



Manual for access to social services at the local level for Roma practitioners and the Roma community



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Gordana Nestorovska

Sofia Georgievskia

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For any other correspondence related to this document, please contact the ROMACTED Programme within the Roma and Travellers Division, Avenue de l'Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France. Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 20 00.

Email: roma.team@coe.int

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Introduction

The Roma community in North Macedonia faces significant challenges in accessing social services despite various governmental and non-governmental initiatives aimed at improving their socio-economic conditions. There are still obstacles that hinder their full inclusion in society, including discrimination, lack of information and bureaucratic obstacles. This Handbook was created to address these challenges by providing a detailed overview of the current state of social services, identifying best practices and offering practical recommendations to improve access to these services.

The comprehensive approach presented in this Handbook aims to identify the significant challenges faced by the Roma community in accessing social services in North Macedonia. By focusing on identified gaps and implementing targeted recommendations, this Handbook aims to promote a more inclusive and just society in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the principle of "Leaving No One Left Behind" (LNOB).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Employment and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reducing Inequalities) serve as guiding frameworks for this Handbook. The principle of "Leaving No One Left Behind" (LNOB) is central to these goals, ensuring that marginalized communities, including the Roma, are not left behind in achieving sustainable development.

1. Background on the Roma population in North Macedonia

According to the last census of 2021, 46,433 people were registered as Roma, which represents 2.53% of the population. Most of them are Muslims. Despite efforts to improve their socio-economic conditions, many Roma still face significant obstacles in accessing education, employment, healthcare and housing. These obstacles include discrimination, lack of information and bureaucratic obstacles. Consequently, the Roma community often has worse health outcomes, lower educational attainment and higher unemployment rates compared to the general population.

1.1. Key findings from the EU Enlargement Review 2023

The 2023 EU Enlargement Review¹ highlights several critical issues regarding the Roma population in North Macedonia:

- **Employment:** The employment rate among the Roma population is 23%, which is significantly lower compared to the national average. The unemployment rate is 67%, and only 8% of Roma women are employed. Many Roma work in the informal sectors, such as trade, taxi services, construction and agriculture.
- **Education:** Only 7% of Roma children of preschool age are enrolled in kindergartens, and 75% of Roma children aged 6-18 are enrolled in school. Financial constraints and distance to schools are major obstacles to education.
- **Health:** The life expectancy of the Roma population is 10 years shorter compared to the national average. Access to health services is restricted, with many Roma not having health insurance.
- **Social services:** Guaranteed minimum assistance (GMP) is the most frequently used social right by Roma beneficiaries. However, there are challenges in integrating GMP recipients into the labor market due to discrimination, low levels of education and lack of support.

¹ [Izvestaj EK 2023.pdf \(sobranie.mk\)](#)

1.2. International standards and National Roma Inclusion Strategy

1.2.1. National Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022-2030

The Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022-2030 is a comprehensive framework developed by the Government of North Macedonia to address the socio-economic challenges faced by the Roma community. This Strategy is aligned with the EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation (2021-2030) and includes the commitments made within the framework of the Poznań Declaration.

Vision

The vision of the Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022-2030 is to create an inclusive society in which Roma have equal access to opportunities, resources and services, which will lead to a better quality of life and socio-economic integration.

Principles and values

The Strategy is based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination and active participation of Roma in policy-making processes. It emphasizes the importance of combining general and targeted measures to address the specific needs of the Roma community.

Strategic goals

The strategic goals of the Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022-2030 include:

- Improving access to quality education for Roma children and youth: Increasing the rate of enrollment and completion of primary, secondary and higher education; providing scholarships and learning support; promoting inclusive educational practices.
- Enhancing opportunities for employment and economic participation of the Roma: Implementation of programs for professional training, subsidies for employment and support for entrepreneurship; promoting measures against discrimination in the labor market.
- Ensuring access to adequate housing and living conditions for Roma families: Developing affordable housing projects, legalizing informal settlements and improving infrastructure in Roma communities.

- Improving health outcomes and access to health services for the Roma: Facilitating access to health services through Roma health mediators, mobile clinics and targeted health programs; enhancing health literacy and preventive care.
- Promoting Roma culture and combating Anti-Gypsyism: Promoting Roma culture and heritage through cultural events and educational programs; dealing with stereotypes and prejudices.
- Ensuring civil registration and legal documentation for all Roma: Ensuring that all Roma are registered in civil registries; providing legal support for obtaining personal documents.

Measures for achieving strategic goals

To achieve these goals, the Strategy encompasses specific measures in each priority area:

- Education: Increasing the rate of enrollment and completion of primary, secondary and higher education; providing scholarships and learning support; promoting inclusive educational practices.
- Employment: Implementation of programs for professional training, subsidies for employment and support for entrepreneurship; promoting measures against discrimination in the labor market.
- Housing: Developing affordable housing projects, legalizing informal settlements and improving infrastructure in Roma communities.
- Health: Facilitating access to health services through Roma health mediators, mobile clinics and targeted health programs; enhancing health literacy and preventive care.
- Culture: Promoting Roma culture and heritage through cultural events and educational programs; dealing with stereotypes and prejudices.
- Civil registration: Ensuring that all Roma are registered in the civil registries; providing legal support for obtaining personal documents.

Monitoring and evaluation

The implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022-2030 will be monitored by the National Coordination Body for Roma Inclusion, which includes representatives from relevant ministries, civil society organizations and international partners. Regular progress reports and evaluations will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the Strategy and make necessary adjustments.

1.2.2. Poznań Declaration

The Poznań Declaration, adopted during the Western Balkans Summit in 2019 reinforces the commitment of the Western Balkans countries, including North Macedonia, to improve the socio-economic inclusion of Roma communities. The Declaration emphasizes the importance of regional cooperation and the implementation of national strategies for Roma inclusion. It sets key priorities such as access to education, employment, health, housing and civil registration.

1.2.3. European Child Guarantee

North Macedonia has launched plans to introduce the European Child Guarantee, which aims to ensure that vulnerable children have effective access to key services such as health, education, childcare, quality housing and nutrition. This initiative is part of the wider EU Strategy to combat child poverty and social exclusion.

