedonia, have implemented their programmes in support of Roma tertiary students. Currently, Romaversitas still provides grants and mentorship to almost all Roma students who enrol in universities in Macedonia to study behavioral or social disciplines, and it guarantees its benefits to those who regularly transfer to the next year.

Key Legislation and Other National Documents

Education is regulated by a set of laws for each respective level of schooling: The laws for primary and secondary education were both adopted in 1995 and last amended in 2006, when the legislation was changed to include the compulsory “zero year” in primary education and to adapt to the decentralisation process. The law for higher education was adopted in 2000 and amended in 2005 for the last time. These laws are accompanied by multiple sub-legal acts, or rulebooks. In 2006, two important laws were added: the Law on the Bureau for Development of Education and the Law on Vocational Education and Training. The 2002 Law on Local Government also sets responsibilities of municipalities with respect to education.

With regard to Roma issues in education, there is need for a Law against Discrimination in Education, to provide a solid basis for eliminating the consequences of the existing negative stereotypes and prejudices against Roma students. These prejudices are often present in the education system, and supported in some of the textbooks as well.

Currently, education is also guided by a framework policy document, the National Program for Development of Education (2005-2015).³⁰ In this programme, priority is given to including all children in education, providing equal opportunities for all in education, decreasing the number of drop-outs, increasing the number of children in pre-school education and the number of students in tertiary education, connecting formal and informal education, reinforcing adult education, decreasing the illiteracy rate, promoting cultural identity, etc. The development of the National Program for Development of Education was progressing in parallel with work on the National Action Plans for the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Unlike the National Action Plans, which are focused on Roma issues in particular, the National Program for Development of Education refers to all ethnic communities in Macedonia. However, there is a clear correspondence and synergy between the two documents – almost everything from the Action Plans is more or less present in the National Program for Development of Education as well. Even the time-frames correspond, so there is a solid basis for further integrated planning.

³⁰ The development of this programme was financed by Foundation Open Society Institute-Macedonia.

Status of the Education System: Key Indicators

Table 1: Key Data on Education in Macedonia for 2002/03 and/or 2003/04

(Data depicted in the table are based on a variety of sources: UNESCO statistics, State Statistical Office and UNDP Human Development Report)

	Pre-school	Primary (G1-G8)	Secondary	Tertiary
Staff	2,935 ^c	13,970 ^b	5,946 ^b	1,540 ^a
Number of students	29,704 ^c	223,876 ^b	94,053 ^b	46,637 ^a
Number of children in one cohort ^a	–	29,000 (approximately)	27,000 (approximately)	–
Number of institutions financed by the state	–	1,010 ^b	95 ^b	3 ^a
Pupil-teacher ratio ^c	11	20	16	17
Graduation rate ^c (percent of enroled)	–	88.5	89.2	Not available
Dropout rate (per year) ^c (percent of enroled)	–	0.3	0.9	–
Gross enrolment ratios ^c (%)	28	97	73	27
Net enrolment ratios ^c (%)	27	91	–	11
Percent of public expenditure per pupil as percent of GDP per capita ^c	–	23.7	7.5	22.4
Education as percent of GDP ^a	2003: 3.5 1996: 4.3			
Public expenditure as a percent of GDP per capita (all levels)	2002/03: ^c 14.2			
Adult literacy rate (% 15+)	2003: ^d 96.1			

a. Source: State Statistical Office, 2005 (data refer to 2003/04 school year).

b. Source: State Statistical Office, 2006 (data refer to 2004/05).

c. Source: UNESCO statistics (data refer to 2002/03 school year): http://stats.uis.unesco.org/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx?CS_referer=&CS_ChosenLang=en.

d. Source: UNDP: Human Development Report 2005: <http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/countries.cfm?c=MKDICEF>.

Student Performance Based on International Assessments

Macedonia participated in both the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS).³¹ Participation in PISA is limited to the cycle for the year 2000, and in TIMSS was limited to the cycles for 1999 and 2003. The Macedonian students' performances are shown in the following two tables:

Table 2: PISA 2003 Results

Area	Macedonia		OECD		Difference Macedonia – OECD
	Mean ³⁵	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	
Mathematics	381	2.7	500	0.6	- 119
Reading	373	1.9	500	0.6	- 127
Science	401	2.1	500	0.6	- 99

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Table 3: Trends in performance over four years: TIMSS 1999 and 2003

Area	1999		2003		Difference 2003-1999
	Mean	S.E.	Mean	S.E.	
Mathematics	447	4.2	435	3.5	- 12
Science	449	3.6	458	5.2	9

Macedonia achieved visibly below the international average on both scales in both cycles. Achievements on all PISA scales are at least one standard deviation below the OECD average. In other words, the difference between Macedonian students' performance and the average OECD performance is about two years of schooling. Although, like many countries, Macedonian students perform somewhat better on TIMSS than on PISA,³³ the country's TIMSS results are also below average. Furthermore, Macedonia showed a slight but statistically significant decrease in TIMSS scores on mathematics between 1999 and 2003.

³¹ Redzepe, L., Andonova-Mitrevska, T., Samardzik-Jankova, T. (2004): PISA 2000 Postignanja na učenice i vo republika Makedonija, Skopje: Biro za razvoj na obrazovaniето www.pisa.oecd.org.

Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O., Gonzales, E.J. and Chrostowski, S.J. (2004): *TIMSS 2003 International Mathematics Report*, Boston: Lynch School of Education, Boston College.

Martin, M.O., Mullis, I.V.S., Gonzales, E.J. and Chrostowski, S.J. (2004): *TIMSS 2003 International Science Report*, Boston: Lynch School of Education, Boston College <http://timss.bc.edu>.

³² The way results are reported in both PISA and TIMSS is the following:

In each assessment area, each student is awarded a score based on the difficulty of the tasks that she or he could reliably perform. The scales are constructed so that the average student score is 500 points and about two-thirds of students score between 400 and 600 points (i.e. the standard deviation equals 100 points).

³³ This is due to the fact that the tasks in PISA are much more cross-curricular and that the sampling for the two studies is different. TIMSS targets students at the end of primary schooling, usually while preparing for their final exams, while PISA targets 15 years olds, who are often already in the first grade of secondary schools, and somewhat detached from the curriculum areas assessed.

The range of differences and negative trend in performance may have serious implications for international competitiveness.