1.2.4. The role of UNICEF and data

UNICEF research reveals that 12% of children aged 5 to 17 and 9% of children under 5 in North Macedonia face multidimensional poverty. Roma children are particularly vulnerable, with one in three children experiencing multidimensional poverty compared to one in nine children in the general population. Geographically, the East and South-East regions have the highest prevalence of multidimensional poverty, followed by the Polog region and the Skopje region.

Challenges for vulnerable children

Children experiencing poverty and exclusion encounter significant barriers to accessing services. Over 21,000 children in the country do not have health insurance, and even insured children from low-income households are not exempt from paying for medicines and medical products. Access to primary education is free, but there are no provisions for free school meals, and extracurricular activities are only partially covered by municipalities, which puts children from poorer families at a disadvantage.

The European Child Guarantee aims to address these issues by ensuring that vulnerable children have access to quality services in a fair and non-discriminatory manner.

2. Social services and social protection

Social services encompass a wide range of support systems targeted at improving the well-being of individuals and communities. These services include *inter alia* healthcare, education, housing and financial assistance. They play a pivotal role in community development and individual well-being, especially for marginalized groups such as the Roma community. Ensuring access to these services is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and attaining the principle of "Leaving No One Left Behind" (LNOB).

2.1. Access of Roma to social services

2.1.1. Review

Social services encompass a wide range of support systems targeted at improving the well-being of individuals and communities. These services include *inter alia* healthcare, education, housing and financial assistance. They play a pivotal role in community development and individual well-being, especially for marginalized groups such as the Roma community. Ensuring access to these services is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and attaining the principle of "Leaving No One Left Behind" (LNOB).

2.1.2. Current state

Despite efforts to enhance access to social services, many Roma still encounter significant obstacles. These obstacles include discrimination, lack of information and bureaucratic obstacles. Consequently, the Roma community often has worse health outcomes, lower educational attainment and higher unemployment rates compared to the general population.

2.1.3. Government initiatives

Several initiatives are aimed at the Roma community. For example, the "Roma Health Mediators" project, implemented by HERA, renders health and social services for youth and marginalized communities. Roma health mediators **work directly on the ground in Roma communities to help families**, especially those in the most difficult position, get the health and social services they deserve. HERA's efforts include comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and provision of national health services to all citizens.

The Ministry of Education and Science² hires Roma educational mediators to provide additional support to students in primary schools in municipalities with a prevalent number of students from the Roma ethnic community. Their role is to help raise awareness of opportunities and access to schools, to have regular meetings with the population and employees of the primary school related to the educational specifics and needs of this vulnerable group, to regularly collaborate with professional associates and teachers to improve students' achievements, as well as to take actions to reduce the dropout of the educational process. Mediators work both with students and teachers, but also cooperate with parents, that is, guardians and local governments, civil society and other institutions and organizations, in order to help children successfully complete primary education.

2.1.4. Best practices from other countries

EU countries

1. **Slovakia:** Community centers for Roma provide integrated social services, including education, healthcare and employment support. These centers are effective in improving access to social services for Roma communities.
2. **Spain:** The Roma Empowerment Project offers targeted social services and support for Roma families, including access to healthcare, education and employment opportunities. This project successfully enhanced the socio-economic conditions of the Roma communities.

Non-EU countries

1. **Albania:** The Roma Social Inclusion Project provides comprehensive social services, including healthcare, education and employment support for Roma communities. The project improved access to basic services and increased the socio-economic status of Roma families.
2. **Turkey:** The Roma Social Assistance Program provides targeted social services, including healthcare, education and financial support to Roma communities. The Program improved access to basic services and reduced poverty among Roma families.

2

[bing.com/ck/a?!&p=ec4637f1ba5ae2c1JmltdHM9MTcyNDg4OTYwMCZpZ3VpZD0zMmY3NGU4YS0xYmUxLTYxOTgtMWJjNC01Y2UwMWE0NzYwZWUmaW5zaWQ9NTE3Ng&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=3&fclid=32f74e8-a-1be1-6198-1bc4-5ce01a4760ee&psq=Roma+educational+mediators&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly9tb24uZ292Lm1rL2NvbnRlbnQvP2lkPTcyNzE&ntb=1](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&p=ec4637f1ba5ae2c1JmltdHM9MTcyNDg4OTYwMCZpZ3VpZD0zMmY3NGU4YS0xYmUxLTYxOTgtMWJjNC01Y2UwMWE0NzYwZWUmaW5zaWQ9NTE3Ng&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=3&fclid=32f74e8-a-1be1-6198-1bc4-5ce01a4760ee&psq=Roma+educational+mediators&u=a1aHR0cHM6Ly9tb24uZ292Lm1rL2NvbnRlbnQvP2lkPTcyNzE&ntb=1)

2.2. Housing

2.2.1. Current state

In North Macedonia, a significant percentage of young adults, including those from the Roma community, live with their parents due to economic dependence. According to Eurostat data, as of 2010, the percentage of young adults (18-34 years) living with their parents remains high. In 2021, more than one in three adults in this age group lived with their parents in 24 of the 29 European countries studied. In North Macedonia, this percentage is alarmingly high, with the country ranking fourth in Europe with a rate of 42.6% in 2020. This situation remains relatively unchanged since 2011.

2.2.2. Government initiatives

The government has implemented several initiatives to address housing issues. The Law on Social Protection from 2009 specifies monetary compensation for housing of materially and housing insecure persons for two risk groups: beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum assistance and persons who until the age of 18 had the status of a child without parents and without parental care, i.e. even after termination of guardianship, and at most up to 26 years of age³.

The method of exercising the right to a housing allowance for beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum assistance is determined by the Council of the municipality, the City of Skopje and the municipalities within the City of Skopje, and for a person who until the age of 18 had the status of a child without parents and without parental care, whereas the form of the request, the necessary documentation and the way of exercising the right to housing allowance are prescribed by the competent minister. The funds for exercising the right to housing allowance are provided from the budget of the municipality, the City of Skopje and the municipalities within the City of Skopje, that is, from the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia. The funds for realizing the right to housing allowance can be provided through donations, loans, etc.