Education Indicators of Roma

Table 4: Education Indicators of Roma Students in Macedonia

Proportion of Roma cohort attending pre-school education (preparatory year) ^a	1.6%
Proportion of Roma cohort ^a enrolling in first grade (2003/04)	96%
Proportion of school-aged (7-15-year-old) Roma in school ^b	70-80% (very rough estimate)
Proportion of Roma children not continuing primary education beyond the fourth grade (of those enrolled)	Around 25%
Proportion of Roma children not completing 8 years of primary education (of those enrolled)	Around 45%
Proportion of Roma among the children who are enrolled in special education schools and classes ^b	Around 27%
Proportion of Roma primary school graduates continuing on to the secondary level ^a	12.8%
Proportion of enrolled Roma completing secondary education ^a	56%
Tertiary level enrolment of Roma cohort ^a	0.3%

a. Source: State Statistical Office, 2005.

b. Calculated for the current study.

Data for the period between 1997/98 to 2002/03 show that the proportion of Roma students among the share of the total number of students completing primary education has increased from 1.15 percent to 2.08 percent. There has also been a slight improvement on the secondary level: In the same period, the share of Roma students among all students who completed secondary education increased from 0.36 percent to 0.59 percent. This change is largely due to demographic trends, stronger campaigns to encourage schooling, and NGO activities. Still, the share of Roma students, especially in secondary education, is significantly lower compared to their overall share in the population.³⁴

³⁴ Source: State Statistical Office, according to the *Report of the Republic of Macedonia on Millennium Goals, 2005*.

It should be remembered that all data referring to Roma education have at least two problems that cast doubt on their accuracy:

1. Official statistical data are generally based on the language of instruction, and rarely include students' ethnicity.
2. In official statistics, the expected proportion of Roma in school is calculated based on the size of this minority listed in the census, which seriously under-represents the population of the Roma community.

Both of these factors can work either way, decreasing or increasing the value of the educational attainment indicators reported. Currently, however, there is no mechanism to establish a valid ground for numerical corrections in either direction.

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Extent and Nature of Roma Segregation and Enrolment Barriers

The most significant problems in the education field regarding Roma in Macedonia are similar to those faced by Roma throughout the Western Balkans. Critical issues include low enrolment, poor performance, and a high dropout rate for Roma children – combined with in-school segregation and discrimination, referral to special schools, restricted availability to pre-school, and lack of support for further education.

In terms of technical details, the specific barriers to enrolment and channels for segregation in Macedonia are the following:

1. Administrative barriers at the pre-school level:
 - ⇒ Parents contribute a payment, amounting to about EUR 25, to help cover the costs of their children's attendance in non-compulsory pre-school education in public kindergartens. There has been no systematic provision for families who are living on social benefits, and most of the Roma families cannot afford to pay the attendance fee. As a consequence, a very small percentage of Roma children are adequately prepared to enter primary education.
 - ⇒ Preparatory four-hour pre-school programmes, offered within primary schools, was up to now not mandatory, and many schools did not have the facilities to enrol all potential first graders into the programme, while some did not offer the programme at all. As a consequence, this opportunity for free pre-school education was not used by the majority of Roma children. Starting with the 2006-2007 school year, the pre-school programme is mandatory, and primary schools have to include a preparatory year (zero year) on a regular basis. Nonetheless, Roma families will still face the typical obstacles that make it harder for them to enrol their children into primary education. These obstacles are described below.
2. Administrative barriers at the primary school level:
 - ⇒ Schools operate on the basis of a neighborhood principle, enrolling students who have a residence permit proving they belong to the local school district. Many Roma living in settlements do not have residence permits, because many settlements are not officially registered. Even when the settlements are registered, they might still be not officially included into the district of the neighborhood school, due to slow updating procedures. Schools can use this excuse to

avoid their obligation to enrol Roma students. This especially happens when the schools have enrolled enough students, even if some of them do not belong to the local district.

- ⇒ Schools rely on parents' personal engagement in enrolling their children, and take no organised actions to inform or remind parents of enrolment in due time. This omission mostly affects Roma parents, and means their children are left out of school. Since schools are not financed on a per-student basis, they have no interest in fighting for "extra students," i.e. more than the minimum required to sustain the number of classes and teachers.
- ⇒ Enrolment into primary education is conditional on assessment of a child's school-readiness, which is conducted in the language in which complete instruction is offered and requires familiarity with paper and pencil and other mainstream culture-based competencies. Roma children often show low results in these tests and are encouraged to enrol in special schools or special classes within regular schools.

3. Barriers at the secondary and tertiary education level:

- ⇒ Entrance to secondary education is competitive, based on grade averages and, in the case of more attractive vocational or general secondary schools, on enrolment exams. Moreover, the most often used enrolment instrument – grades from the previous education cycle – can easily reflect and carry further biases built into the subjective grading system applied at the earlier level of schooling. Thus, Roma students most often end up in non-attractive, non-competitive schools offering education for non-employable professions, or they abandon further schooling altogether.
- ⇒ Although entrance to tertiary education is supported for Roma through affirmative action, enrolment into universities is still rare among Roma students, due to lack of information, different interpretations of the criteria of enrolment applied by different faculties, tuition fees, and the lack of financial support attached to enrolment.
- ⇒ For those who dropped out of secondary education, or never enrolled in it, vocational training is only organised by the National Employment Services upon the request of a particular employer. Vocational courses are offered to registered unemployed citizens, and these are very often limited to the capacity of the employer's needs.

4. Age-bound barriers:

- ⇒ There is also an age-based systemic gap in the educational support affecting Roma. Even though enrolment into primary education is not age-bound, and the schooling can be done later if it is not started on time, students cannot attend primary schools after the age of 17. Many Roma children fall into the gap between late enrolment and this age limit: At the age of 17, they cannot complete their primary education, but are pushed out of regular attendance and forced to transfer to adult education programmes.
- ⇒ After the age of 17, students who dropped out of primary school at any grade level only have the possibility to enrol in adult education primary schools, at the next grade level. Currently this education does not provide qualification certificates other than graduation from adult education primary school.

Unfortunately, all these barriers are coupled with a serious lack of legislation preventing discrimination. Hence, except for lobbying through the NGO sector, there is no in-country mechanism that Roma can resort to if any of the administrative systemic barriers result in discrimination.

Qualitative Assessment of the Education System³⁵

The education system in Macedonia has been experiencing a prolonged transition process. Developments have been introduced in almost all areas of the system – sometimes with more success, sometimes with less – but they are always accompanied by obstacles and barriers that do not allow for changes in education that would precede the necessary changes in society. What follows is a description of the problems in some relevant areas.

School Management

School management and governance has recently changed to include parents and municipal representatives in school boards. But political issues still prevail in school governance, so that the school management system and ethos is generally not supportive of Roma children. School managers are neither trained nor encouraged to promote inclusive education, Roma and parents with a low socio-economic status are not selected for school-boards, no measures are taken to monitor and combat everyday discrimination against Roma students, and no measures are taken against schools that fail to enrol all students from their neighborhood. Schools are indirectly encouraged to avoid students who would potentially require additional staff time, and the number of ethnically “mixed” schools is decreasing in Macedonia.

Teachers: Qualification, Selection, Education and Training

Teachers often harbor negative stereotypes and have very low expectations when it comes to Roma children. Teacher discrimination against children is most often neither identified nor punished. Requirement for holding remedial classes are not enforced. Roma who are qualified as teachers are very rare: there are no affirmative action measures helping Roma to study to be, or find employment as, teachers, and there is no legal or financial support for Roma teaching assistants. There is also a shortage of qualified teachers for rural schools or teachers who are qualified to teach in Albanian and Turkish. And there is an absence of qualified teachers who can teach in Romanes. Pre-service teacher education does not provide skills for addressing diversity and multicultural issues. Meanwhile, the teacher licensing, career advancement and accreditation system for in-service teacher training is still not developed to provide safeguards against discrimination, or to support meaningful capacity building of teachers.

Curriculum

The curriculum is set only on the national level; it is still content based and factual. Mastering the curriculum requires parent engagement or private tutoring, which is a common practice for some, but this discriminates against lower socio-economic status and less-educated parents. Most Roma families cannot offer the required support for organizing additional classes for Roma students. Even though the law says that additional tutoring in school must be provided whenever necessary, such teaching is rarely performed, and there are no mechanisms to put this law into practice. In addition,

³⁵ For a detailed qualitative assessment see table in Annex.

the Roma language and culture is not part of the curriculum. There is no institutional support for Roma children who speak Romanes as their mother tongue and are not fluent in the language/s of instruction offered in their school.

Textbooks

Roma children do not have proper access to textbooks. Parents are expected to purchase the textbooks, and there is no systematic and organised way of providing free textbooks for Roma children, though some NGOs provide books/stipends for a limited number of Roma students. Generally, textbooks do not present Roma culture, but when they include elements of Roma tradition, they often enforce negative stereotypes. Most of the textbooks cannot be used without some assistance, and Roma children cannot rely on their parents' guidance for that purpose.

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Assessment and Evaluation

The development of a school-leaving examination system is under way. Formative assessment is rarely practiced, except in grades one through three, where descriptive grading was introduced in 2005/06.³⁶ Summative assessment still dominates, and it is not yet based on developed standards. As a result, class-level assessment can be biased and unfair. Most Roma students end up as underachievers, which prevents them from further advancement in education. The grading system relies heavily on oral exams that are open to a teachers' subjective judgments and thus biased by teachers' prejudices against Roma. Even when the assessment – both for enrolment and grading purposes – relies on more objective tests, it is still culturally and linguistically biased to the disadvantage of the majority of Roma students.

Finances

Roma education is not suitably financed. There are no financial incentives for inclusive education; free meals, free textbooks, or school supplies, and scholarships are not provided. Additional classes and/or mentoring are not financially supported. The financial mechanism actually provides incentives for schools to avoid Roma students. Furthermore, schools in low-income municipalities are struggling with basic maintenance financing.

Knowledge, Data and Capacity Concerns Affecting Roma Education

Knowledge and Data Gaps

The lack of regular and consistent data collection and processing is still an important obstacle to proper targeting and monitoring of educational activities. Official statistical evidence is mainly

³⁶ This change is expected to contribute to the abandonment of the traditional categorization of students on the basis of their achievement and encourage teachers to develop more individual approaches to their students.

based on the languages of instruction, and it disregards the ethnic background of the students. This especially affects Roma students: Registering their educational attainment on a national level requires additional efforts, because they attend classes in Macedonian, Albanian, or Turkish.

Furthermore, the system still lacks comprehensive data on the quality of education. No clear indicators for monitoring students' educational progress have been developed in Macedonia. Given the shortage of these indicators and data, it is difficult to develop a strategy to measure the effectiveness of any affirmative actions that are introduced.

The educational problems of the Roma community differ from one region to another in Macedonia. In the absence of regular and consistent data, it is even more difficult to develop approaches that would be tailored to the specific educational needs of Roma communities living in different municipalities. It is too early to judge whether the forthcoming decentralisation will have a beneficial effect on local data collection and targeting, or pose additional obstacles.

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Institutional and Other Capacity Issues

Macedonia has not developed a strategy for combating prejudice and discrimination in education, a problem that not only affects Roma students to a greater extent, but also influences the effects of educational programmes directed at Roma. In addition to the lack of legislative provision, inspection is not prepared to identify discrimination, and there are no developed curricula to prepare current or future non-Roma teachers to identify and combat prejudice against Roma in their classrooms.

There is a serious shortfall of Roma personnel in the education profession: There are neither systematic provisions to attract Roma high school graduates to enrol in teacher training nor any institutional framework for preparing teachers to use Romanes in schools.

There is a concern that educational policy making at the local level seriously lacks capacities and that the new local education commissions will not be able to address Roma education appropriately. Transferring educational responsibilities to local levels is due by 2007; hence this capacity gap will need to be addressed urgently. Roma NGOs have played a very active role in initiating and implementing educational support for Roma at all levels of education. This implies that the expertise and professional capacities for dealing with Roma educational issues are located within the Roma NGO sector but not yet sufficiently incorporated into governmental bodies. Consequently, educational institutions are not benefiting from the knowledge and expertise of the NGO community. On the other hand, the Roma NGOs' capacities in terms of institutional and human resources are still very limited.

The lack of clear institutional responsibilities is another obstacle in addressing Roma educational issues. Despite the existence of a Governmental Coordinative Body to handle Decade of Roma Inclusion activities, all initiatives have to proceed to the highest ministerial level in order to reach a decision, and the paths of the decision-making process are manifold and not coordinated. The implementation of the decentralisation process is expected to simplify and shorten the paths to reaching important decisions, but only for issues that address local educational needs.

Finally, Macedonia faces an implementation gap with respect to Roma policy. Although policy documents have been developed and adopted, institution building at both the national and local level has barely started, and new policies are implemented only as projects with external funding, without consideration of sustainability. Thus these policies run the risk of being donor driven and dependent. The impending decentralisation process may additionally deepen and complicate the already existing implementation gap.