Nonetheless, young people who do not belong to these groups, such as students and marginalized communities (LGBTI, Roma, people with disabilities), do not have options for social or open housing if they decide to leave the parental home.

³ [Right to social housing \(mtsp.gov.mk\)](https://mtsp.gov.mk)

In September 2018, the Government adopted the National Deinstitutionalization Strategy 2018-2027⁴ "Timjanik" and its Action Plan. The Strategy aims at transforming large social institutions into community-based services. This includes allocating people from institutions to small group homes, apartments and houses across the country. These homes admit young people without parental care up to 18 years old. Young carers maintain 24-hour contact with social workers and psychologists, and supervision is carried out by the Institute of Social Activities and the Ministry's Inspection Department.

Other government efforts include:

- **Social buildings for socially vulnerable groups:** The state builds social housing that is allocated to people at socio-economic risk through public calls. In 2021, the Ministry of Transport and Communications announced the construction of over 660 social buildings across the country. In the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Transport and Communications for 2022-2025,⁵ the strategic priorities are defined, including the priority Improvement of Residential - Communal Infrastructure. For the realization of this strategic priority, the following are defined as priority goals: Distribution of social housing for socially vulnerable groups of citizens and construction and reconstruction of water supply and sewage treatment systems, which will lead to an improvement in the quality of life.
- **"Buy a House, Buy an Apartment" Project⁶:** This Project supports the construction or purchase of new houses or apartments through a model where the government covers part of the monthly loan installment for the first five years.
- **"Buy a House for Young people" Project⁷:** Aimed at young people under 35 years of age, this Project offers similar support for acquiring housing, with specific eligibility criteria including income restrictions and no previous housing loans.

2.2.3. Challenges

Despite these initiatives, challenges still remain. Eligibility criteria for housing assistance are limited, excluding many in need. In addition, there are inadequate housing policies for non-beneficiary marginalized groups, such as the Roma community.

⁴ [Strategy deinstitutionalizacija Timjanik 2018-2027.pdf \(mtsp.gov.mk\)](#)

⁵ [Strategic plan 2023-2025 for web.pdf \(mtc.gov.mk\)](#)

⁶ [KKKS Presentation_02 \(finance.gov.mk\)](#)

⁷ [KKKS Presentation_02 \(finance.gov.mk\)](#)

2.2.4. Best practices from other countries

EU countries

1. **Spain:** The Acceder Program in Spain has successfully increased Roma housing through comprehensive support services, including vocational training, employment and individualized support services. The Program's holistic approach has led to significant improvements in the housing stability of Roma participants.
2. **Hungary:** The pilot project for social housing in Hungary provides affordable housing for Roma families through public-private partnerships. This initiative has improved housing conditions and stability for Roma communities.

Non-EU countries

3. **Serbia:** The Program for Housing and Social Integration of Roma in Serbia focuses on providing affordable housing and improving living conditions in Roma settlements. The Program has increased housing stability and has enhanced the living standards of Roma families.
4. **Turkey:** The Housing Assistance Project for Roma in Turkey offers financial support and technical assistance to improve housing. The project has successfully enhanced the quality of housing for Roma families.

2.3. Healthcare

2.3.1. Current state

Roma in North Macedonia have a worse health condition compared to the general population. The life expectancy of the Roma population is 10 years shorter than the national average. Many Roma do not have health insurance, which limits their access to health services. According to the 2023 EU Enlargement Review, the coverage of Roma women with health services during pregnancy is drastically lower than the prescribed standards.

2.3.2. Government initiatives

The government offers various health programs aimed at vulnerable groups, including the Roma. The Roma Health Mediators project, for example, connects Roma communities with health services, providing them with basic health information and support. HERA is the

largest non-governmental organization working in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in North Macedonia. It operates several clinics that provide health and social services to youth and marginalized communities and is a leader in providing comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).

2.3.3. Best practices from other countries

EU countries

1. **Czech Republic:** The "Healthy Roma" Project provides comprehensive health services, including preventive care and health education for Roma communities. The Project contributed to improved health outcomes and increased access to health services for Roma individuals.
2. **Slovakia:** Roma health mediators work within Roma communities to enhance access to health services and provide health education. This initiative has successfully increased the use of health services and has improved health outcomes among the Roma population.

Non-EU countries

1. **Serbia:** The Roma Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Project offers mobile health services and health education for Roma communities. The project increased access to healthcare and improved health outcomes for Roma individuals.
2. **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** The Roma Health Project provides targeted health services, including preventive care and health education for Roma communities. The Project has contributed to improved health outcomes and increased access to health services for Roma individuals.

2.4. Financial services

2.4.1. Review

Financial services play a key role in supporting the socio-economic development of marginalized communities. Nonetheless, the Roma community often faces challenges in accessing financial services due to discrimination and lack of tailored support mechanisms.

2.4.2. Government support

The government secures scholarships and student loans for high school and university students⁸. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Ministry of Finance issued "Home Cards" to support young people. These cards, issued to persons aged 16 to 29 who are actively participating in public formal secondary and higher education, can be used to purchase domestic products and services.

2.4.3. Best practices from other countries

EU countries

1. **Hungary:** The Roma Financial Inclusion Project provides financial literacy training and support for Roma to access financial services. The Project has improved the financial inclusion and economic stability of the Roma communities.
2. **Bulgaria:** The Roma Financial Empowerment Program offers tailored financial services, including micro-loans and savings accounts to Roma individuals. This program increased access to financial services and economic opportunities for Roma communities.

Non-EU countries

1. **Turkey:** The Roma Economic Empowerment Project offers financial literacy training and access to micro-credit for Roma individuals. The project has successfully increased financial inclusion and economic opportunities for Roma communities.
2. **Serbia:** The Roma Financial Literacy and Inclusion Program provides financial education and access to financial services for Roma individuals. The Program has improved financial stability and economic opportunities for Roma communities.

2.5. Employment

⁸ [Search \(mon.gov.mk\)](https://mon.gov.mk)

2.5.1. Current state

The employment rate among the Roma community in North Macedonia is significantly lower compared to the national average. Many Roma are employed in the informal sector, which offers little job security or social protection. Discrimination, low levels of education and insufficient access to employment services further exacerbate the problem of unemployment within the Roma community.

2.5.2. Government initiatives

The Government has developed several initiatives to improve employment opportunities for the Roma:

- **Operational Employment Plan⁹:** This Plan envisages specific measures to increase the employability of Roma, such as vocational education training, employment subsidies and support for self-employment. According to the Program of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia 2022-2024, efforts shall be made to increase the coverage of Roma in active measures for employment and services by introducing a quota of 5% for the coverage of Roma. In the Operational Employment Plan for 2024, as an employment service, it is also stated: ACTIVATION OF UNEMPLOYED ROMA AND OTHER PERSONS AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION. The service will be aimed at all unemployed Roma and other persons at risk of social exclusion. Unemployed persons will have access to a team of mentors, who will be engaged in local communities. Their role will be to motivate them and regularly inform them about employment opportunities or to improve their professional capacities. Through an individual approach to identify the knowledge, qualifications and skills that people have, referrals will be made to the appropriate programs from the Operational Plan for active programs and measures for employment and services on the labor market.
- **Active employment measures¹⁰:** These measures aim to improve the skills and work opportunities of unemployed Roma through training programs, apprenticeships and employment mediation services.

⁹ [OP 2024 so logoa.pdf \(av.gov.mk\)](#)

¹⁰ [Advertisements for active measures \(av.gov.mk\)](#)

2.5.3. Challenges

Despite these initiatives, challenges still remain in increasing the employment rate among Roma. Discrimination in the labor market, limited access to education and lack of awareness of available employment services represent significant obstacles.

2.5.4. Best practices from other countries

EU countries

1. **Spain:** The Acceder Program in Spain has successfully increased Roma employment through targeted vocational training, employment mediation and individualized support. The Program's holistic approach has led to significant improvements in employment rates among Roma participants.
2. **Bulgaria:** The Roma Mediation Integration Program employs Roma mediators to facilitate communication between Roma job seekers and employers. The Program has effectively reduced obstacles to employment and expanded employment opportunities for the Roma.

Non-EU countries

1. **Serbia:** The Roma Employment Promotion Program provides vocational education, employment mediation services and employment subsidies. The Program has successfully increased Roma employment and reduced unemployment rates among Roma communities.
2. **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** The Roma Employment and Empowerment Project offers comprehensive employment support, including vocational training, employment mediation and entrepreneurship support. The Project has significantly enhanced employment outcomes for Roma individuals.

2.6. Access to services for Roma returnees

2.6.1. Overview

Roma returning to North Macedonia face unique challenges in accessing social services. The reintegration process includes obtaining personal documentation, social protection, healthcare, education and employment. The main issue that returnees face is obtaining personal documents, which are necessary to access other services.

2.6.2.Key challenges

- **Personal documentation:** Many returnees do not have personal identification documents, which makes it difficult to access social services. The Program for Reintegration of Returnees aims to resolve this issue, but it lacks clarity and support mechanisms.
- **Housing issue:** Returnees often encounter housing challenges due to lack of institutional support. Many rely on relatives or live in informal settlements, which further complicates the process of obtaining personal documentation.
- **Employment:** Weak economic conditions and lack of institutional support make it difficult for returnees to access the labor market. Roma returnees face higher unemployment rates and are more likely to work in informal sectors.
- **Healthcare:** Roma returnees often lack health insurance and face obstacles in accessing public health services. Limited knowledge of their rights further exacerbates the problem.

2.6.3.Recommendations

1. **Personal documentation:** Establishing a legal aid system to help returnees obtain personal documents and facilitate their reintegration into society.
2. **Housing issue:** Developing support mechanisms for providing temporary housing for returnees and legalizing informal settlements to improve living conditions.
3. **Employment:** Implementing comprehensive employment and support programs to improve access to the labor market for returnees.
4. **Healthcare:** Raising awareness of health rights and providing targeted health services to improve access for Roma returnees.
5. **Education:** Strengthening support for Roma returnees in accessing education and reducing school dropout rates through targeted interventions.

2.6.4.Best practices from other countries

EU countries

1. **Slovakia:** The Roma Empowerment Program provides comprehensive support to Roma returnees, including personal documentation, housing, employment and educational assistance.

2. **Bulgaria:** The Support Program for Reintegration of Roma Returnees renders targeted services to facilitate the reintegration of Roma returnees, including legal aid and housing support.

Non-EU countries

1. **Serbia:** The Project for Reintegration and Empowerment of Roma Returnees provides comprehensive support for Roma returnees, including personal documentation, employment assistance and educational support.
2. **Turkey:** The Roma Returnee Reintegration Program renders targeted services to support the reintegration of Roma returnees, including housing, employment and educational assistance.

2.7. Conclusions on access to social services

Discrimination, lack of information and bureaucratic obstacles make it significantly more difficult for the Roma community to access social services. Increasing outreach efforts, reducing bureaucratic barriers and providing targeted information are crucial steps for service delivery improvements. By addressing these challenges, North Macedonia can make significant progress towards achieving Goal 10 (Reducing Inequalities), thus ensuring that social services are accessible to all, regardless of background.

2.7.1. Housing challenges / housing

Housing remains a critical issue for the Roma community, with current policies excluding many of those in housing need, particularly marginalized groups. In order to solve this problem, it is necessary to expand the eligibility criteria for housing assistance and develop inclusive housing policies. Provision of support for the legalization of informal settlements is also of key importance. These measures will help achieve Goal 1 (No poverty) and Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), thus ensuring that all Roma have access to safe and adequate housing.

2.7.2. Improving healthcare

The Roma community faces poor health outcomes, lack of health insurance and high rates of untreated health problems. Developing targeted health programs, increasing health literacy and improving access through mobile clinics and health mediators are deemed key

interventions. These activities are in conformity with Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), promoting better health outcomes for the Roma community and ensuring that they receive the healthcare they need.

2.7.3. Employment opportunities

High rates of unemployment, employment in the informal sector, discrimination and low levels of education are significant obstacles to the employment of the Roma community. The implementation of customized employment programs, vocational education and employment subsidies, as well as reduction of discrimination in the labor market are essential steps to expand employment opportunities. These measures contribute to Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), thus encouraging economic inclusion and stability for the Roma.