Summary of Systemic Strengths and Weaknesses with Regard to Roma Education

Macedonia is one of the countries where the situation of Roma has improved in recent years. The number of Roma students enrolled in primary and, especially, secondary school has somewhat increased, and affirmative action has significantly influenced the number of Roma students enrolled in, and graduated from, the tertiary education system. Roma participation in the political and administrative sphere has also improved to some extent,³⁷ and significant cooperation between the government and the Roma community has been realized. Moreover, the Roma are active participants in decision making processes at the municipal level as well.

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However, Roma still face serious barriers in their education. These can be summed up as follows:

1. Administrative barriers to enrolling into pre-school and primary education still exist, because of a lack of documentation of Roma families and a lack of access to social support in pre-school education. A forthcoming partial privatization of pre-school will most probably additionally jeopardize access of Roma to free pre-school.
2. Segregation in special schools and classes is still a practice in Macedonia, and the problem goes without visible discussion or reaction, even by the Roma community.
3. Despite good policy documents and the personal willingness of political leadership, schools are not welcoming and not supportive of Roma children. Roma children enrolled in schools in Macedonia are confronted with systematic, multifaceted obstacles that contribute to their poor achievement and high dropout rate, which in turn influence their low enrolment into further levels of education (secondary and tertiary). The most alarming obstacles are the following:
 - ⇒ Education authorities, as well as teacher training institutions, lack policies to attract and support Roma in pre-service teacher training. As a consequence, Roma teachers are rare even at the pre-school and primary school level. Roma students are often taught by teachers who hold negative ethnic stereotypes and prejudices toward Roma. Teacher prejudices can harm Roma students and also present a negative example for non-Roma students.
 - ⇒ Except in schools where Roma students are in the vast majority, Roma parents are rarely included in school boards and in the decision-making process. As a consequence, school policies remain insensitive to the Roma students' needs, and cooperation with Roma NGOs is most often not welcomed.
 - ⇒ Especially in the early stages of education, the quality of education for Roma can be seriously substandard, a situation that contributes to poor Roma performance throughout school, and higher Roma dropout rates. Students from the first through the fourth grade cannot fail and repeat a grade, but their teachers are obliged, according to the law, to organise additional classes for those who have not acquired the minimum knowledge and skills. Roma children, who very often fall into this category, most often do not receive additional training from their teachers, and are transferred to the next grade without fulfilling the minimum requirements. As a consequence, Roma children have difficulties in integrating into the higher grades.

³⁷ Currently, one of the Roma political parties is part of the ruling coalition in the parliament.

- ⇒ There are no qualified teachers and teacher trainers who can teach/train in the Romanes language. There is also no Chair for Romology or any other institutional framework that could provide qualified teachers of Romanes. Hence, although, according to the Constitution, Romanes can be a language of instruction in schools, this is neither practiced nor requested. Most schools that accommodate Roma students do not even teach Romanes as an optional subject in primary schools, because this would create additional space requirements and necessitate the additional cost of engaging a teacher.
 - ⇒ Discrimination is present in several systemic layers: There is no active and easily accessible mechanism for combating discrimination in school. Prejudicial acts by teachers and school administration usually have no consequences, and Roma children continue to suffer discrimination that very often leads to segregation. The school curricula are not multicultural, and they either avoid mentioning Roma culture and tradition or treat them in an unfavorable way, supporting the existing negative stereotypes and prejudices toward Roma. The assessment system is not based on grading standards and objective criteria. This system is a rich venue for biased and discriminative assessment of Roma children.
4. In Macedonia, education financing is seriously inadequate. This is not only due to the generally low level of funds, but also to inappropriate financing mechanisms, which have especially negative impacts on the education of Roma. Specific problems include the following:
- ⇒ There is virtually no social support attached to participating in education. Stipends, scholarships, textbooks, free meals, and exemption from pre-school attendance fees, are only available through programmes financed by donors or for those in special education.
 - ⇒ The education system does not provide funding for additional classes for children whose low achievement and/or lack of parental support would require additional attention. Students are expected to pay for all extracurricular activities, additional classes, extra attention of teachers (e.g. mentoring), private tutoring, and preparation for entry exams to higher levels of education.
 - ⇒ The current funding mechanism is based on the number of eligible classes. Thus it stimulates schools to minimize effort and avoid students who would require more serious work, or just to endure these students until they drop out by themselves after a couple of years of schooling. A per-student formula for financing is not yet being piloted, nor is it discussed seriously in the framework of the decentralisation law. There seems to be a high risk that this situation will even further deteriorate if decentralized education financing is introduced without a new formula for financing and compensation mechanisms.
 - ⇒ Education provided by the state system is, to a considerable extent, complemented by the NGO sector, which is financed through donations from international counterparts. Most of the shortcomings in the official system are complemented by activities of Roma NGOs. Although this work has created a vibrant civil society dealing with education, it also unwillingly contributes to a further decrease in attention devoted to Roma children in schools and pre-schools. An implicit “division of labour,” is developing. A situation that is already financially unsustainable and can, in the long run, pose obstacles to the development of the education system.

5. Overview of Government and Partner Activities

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The preparations for the Decade of Roma Inclusion in Macedonia started in 2004 with the establishment of a National Committee, which set up a Working Group that drafted four action plans related to education, housing, employment and health care of Roma in Macedonia. In January 2005, the Government adopted the National Action Plan for the Roma Decade and the Strategy for Roma in Macedonia. Both were fully supported by the Parliament. In November 2005, the National Working Group received the status of a governmental coordinative body, in charge of preparation, implementation, and monitoring of all activities connected to the Roma Decade and the Strategy for Roma.

During this preparatory process, the four ministries affected by the Action Plans worked in coordination to prepare plans to assist the Roma ethnic community, a first in Macedonia. All planned activities were placed under one joint framework, and their realization can be assessed and monitored. Roma representatives worked together with the representatives from the ministries on the preparation of the Action Plans. The drafts of the Action Plans were communicated with a number of Roma NGOs and were made accessible to all interested parties through the website of the coordinating ministry, the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy. Through this exposure, the drafts were made available for comments and suggestions. A month later, a conference supported by the FOISM and the World Bank brought together almost all Roma NGOs in Macedonia and representatives of the relevant ministries. The draft National Action Plans were adopted at that conference, with the consensus of all participants.

The beginning of the implementation of the Action Plans raised the need to identify concrete activities and to define the required budget. As a result, more specific Operational Plans were drafted by four working groups within the responsible ministries, and these were finalized by the National Working Group and adopted by the Government in 2005.

Although the National Action Plans do not include a budget, the Operational Plans are budgeted for the first three years of the Decade.