2.7.4. Access to education

Low enrollment and completion rates, financial constraints and the remoteness of schools hinder the educational achievements of Roma children. Providing financial support for education, facilitating access to schools and improving inclusive educational practices are necessary steps to ensure that all Roma children have the opportunity to receive quality education. This is in conformity with Goal 4 (Quality Education), thus ensuring that each and every child can achieve their full potential.

2.7.5. Financial services

Financial services are often not adapted to the needs of the Roma community, and there are significant bureaucratic hurdles. Adapting financial support mechanisms, implementing financial literacy programs and improving the availability of financial services are key interventions. These steps support Goal 1 (No Poverty) and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), thus promoting financial inclusion and economic stability for the Roma.

2.7.6. Personal documentation

Many Roma do not have the necessary identification documents, which hinders their access to other services. Establishing support systems for obtaining personal documents, providing legal assistance and simplifying documentation processes are crucial steps to resolve this issue. Such measures are in conformity with Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), ensuring that all Roma can exercise their rights as citizens of North Macedonia.

2.7.7. General effect

By addressing these gaps through targeted recommendations, North Macedonia can significantly improve the socio-economic conditions of the Roma community. The successful implementation of these measures requires cooperation among government agencies, civil society organizations and international partners. Regular monitoring and evaluation shall be key to ensure the effectiveness of these initiatives and to make the necessary adjustments.

Such a comprehensive approach not only aims to improve the position of the Roma community, but also to contribute to the overall development and stability of North Macedonia. By ensuring that no one is left out, North Macedonia can progress towards a more inclusive society in which all citizens shall have equal access to opportunities and resources. This endeavor supports the global commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals and emphasizes the importance of social justice and equality for all.

3. Rights to financial assistance from social and child protection

According to the Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022-2030, 21.9% of the Roma population live in precarious conditions. The poverty rate, by type of household, is the highest (45.3%) in a household of two adults with three or more dependent children. This is followed by a single parent with dependent children (42.8%) and households with dependent children (26.4%). Inactive and unemployed persons are among the most vulnerable categories and their poverty rate is the highest (33.9% and 33.2% respectively), and the lowest among pensioners (2.2%).

Roma children have almost three times the incidence of poverty compared to the members of other ethnic communities. The incidence of poverty is 40% among Roma children, 12.9% among Albanians and 5.1% among Macedonians, while it decreases to 13.3% among children of other ethnicities. Roma children have nine times the incidence of poverty in education and more than four times the incidence of poverty in the domains of care and material condition.

With the novelties in the Law on Social Protection during 2019, around 30,000 households were supported to get out of poverty. The legal amendments introduced a minimum guaranteed income and increased the amount of social assistance by 300 percent. This amendment actually introduced a family package that includes a guaranteed minimum income, child and education allowance and energy allowance.

In the text that follows, guidelines are briefly given for opportunities to use financial assistance in accordance with the Law on Social Protection, the Law on Protection of Children and the Law on Social Security of the Elderly.

3.1. Law on Social Protection¹¹

The Law on Social Protection defines social protection as a system of measures, activities and policies aimed at preventing and overcoming the basic social risks to which the

¹¹Law on Social Protection (104/19), Law on Amendments and Modifications to the Law on Social Protection (146/19)), Law on Amendments and Modifications to the Law on Social Protection (275/19), Law on Amendments and Modifications to the Law on social Protection (311/20), Law on Amendments to the Law on Social Protection (163/21), Law on Amendments and Modifications to the Law on Social Protection (294/21), Law on Amendments and Modifications to the Law on Social Protection (99/22), Law on Amendments and Modifications to the Law on Social Protection (236/22), Law on Amendments to the Law on Social Protection (65/23)

citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia are exposed. A social risk is a condition that may impair or prevent normal functioning due to old age, illness, disability, injury or death. In general, the measures undertaken to prevent or reduce these risks are divided into: social prevention, social services and financial assistance from social protection.

Social protection services are divided into six groups: 1) information and referral, 2) professional help and support, 3) counseling, 4) home services, 5) community services and 6) non-family protection services. The bearers of social services are the Government through the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Municipalities that ensure the performance of social protection activities through the establishment of institutions for social protection or transferring the performance of social protection activities to associations, other legal and natural persons. The Republic and local self-government units, when transferring the performance of work to other legal and natural persons, regulate their mutual rights and obligations with an administrative agreement.

Municipalities develop local measures and activities for social protection, namely: ensure the implementation of social protection in accordance with legal regulations; determine and finance other rights and social services in the field of social protection on a larger scale; establish public institutions for social protection; provide financial means for performing social protection work to associations, other legal and natural persons and conclude administrative contracts; and perform other tasks related to social protection.

Municipalities, as the main bearers of social protection, are legally obliged to adopt annual programs in the field of social protection, in accordance with the national program for social protection, where the social services that are to be delivered to the local population are defined. Municipalities have an important role in the strategic planning and provision of services through the Municipal Councils for Social protection and the Councils for Social Protection of the Planning Regions which have already been established in most of the municipalities and planning regions as multi-sectoral bodies at a local and regional level.

The new role of municipalities in social protection implies detailed mapping of social problems and vulnerable groups within the municipality, analysis of the capacities and available social services in the municipality, as well as determination of specific goals for the development of social services. In order to ensure social protection from the municipalities, the City of Skopje and the municipalities within the City of Skopje (hereinafter: the municipality), the following bodies are established: a) **Municipal Council for Social Protection** and b) **Council for Social Protection of the Planning Region**.

A) The Municipal Council for Social Protection is established by decision of the Council of the Municipality, on the proposal of the mayor. The Municipal Council for Social Protection is comprised of representatives of the municipal administration, the Center for Social Work, service providers, associations, religious communities and other legal entities and natural persons that perform social protection activities, institutions in the fields of education, healthcare, employment, the police and/or Public Prosecutor's Office on the territory of the municipality.

The Municipal Council for Social Protection drafts a social plan for the area of the municipality. The social plan covers mapping of social problems and vulnerable groups in the municipality, analysis of the capacities and available social services, as well as the specific needs for the development of social services within the municipality. These mandatory activities for strategic planning are part of the process of drafting the social plan of the municipality, which shall be used as a foundation for the development of the Annual Program for Social Protection, which is adopted by the Council of the Municipality .

B) The Council for Social Protection of the Planning Region is established in each planning region for the purpose of planning and developing the network of social services of the region. The Council for Social Protection of the Planning Region is comprised of the mayor and the director of the Center for Social Work from the municipality of the area of the planning region, with a mandate of four years. The Council for Social Protection of the Planning Region is constituted on the initiative of the municipality with the largest number of inhabitants in the region. The members of the Council for Social Protection of the Planning Region elect the President of the Council for Social Protection of the Planning Region from among the mayors, who is responsible for convening the sessions of the Council on a rotating basis for a period of one year. The Council for Social Protection of the Planning Region at least once annually is to submit a proposal to the Ministry on the need to develop social services in the planning region, the type and method of establishing the services.

The key performers of the social protection activity are the institutions for social protection¹² (see Annex 2). The network of authorized providers of social services established by the Ministry consists of public institutions for social protection and other authorized providers of social services (associations, other domestic and foreign legal entities) with which the Ministry, i.e. the municipalities, have entered into an administrative agreement for the provision of social services , as well as a natural person who received a permit to perform social protection work as a professional activity and entered into an agreement with the Center for Social Work. Associations, other legal and natural persons, which are not in the network of authorized service providers, may provide social services on condition that they have received a permit to perform social protection work. The Law on Social Protection

¹²Annex 2 – Description of Social Protection Institutions

foresees an obligation for service providers to acquire a work permit (license) for performing social protection activities, that is, meeting the prescribed norms and standards for the purpose of providing social services.

The Law on Social Protection stipulates the rights, services and measures of social protection. The right to financial assistance from social protection is realized by submitting a request to the Center for Social Work, competent according to the applicant's place of residence, if the conditions provided for in the Law on Social Protection and the corresponding regulations have been met.

- **Guaranteed minimum assistance** A household that is materially insecure and does not own property and property rights from which it can support itself has the right to guaranteed minimum assistance.
- **Disability allowance** is provided to encourage social inclusion and equal opportunities to a person who is:
 - with a severe or profound intellectual disability,
 - with the most severe physical disability,
 - a completely blind person and
 - a completely deaf person.Compensation due to disability can be obtained by a person who has reached the age of 26, and it is used regardless of the age of the beneficiary.
- **Monetary compensation for help and care from another person.** A person over 26 years of age, with a moderate, severe or profound intellectual disability, a person with a more severe and severe physical disability, a person who is completely blind, as well as a person with permanent changes in their health condition, has the right to compensation for assistance and care from another person.
- **Salary compensation for part-time work due to care of a child with a disability and the most severe forms of chronic diseases** The parent submits the request for exercising the right to compensation for part-time work due to the care of a child with a disability and the most severe forms of chronic diseases, determined by the Law on Labor Relations, to the Center for Social Work in the area where the applicant resides.
- **Housing allowance** The right to housing allowance is provided to materially and housing insecure persons. A financially insecure person e:
 - a beneficiary of guaranteed minimum aid, and

- a person who until the age of 18 had the status of a child without parents and without parental care, that is, even after termination of guardianship, and at most until the age of 26.

- **Permanent compensation** The right to permanent compensation is available to:

- ✓ a caregiver who has cared for a person in his family for at least fifteen years, after reaching 62 years of age for a woman, i.e. 64 years of age for a man, who is unemployed and does not use the right to a pension on any basis and
- ✓ a parent who took care of a child with a disability and a parent who took care of the child until he/she was 26 years old, without using the service of non-family social protection, who is unemployed and who does not use the right to a pension.

- **One-off financial aid** One-off financial aid or aid in kind is granted to a person or a family who found themselves in a state of social risk, as well as to a person and family due to a natural disaster or epidemic and prolonged treatment in a health facility of a family member. Aid in kind implies provision of clothing, food and other resources that the Center for Social Works deems necessary for the minimum subsistence of the citizen and the family.

- **Right to healthcare** Beneficiaries have the right to healthcare. Namely,:

- ✓ a beneficiary of guaranteed minimum assistance who is a person incapable of work,
- ✓ a disability benefit beneficiary,
- ✓ a beneficiary of compensation for assistance and care from another person,
- ✓ a person with the status of a declared refugee and a person under subsidiary protection,
- ✓ beneficiaries of non-family protection,
- ✓ a person-victim of domestic violence for whom a measure of protection has been imposed in accordance with the regulations in the field of prevention, prevention and protection from domestic violence, and
- ✓ a person-victim of human trafficking.

Beneficiaries exercise the right to healthcare only if they cannot obtain insurance on another basis.

3.2. Law on Protection of Children¹³

According to the Law on Protection of Children, the following monetary rights for the protection of children are regulated (Article 6):

- child allowance;
- special supplement;
- one-off financial assistance for a newborn;
- parental allowance for a child;
- allowance for education;
- co-pay

A larger volume of rights can be granted by the municipality, the municipality within the City of Skopje and the City of Skopje if it provides funds from its own sources. The method and more detailed criteria for exercising the rights to protect children are prescribed by the Council of the municipality, the Council of the municipality within the City of Skopje and the Council of the City of Skopje.

3.3. Law on Social Security of the Elderly¹⁴

This law regulates the social security for the elderly, the conditions and the procedure for realizing and financing the right to social security for the elderly. Social security for the elderly is provided in accordance with the principles of social justice, humanity and solidarity.

A person over the age of 65 is entitled to social security for the elderly under the terms and conditions set out by this law. Provided that the petitioner for exercising the right to social security for the elderly has a spouse or a person with whom he lives in an extramarital union who has reached the age of 65, the right can only be exercised by one of the persons.