Commitments to the Roma Decade: Actions/Progress to Date

The prime minister, the minister of Labour and Social Policy, and the other responsible ministers have expressed strong commitment to the Decade of Roma Inclusion on a political level. The 2006 national budget reflected³⁸ part of the Action Plan budgets, but only a small proportion of it is dedicated to improvements in education.

³⁸ The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has assigned about \$20,000 for Roma programmes and allocated \$270,000 for including children aged 4-6 into optional pre-school education. The Ministry of Health has devoted \$87,000 for prevention of diseases in vulnerable populations, including Roma. The Ministry of Transport and Communication has planned to spend about \$20,000 on improving water supplies and constructing sewerage systems in Roma settlements. The Ministry of Education and Science did not have a separate budget line assigned for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, but it supported Roma education through programmes based on the National Program for Development of Education (2005-2015), including school reconstruction and reforms in education.

The *legislative* and *administrative* changes that are envisaged in the Action Plans are still to be developed and implemented, and the prerequisite structures (secretariat and national council) have not yet been established. The decentralisation issues and the new Law on Local Government places greater responsibility on the municipal level. However, only minor action has started thus far.

On the *programme level*, implementation is progressing only slowly. So far, no new policies have emerged from the joint efforts of the four relevant ministries: Social assistance is not connected with educational attainment; there is no textbook provision for families living on social welfare; decisions to grant stipends and scholarships do not substantially depend on the socio-economic status of families, etc.

Activities coordinated and implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science include:

- ⇒ Performing affirmative action in enrolment of Roma students at universities and secondary schools, based on students' ethnic self-identification, as officially noted in their school diplomas.
- ⇒ Developing local action plans for Roma integration by municipal councils and the municipal Commissions for Interethnic Relations. This process is still at an early stage, however, and only local action plans have been adopted so far, even though all local governments are encouraged to work on them. The process also very much depends on the initiatives of Roma NGOs.
- ⇒ Developing a programme for Roma language and culture, to be taught as an optional subject in primary education, and implementing it in a couple of schools with a majority of Roma children. Until now, however, this has only been done in the Roma-led municipality of Šuto Orizari.

In addition, in 2006 about 30 Roma NGOs were running various projects related to education at all levels of education, with the approval of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Donor Funding: In-Country Programmes

According to the Governmental Sector for European Issues data-base, only 4.6 percent of all international support to Macedonia goes for projects in education. This is far less than the support received, for example, for health, transportation, democratization, industry, and agriculture. Most of the international funds for education were aimed at improving the school infrastructure, introducing innovations in educational programmes and curricula, promoting interethnic dialogue (mainly between Albanians and Macedonians), in-service training of teachers, etc. In some of these projects, the Roma community appeared as one of the direct beneficiaries, together with the other communities. In other projects, Roma are only indirect recipients of the effects of more general interventions.

Nevertheless, among the currently-run donor funded educational projects, several are focused exclusively, or almost exclusively, on Roma education. These include:

- ⇒ "Roma Education Program (REP)": Jointly funded by USAID, FOSIM, the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation of Switzerland and the OSCE, this programme focuses on: (1) preparing pre-school children for entering primary education through the activities of the Roma Education Centers; (2) increasing enrolment and transition rates, decreasing drop-out rates, and improving the school performance and attendance of Roma students in primary and secondary schools – by providing stipends and mentor support for students, anti-prejudice training for teachers, out-of-school tutorial assistance for students, and workshops for parents and local communities; and (3) offering an opportunity for Roma students in

- universities to have equal opportunities and better academic achievements, through the provision of stipends and mentor support for students. The project's components for pre-school, primary and secondary education are implemented in Skopje, Kumanovo, and Prilep, in cooperation with five NGOs.
- ⇒ "Equal educational opportunities for Roma children": With the support of the Dutch Embassy in RM, FOSIM extended the primary school component of REP in 10 new sides with high concentration of Roma. In the next three year period, over 3,000 Roma primary school students from 10 primary school nation-wide will receive direct and indirect additional after school assistance placed in school.
 - ⇒ "Education for all": Funded and managed by the UNICEF office in Skopje, this project is aimed at ensuring quality education for all students in Macedonia, reducing the drop-out rates in primary and secondary education and providing conditions for reintegration of students who have dropped out (mostly Roma students), and increasing the coverage of children from vulnerable groups (including Roma girls) into primary and secondary education. Seminars have been conducted for school managers, teachers, and school administration, including psychologists, sociologists, etc. Professional and promotional publications have been disseminated. A survey of teachers and students was conducted to assess the reasons for dropping-out, and a strategy for preventing drop-out as a phenomenon was created, based on the results of the survey.
 - ⇒ "Novel approach to raising awareness for education, technology and civil rights among the Roma population": This project is funded by the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation's European Agency for Reconstruction and implemented in Bitola. It is aimed at raising awareness of education and technology among the Roma population in Bitola by providing access to computers, internet, and multimedia services; and improving the quality of public administration services for the Roma community through the establishment of an Information Center in the Roma settlement
 - ⇒ "Applied Education for Young Roma":³⁹ This project, funded by the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCMS), contributes to increasing the integration of Roma children in primary schools, and improving the job opportunities and possibilities for generating income among Roma youth. The project is applied through awareness-raising events organised by local civic organisations in cooperation with local primary schools, or support for vocational trainings provided by the Workers' University in cooperation with private companies.

Many other smaller projects in education, which are intended for the Roma community and/or are run by Roma NGOs with the support of international donors, have been carried out or are being carried out in Macedonia (for example, the Freudenberg Stiftung's support to Roma Education Centers). These projects address various aspects of education, such as additional classes, cooperation with schools, awareness raising among parents, literacy classes for adults, and many other issues, depending on the local context, resources, capacities of the organisation, etc.

Donor Funding: Conditions and Constraints

Current projects are closely related to the National Action Plans for Roma education, but the existing funding does not satisfy their needs. Nevertheless, in order to increase the efficiency of the limited

³⁹ Source: <http://www.mcms.org.mk/default-mk.asp?ItemID=3E9A52965E337843A4306BC7A317A080>.

funds for educational programmes, it is imperative to improve mutual coordination and avoid overlap or duplication of activities.

There are various problems regarding the funds coming to Macedonia. One is a certain lack of local transparency and consultations during the creation of some programmes: Plans and agreements for funding are made on higher levels, and this planning often does not ensure local participation and inclusion of local needs and perspectives at the grass-root level. Another problem is the large number of mediators among donors and implementers, a situation that places an additional burden on the realization of the funds and decreases the efficiency of the projects. A third concern is the capacity for absorption of the funds among certain structures, including Roma NGOs. And, finally, most of the donor-funded projects cover activities lasting six-to-12 months. Such projects usually do not have a long-term, policy-related impact on the education process.