The right to social security for the elderly can be exercised if the person:

¹³<https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/%D0%97%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%20%D0%B7%D0%B0%20%D0%B7%D0%B0%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B0%20%D0%BD%D0%B0%20%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%86%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0%20%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%20%D1%84%D0%B5%D0%B2%D1%80%D1%83%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B8%202021-converted.pdf>

¹⁴ [Law on Social Security of the Elderly \(104/19\)](#)

1. has the citizenship of the Republic of North Macedonia;
2. has had a permanent place of residence in the Republic of North Macedonia for the past 15 years prior to submitting the request;
3. does not own property and property rights from which he can support himself/herself;
4. is not a beneficiary of a pension from the Republic of North Macedonia or a type of benefit based on old age, disability or experience from another country and the Republic of North Macedonia (Official Gazette, no. 104 of 23/5/2019)
5. has not generated income on any grounds in the past three months prior to submitting the request.

These terms and conditions also apply to his spouse or the person with whom he lives in an extramarital union.

3.4. Other laws related to improving access to social services and social protection of Roma at the local level

Roma women have a specific position in society and are victims of daily intersectional discrimination both because they are women and because they are Roma. A large number of Roma women do not have the same opportunities to make their own decisions on issues related to marital status, education, career, employment and other issues. These decisions are usually made by their family members or by the husband.

This is precisely why underage marriages and pregnancies are most common among the Roma. The Roma in our society have the lowest percentage of education, the highest percentage of poverty and unemployment and have large families. In such cases, the Roma woman is completely dependent on the man, starting with economic dependence, but also dependence in terms of housing and decision-making.

All these facts contribute to increased family and gender-based violence against Roma women, which in most cases is kept silent¹⁵.

The reasons why violence is kept silent differ and the most prevalent are the feeling of fear of the aggressor, shame, but also lack of information or unawareness on the part of the victim.

¹⁵ [5364 file2 research-on-the-access-and-functionality-of-the-system-for-protection-of-romani-women-victims-of-domestic-violence-on-the-territory-of-skopje-macedonian.pdf \(errc.org\)](#)

The institutional discrimination of the Roma women significantly affects the silencing of violence because of mistrust in the system and in the authorities.

3.4.1. Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence¹⁶

The Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence regulates the actions of the institutions with due care when taking measures for the prevention of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence, the actions of the institutions for the protection of women from gender-based violence and domestic violence, the mutual coordination of institutions and organizations, services for the protection of victims and the collection of data on gender-based violence against women and domestic violence.

In conformity with the system of social protection, victims of domestic violence and gender-based violence have the right and the opportunity to use different social services regulated by the Law on Social Protection (cash assistance, healthcare, temporary residence, etc.)

Protocol for mutual cooperation of competent entities for taking measures for prevention and protection from violence against women and domestic violence (Microsoft Word - Protocol FINAL USOGLASEN (mtsp.gov.mk))

The Protocol ensures a systematic and coordinated approach in terms of the actions of all competent entities working on protection, assistance and support of women, victims of violence and domestic violence.

The competent entities engaged in the mutual cooperation for the prevention and protection of women, victims of violence and domestic violence are all state administration bodies, courts, public prosecutor's office, local self-government units and legal entities that exercise public powers established by law.

The Protocol regulates the mutual cooperation for the prevention and protection of women victims of violence and domestic violence on the part of the competent entities for action **in the field of social protection**, police work, education, healthcare, criminal prosecution, probation work and the support services that citizens' associations provide.

¹⁶ [DECISION ON DETERMINING THE HIGHEST PRICES OF CERTAIN OIL DERIVATIVES DETERMINED ACCORDING TO THE METHODOLOGY \(mtsp.gov.mk\)](#)

3.4.2. Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination¹⁷

The Law on Protection against Discrimination regulates the prevention and prohibition of discrimination, the forms and types of discrimination, the procedures for protection against discrimination, as well as the composition and work of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination. The law enables equal protection and a dignified life for all citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia, including the basics of sexual orientation and gender identity. The law was adopted on October 27, 2020.

The Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination ¹⁸is **an autonomous and independent body** that works in accordance with the competences set out in the Law on Prevention and Protection from Discrimination.

A complaint¹⁹about discrimination may be lodged to the Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination electronically, by mail or in person at the premises of the Commission.

4. Recommendations for improving access to social services

In this chapter, recommendations for improving access to social services will be presented with a particular focus on the following aspects:

- The analysis of the Roma's access to social services, where the current situation and the obstacles faced by the Roma in obtaining these services are considered.
- The legal possibilities for realizing the rights to financial assistance from social and child protection, which include the existing legal frameworks and their implementation at the local level.
- The opportunities envisaged by other laws related to improving access to social services and social protection of the Roma at the local level in order to encourage a more inclusive environment.
- The results of the questionnaires disseminated to the municipalities for access to social services in accordance with Article 22 of the Law on Local Self-Government (Annex 3), where the degree of availability and provision of these services at the local level is evaluated.

¹⁷[Law on prevention and protection against discrimination.pdf \(mtsp.gov.mk\)](#)

¹⁸ [About KSZD - KSZD](#)

¹⁹ [Procedure for reporting discrimination - KSZD](#)

- The results of the questionnaires disseminated to non-governmental organizations for access to social services for the Roma (Annex 4), where their opinions and experiences in the provision and use of social services for this target group are analyzed.

These recommendations aim to offer specific guidelines and measures for improving access to social services and enhancing the living conditions of the Roma, by strengthening local and national support and integration mechanisms.

In order to provide quality social services tailored to the local needs, the involvement of both beneficiaries and service providers in the process of designing and delivering social protection services is crucial. The processes should be interactive despite the fact that all parties engaged in the processes have different expectations, obligations and rights, and the processes can be hindered by various problems such as a lack of material, financial and human resources, inadequate organizational solutions or non-compliance with legal provisions. For the purpose of ensuring successful integration and support of the Roma community in North Macedonia, a comprehensive set of measures and activities is recommended. These recommendations are designed to address the specific needs of the Roma community, utilizing the resources and capacities of the respective municipalities and encouraging cooperation with international donors and organizations.

1. Allocation of annual municipal budgets for Roma integration

- **Action:** Municipalities are to allocate annual budgets dedicated to supporting services for the Roma community. These budgets should cover fees, administrative support and legal assistance, especially for those dealing with bureaucratic processes such as obtaining documents, enrolling in education or accessing health services.