6. REF Programme in Macedonia

The Roma Education Fund (REF) has been very active in Macedonia: As of February 2007 it had received 30 projects proposals, and had approved funding of EUR 1,500,000 for six projects.

The largest project the REF finances is a comprehensive programme of scholarships for secondary school Roma students, managed by the Ministry of Education and Science and the FOISM. The project is progressing well and shows the importance of scholarships and mentoring to increase Roma student enrolment in secondary and tertiary education. This approach seems to be a good programme for extending to other cohorts.

Another project that will soon be completed focuses on capacity building of Roma Education Centers in Macedonia. The project is implemented by the Roma Educational Network with the involvement of national and local level officials. The main outcome of this project is a collection of best practices and a strategy for the Network of Education Centers, which are providing out-of-school support for Roma children as a basis for their development and for increasing their integration in the Macedonian education system. The sustainability of these centres remains an issue. They are entirely funded by external donors, but the preparation of the best practice guidebook and strategy has provided a forum for discussion of important problems related to support for Roma children in integrating pre-school-education and enrolling in primary education.

The REF has also financed two projects to support a campaign for Roma children's enrolment in schools, implemented nationwide by the National Roma Center. It has also financed a programme for TV debates and discussions on Roma education issues with the NGO Romano Vas and a national TV channel. Finally, REF is financing a programme to scale up the inclusion of Roma children in pre-school education with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The programme will help the Ministry to test an approach to supporting Roma children in enrolling and in avoiding drop outs from pre-school, a major issue in Macedonia.

Project Partnerships

The REF has sustained a dialogue with the Government on issues of Roma education with both the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Four of the six currently running REF projects in Macedonia (up to May 2006) are led by Roma NGOs, one by the Government (the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy) and one as a partnership between FOSIM and the Government (the Ministry of Education and Science). However, Roma NGOs are involved in the implementation of all six projects.

Governmental co-funding is ensured only for the pre-school project and for the secondary scholarship project there is a clear synergy with a very similar project, targeting other cohorts, with USAID.

The REF has hired a country facilitator, to help with coordination between governments and NGOs and to provide assistance in project implementation.

Table 4: Levels of Engagement for Improving Roma Education Outcomes in Macedonia

Assistance and Support to the Roma Community	Implementation Support to Education Authorities	Policy Development with the Government
<p>1. Increasing representation of Roma professionals in education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Motivate and support affirmative action to attract and enrol Roma into the teaching profession. ⇒ Support initiatives for establishing a chair for Romology. ⇒ Train Roma and enhance their skills in the areas of teaching, education policy design, evaluation, research of education issues, etc. 	<p>1. Ensuring that forthcoming changes in the education system benefit Roma:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Ensure that school development planning and school self-evaluation supports inclusive education. ⇒ Develop a viable strategy for monitoring student progress and attainment at all levels of education, including tertiary. ⇒ Ensure that school-leaving examinations are developed so as to prevent any systemic negative affects on Roma children. ⇒ Develop curricula with increasing school-level flexibility, diversified content, diversified teaching methods, and clear expectations of outcomes, coupled with formative assessment. 	<p>1. Engaging in the decentralisation process to build local government capacities and commitment to Roma education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Focus on local Education Commissions. ⇒ Assist in developing inclusive local action plans. ⇒ Assist in the development of the decentralized funding formula, by ensuring an adequate financial coefficient for Roma students and an equalizing formula for poorer local authorities with a high Roma population. ⇒ Support local authorities to prevent creation of segregated schools by drawing segregated school district boundaries.
<p>2. Supporting Roma parents and community leaders to recognise and engage in key education issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Involve Roma parents in school boards and parent associations. ⇒ Detect and act on school-level discrimination. ⇒ Identify and overcome enrolment obstacles. ⇒ Support full inclusion of Roma children in the compulsory pre-school programme that started in 2006. 	<p>2. Increasing the focus on quality improvement in the education system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Ensure full coverage of Roma children in compulsory pre-primary education, including appropriate teacher education for the zero year. ⇒ Establish a mentoring system for Roma children in fifth grade. ⇒ Enforce legally binding provision of additional classes for students in need, especially in grades one through four. 	<p>2. Assisting in introducing antidiscrimination legislation in education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Train inspectors to provide inclusive education and to detect discrimination.

Assistance and Support to the Roma Community	Implementation Support to Education Authorities	Policy Development with the Government
<p>⇒ Monitor enrolment and progression through the education system.</p>	<p>⇒ Address over-representation of Roma in special schools, in cooperation with intergovernmental and international organisations.</p> <p>⇒ Involve in-country professionals and Roma NGOs to develop a clear and viable agenda for mainstreaming all children into an inclusive education system and significantly decreasing the special education system.</p>	
<p>3. Building a support system for Roma children at the family level:</p> <p>⇒ Motivate parents to enrol their children in primary education, including the compulsory pre-primary preparatory year.</p> <p>⇒ Motivate parents to monitor school achievements, prevent dropouts etc.</p>	<p>3. Improving linkages between education system and social support:</p> <p>⇒ Connect social assistance to education at every level at which doing so is feasible.</p> <p>⇒ Ensure sustainable text-book and school supplies provision for the Roma.</p> <p>⇒ Develop an administrative framework for affirmative action.</p>	<p>3. Restructuring social support to support education of Roma more effectively:</p> <p>⇒ Review the concept for announced privatization of pre-school provision, to ensure full Roma participation.</p> <p>⇒ Review current scholarship schemes for Roma and create a viable support system at the national level that is funded by the government.</p>
<p>4. Supporting Roma NGOs involved in educational activities to cooperate and strengthen their organisational, networking and capacity building structures, with the aim of maximizing the policy impact of their activities.</p>	<p>4. Supporting cooperation among Roma NGOs, schools and local government cooperation:</p> <p>⇒ Share experience.</p> <p>⇒ Assist in joint activities.</p> <p>⇒ Collaborate to overcome separate venues in Roma education.</p>	

Overall Strategic Framework and Levels of Engagement

Having in mind both the systemic constraints and the specific barriers embedded in the education system which Roma face, REF's role in Macedonia should be viewed as a multi-layered assistance consisting of policy related activities, support to the Roma community and support to the government. Table 4 indicates the broad framework of REF priorities that from which specific REF activities in Macedonia should evolve during the coming years.

Strategic Directions for Future REF Activities

REF Project Priorities

Based on this broad framework and considering the current REF programme, resource availability and capacity, short term priorities for REF funding will be given to the following:

1. Assistance in preparing municipalities to take over education decision making – e.g. through competitions for local governments that have a significant percentage of Roma population.
2. Activities that focus on increasing the quality of education for the Roma:
 - ⇒ Mentoring at transition grades (four and eight) to increase progression rates.
 - ⇒ Providing support in obtaining textbooks to disadvantaged students in communities with significant Roma populations – by borrowing from school libraries, providing special cheap editions, etc.
 - ⇒ Providing teacher and mentor training.
 - ⇒ Using Roma education centres to connect parents with schools and reach parents through training, sharing best practices for early schooling, information campaigns, and awareness raising.
 - ⇒ Applying the experience from the “Tanoda” example in Hungary to find the best ways to organise additional classes and after-school activities.
3. Scaling up of scholarship and mentoring programmes at the secondary level.

REF Research and Policy Analysis Priorities

Based on the overall framework for REF instruments and priorities, there are three current priorities for policy analysis in Macedonia:

1. Analysis of education expenditures including government, donor, and NGO sources.
2. Case study comparing Šuto Orizari schools to selected “mainstream” schools.
3. Analysis of teaching inputs and incentives to identify viable options for mentoring and additional classes, including work schedules, double financing, etc.

In addition to these subjects, there are four major areas that require targeted policy research in the future:

- ⇒ A review of existing scholarship schemes in the country, as well as the existing social assistance schemes, in order to develop more effective and better targeted models that could ensure higher attendance and lower dropout rates – and assist policy makers to adopt and implement these models.
- ⇒ An economic benefit study would be a very useful instrument to raise the issue of governmental financial commitment to Roma education both on the national and municipal level.
- ⇒ Teacher education universities must develop curricula that are pertinent for Roma students. In the framework of the Bologna process, universities will change curricula, structures and procedures in the forthcoming one or two years. It is important that this process is informed by the needs that a more effective education of Roma – both teacher trainees and the children they will teach – should encompass. For this purpose, there should be a study addressing the overview of existing teachers' education curricula, possible options and recommendations, including an overview of options for preparing students to teach Romanes language and culture. Since the higher education reform process is an international one, it would be best to conduct such a study for all Decade of Roma countries in a coordinated way.
- ⇒ There is a need for a strategy to transfer students from special schools to mainstream education. Because special education is de facto segregated Roma education in Macedonia, there should be a targeted analysis of the scope of the problem and the mechanisms underlying poor practices (including financial and other interest-based mechanisms). There should also be an elaboration of possible local strategies resulting in transferring children from special to regular education, and in keeping them out of special education in the first place.
- ⇒ Roma parents need better possibilities to become involved in their children's education. Although there is a growing experience of NGOs assisting in parent involvement as an indispensable support mechanism for successful education, there is still a need for a clear overview of possible practices, coupled with assessment of their long-term effectiveness. Based on these findings, a more sustainable approach could be built.

Results Framework Anticipated by REF Activities

Based on the identification of REF strategic priorities and on the REF's current projects and project pipeline, the set of expected results of REF activities should be visible in the next two-to-three years on the following levels:

1. Legal, financial and administrative changes:

- ⇒ A legal and administrative framework that provides for affirmative action to enrol Roma students into secondary education, while also providing the necessary accompanying social and educational support, such as stipends for students and mentoring support financed by the government.
- ⇒ Appropriate financial mechanisms linked to the decentralisation process, to ensure incentives for schools to support enrolment and participation of Roma students (through a weighted per-student formula or other measures).
- ⇒ Legislation banning discrimination in education must be passed by parliament, and necessary implementation measures must be taken, including training for education inspectors in detecting discrimination and fostering inclusive education.
- ⇒ Pre-school offered free of charge for families in need.

2. Key education indicators (results are expected in the mid-term through improved education outcomes for the Roma):
 - ⇒ Pre-school participation, both compulsory and non-compulsory.
 - ⇒ Enrolment rate in secondary school and completion rate in secondary education.
 - ⇒ Number of Roma staff in education.
3. Increased social cohesion:
 - ⇒ Cooperation between schools and Roma NGOs in the education activities of schools – to be monitored through project reporting.

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Country Monitoring Framework

Monitoring of these expected results will need to be conducted through a matrix of organisations providing a variety of data sources. These include:

1. Roma NGO Network engaged in education.
2. State Statistical Office.
3. Databases of the Ministry of Education, other Government agencies, and other donor's data collection routines.
4. Evaluation and monitoring designed and funded by each REF project.

Specific arrangements will be articulated in cooperation with all partners. Given the knowledge and data gaps, and the need to develop a well-functioning and efficient monitoring system, the REF may consider contracting a professional agency to collect data in missing areas. The REF may also want to convene all actors listed to develop a joint comprehensive monitoring system.

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Annex

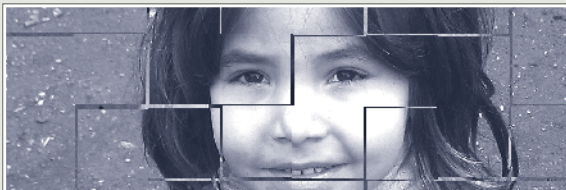
AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN MACEDONIA				
	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
SCHOOL MANAGEMENT (students' and parents' role, ethos) Primary school boards are composed of two-to-three parents, two-to-three teachers (depending on the school size), two municipal officials and one representative of the Ministry of Education and Science. Secondary school boards have three parents, four teachers, three municipal officials, one representative of the Ministry of Education and Science and one representative of the business community. School directors are elected by the mayor, based on the selection and proposal of the school board. The neighborhood schooling principle dominates, but free choice of schools is sometimes possible.	Management is accountable to the school board and to municipal political leadership. Parents' councils exist, but they lack substantial participation in decision making. According to the law, their role is to observe the education process and give opinions about it. Student unions are established regularly, but their participation in school life is marginalized. Political parties yield a major influence in education policy and management. Violence among youths has increased.	Traditional inspection dominates. The State Inspectorate and municipal inspectors are in charge. School improvement/development, and quality assurance mechanisms, including assessment of the school ethos, are under development.	The number of ethnically "mixed" schools, with Macedonian and at least one other language of instruction, is decreasing. Less than 10 percent of the schools are included in programs that promote an inclusive ethos for students with learning disabilities and other minor physical handicaps. Schools are indirectly encouraged to avoid students who will potentially require additional staff time. No measures are taken against schools that fail to enroll all students from their neighborhood. Roma parents or parents with a low socio-economic status are not selected for school boards and parent councils, except in schools where Roma are the majority of students.	School management is not efficiency-oriented. Instead the dominant managerial skills are oriented toward political and personal benefits. School principals are required to pass an exam after attending training in school management, but the training does not include diversity issues.	School management is controlled by existing (updated) laws and sub-legal documents, primarily on the national level.

AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN MACEDONIA				
	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
TEACHERS <p>Teachers are required to have a university degree, to undergo an induction period, and to pass a state exam after a year of practice.</p> <p>No competencies and standards are set for the teaching profession, except when it comes to career advancement.</p> <p>In-service teacher training is mandatory, but not all of the training programs are accredited, and there is no accreditation institution yet. A variety of selections are offered, with funding from a municipal or national budget.</p>	<p>A European credit transfer system has been introduced in higher education. But in most cases, including the teacher education institutions, its implementation has not brought genuine changes in the education process.</p> <p>Pre-service teacher education – especially the training aimed at subject teachers in the primary and secondary level—does not provide skills for child-centered and participatory approaches. Some in-service teacher-training programs, mainly offered by NGOs, include these elements.</p> <p>Teachers are not required to take a participatory approach towards students and parents. There is no meaningful parent and student involvement.</p>	<p>No standards have been developed to assess the competency and work of teachers. Teachers are not motivated to attend in-service training and implement new skills in the classroom</p> <p>The only institution accredited for in-service teacher training is the Bureau for Development. Many NGOs that offer teacher-training programs have to obtain permission from the Ministry of Education and Science to conduct training on an experimental level.</p>	<p>There is a shortage of qualified teachers for rural schools who can teach in Albanian and Turkish, and an absence of teachers qualified to teach in Romanes.</p> <p>There are no affirmative action measures for teacher-student intake or teacher employment.</p> <p>There is no provision in pre-service teacher education for diversity issues. Competencies that are important for teaching in multicultural diversified classrooms are offered through the training programs of NGOs. These are attended by a limited number of current teachers, and are not yet accredited,</p> <p>Requirement for holding remedial classes are not enforced.</p> <p>Teacher discrimination against children is neither identified nor punished.</p>	<p>Teachers are underpaid, and negative selection takes place in teacher education.</p> <p>Subject teachers lack basic teaching/learning skills and assessment skills. The method of teaching is neither efficient nor motivating.</p> <p>More than 50 percent of the teachers are included in in-service teacher training programs offered by NGOs, but most of them are not encouraged to implement their new skills in their classrooms.</p>	<p>Education and selection is regulated through several rulebooks, in non-systemic ways, at various levels. The system is open to manipulation and misuse.</p> <p>Qualification (licensing) and most in-service training is not yet regulated.</p>

AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN MACEDONIA				
	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
CURRICULUM There is a rigid national curriculum, allowing minimum flexibility for teachers in some subjects. Extracurricular activities are rare.	A certain degree of regional flexibility is envisioned in the national strategy for the development of education. Official curricula in history and literature are culturally adjusted on the basis of the languages of instruction. The Romanes language is offered as an optional subject on the official level. In practice, it is only implemented in two schools.	The curricula are content-based, not outcome-based. No standards have been developed yet, but development is under way.	Mastering the curriculum requires parent engagement, and private tutoring is a common practice. This system discriminates against children whose parents have a lower socio-economic status or less education. The Romanes language and culture is not part of the curriculum. There is no special support for Roma students who do not speak any of the languages in which instruction is offered.	The curricula are heavily factual and academic, and they lack relevance for real-life situations. There is a low retention rate of knowledge gained. Macedonian students have low results on the international PISA and other criterion based tests.	The curriculum is over-regulated. A detailed syllabus by grade and by subject is issued on the national level.

BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN MACEDONIA					
AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
TEXTBOOKS Almost all subjects are covered by textbooks. For some subjects, there is more than one textbook offered.	<p>There is liberalized publishing of textbooks that have been approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.</p> <p>Selection of textbooks is made at the school level.</p> <p>Most textbooks enforce ethnocentric orientation, without a multicultural perspective. They can even encourage negative stereotypes towards "others."</p>	<p>No quality standards have been set for textbooks.</p>	<p>Textbooks are purchased by parents, and no school assistance is provided.</p> <p>Low-income families have difficulty paying for textbooks, and there is no systematic assistance.</p> <p>Some NGOs provide books/stipends for a limited number of Roma students.</p>		<p>Approval of textbooks is regulated by law on the national level.</p>
ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION <p>A school-leaving examination system only exists in general high schools.</p> <p>There is periodic achievement monitoring on a sample segment of schools.</p>	<p>Schools do not have transparency or accountability to parents or the community for their performance.</p> <p>There is no formative assessment in schools.</p> <p>Self-evaluation of schools is under development.</p>	<p>The only standards developed for assessing students' achievement cover math and languages in the lower primary level.</p> <p>An external examination system has been planned, but not yet set up.</p> <p>Only research studies and the international PISA exams provide assessments of Macedonia's schools.</p>	<p>There is widespread private tutoring by teachers. This system is discriminatory towards students from families with a low socio-economic status.</p>		<p>Assessment is only regulated on the level of systemic legislation. Rulebooks and implementation have not been developed.</p>

AREAS OF EDUCATION POLICY and basic facts	BASIC DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION POLICY IN MACEDONIA				
FINANCES	Openness	Measurability	Equity	Efficiency	Regulation
<p>Funding comes from the national budget, which covers salaries and some investments, and the municipal budget. Salaries are based on the number of eligible teachers in each school, and are calculated according to the number of eligible classes and program requirements.</p>	<p>There are no uniform finances and no formulae favoring diversity, openness, developmental programs, minority education, etc.</p> <p>Pilot projects, which are carried out by NGOs with international support in a limited number of schools, support openness and participation.</p>	<p>There is no transparency of finances yet. A new Education Management Information System ensuring transparency has been developed, but not yet implemented.</p>	<p>Schools in low-income municipalities are struggling with basic maintenance financing.</p>	<p>School rationalization might be expected as an outcome of decentralization.</p>	<p>Changes in municipal financing due to decentralization are regulated by law, but the necessary sub-legal documents have not all been developed.</p>



ROMA EDUCATION FUND (REF)

*T*he goal of the Roma Education Fund is to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma, through policies and programs to support quality education for Roma including desegregation of educational systems. The Roma Education Fund was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Therefore, it also shares the goals of the Decade.

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