2. Establishment of special municipal contact points

- **Action:** Creation of specialized positions within the municipalities to serve as contact points for the Roma community. These contact points should provide comprehensive information on available rights, services and opportunities. They should also act as intermediaries between the Roma community and the local authorities to ensure that their specific needs are met.

3. Increasing the financial resources of the municipalities for services to the Roma

- **Action:** Municipalities should increase the financial resources specifically intended for Roma integration projects. This includes funding for education, health, housing and employment support services to ensure that all aspects of the needs of the Roma community are fully covered.

4. Developing and maintaining a database for NGOs and service providers

- **Action:** Creation and maintenance of a detailed database of recognized NGOs, civil society organizations and service providers that render services to the Roma community. This database should be accessible to the municipalities, service providers and the Roma community itself, thus ensuring that all stakeholders are informed of available resources and reliable service providers.

5. Implementing a digital platform for monitoring services

- **Action:** Developing a digital platform for the purpose of monitoring the delivery and effectiveness of services provided to the Roma community. This platform should enable coordination between local institutions, NGOs and government agencies, ensuring transparency and accountability in service delivery.

6. Promotion and expansion of free legal services

- **Action:** Raising the awareness and availability of free legal services among the Roma community. Municipalities should actively promote these services and cooperate with legal aid organizations to ensure that Roma individuals receive the necessary legal support, especially in cases of discrimination, housing disputes or access to social services.

7. Strengthening the advocacy and representation of the Roma community

- **Action:** Ensuring that Roma individuals can be represented by authorized representatives approved by the municipalities. These advocates should be well aware of the rights and needs of the Roma community and should provide representation in legal, social and administrative matters so as to ensure fair treatment and access to services.

8. Creation of municipal roles for monitoring services

- **Action:** Establishing special roles within the municipalities for monitoring the needs of the Roma community and monitoring the progress in the delivery of services. These roles should include regular engagement with members of the Roma community to identify gaps in service delivery and to verify that services are tailored to their evolving needs.

9. Developing digital tools for coordination between local institutions and NGOs

- **Action:** Investing in the development of digital tools that enable better coordination between local institutions and NGOs. These tools should enable real-time information sharing, service monitoring and case management to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery for the Roma community.

10. Establishing models for vertical integration between local and national institutions

- **Action:** Creating models for vertical integration of services, linking local and national institutions to ensure a cohesive approach to supporting the Roma community. This integration should focus on policy alignment, resource sharing and coordinated service delivery at different levels of government.

11. Developing and distributing multilingual promotional materials

- **Action:** Production and dissemination of promotional materials in Macedonian and Romani language to heighten awareness of available services for the Romani community. These materials should be easily understandable and should be distributed through various channels, including communities, schools and health facilities.

12. Strengthening of education and employment support programs

- **Action:** Strengthening the existing programs to support education and employment, specifically adapted to the needs of the Roma community. This includes expanding access to vocational training, scholarships and employment services, as well as providing additional support for children and young people at risk of dropping out of school.

13. Support of cultural and joint integrative initiatives

- **Action:** Promoting and supporting initiatives that encourage cultural integration and common cohesion. This includes organizing cultural events, educational programs and joint dialogues that celebrate Roma culture and encourage positive interactions between the Roma community and the wider population.

14. Encouraging participation in policy-making processes

- **Action:** Ensuring that members of the Roma community have a voice in policy-making processes at the local and national level. This can be achieved through the inclusion of Roma representatives in municipal councils, advisory bodies and other decision-making bodies that affect their lives.

15. Improving the monitoring and evaluation of integration efforts

- **Action:** Regular monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of integration efforts and social services provided to the Roma community. This should include gathering feedback from members of the Roma community and using such data to continuously improve service delivery and policy implementation.

Annex 1: Comprehensive overview of public services and access for the Roma community

1. Personal documentation services

Obtaining personal identification documents is crucial for Roma to access other social services and fully integrate into society.

Service	Institution/Authority	Response time	Necessary documents	Recommended price	Relevant SDGs
Request for ID	Ministry of Interior (MIA) <u>Ministry of Interior electronic scheduling (mvr.gov.mk)</u>	10 working days	Completed application, payment slip, old ID card or valid passport	300 MKD	SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
Passport application	Ministry of Interior (MIA) <u>Ministry of Interior electronic scheduling (mvr.gov.mk)</u>	15 working days	Completed application, payment slip, old passport, valid ID card	300 MKD	SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
Registration in the Birth Registry (for children born abroad)	Office for Management of Registries of Births, Marriages and Deaths <u>(Services – OFFICE FOR MANAGEMENT OF REGISTRIES OF BIRTHS, MARRIAGES AND DEATHS (uvmk.gov.mk))</u>	10 working days	Request for Birth Certificate, personal documents of the parents, Marriage Certificate, notary deed of joint residence, payment slips	600 MKD	SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
Request for marriage	Office for Management of	10 working	Request for Marriage	300 MKD	SDG 16: Peace,

certificate	Registries of Births, Marriages and Deaths (Services – OFFICE FOR MANAGEMENT OF REGISTRIES OF BIRTHS, MARRIAGES AND DEATHS (uvmk.gov.mk))	days	Certificate, personal documents of parents		Justice and Strong Institutions
Citizenship application	Ministry of Interior (MIA) <u>Ministry of Interior electronic scheduling</u> (mvr.gov.mk)	5 days	Completed application, payment slip, valid passport or ID card	300 MKD	SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
Transaction Account and Debit Card Request	Bank	1 day for account, 7 days for card	Request, ID card	300 MKD	GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

2. Social protection services

Roma have the right to various social protection services, like the other citizens of North Macedonia. The following table describes the key services available:

Service	Institution/Authority	Response time	Necessary documents	Recommended price	Relevant SDGs
One-off financial assistance	Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth	15 days	Birth/Marriage Certificate, Death Certificate (if applicable), Pay slip, Pension Document, Unemployment Document, Income Certificate	600 MKD	GOAL 1: No Poverty
GMA Renewal	Ministry of Social Policy, Demography	30 days	Birth Certificate, medical	600 MKD	GOAL 1: No Poverty

request	and Youth		documents, Marriage Certificate (if applicable), ID card, transaction account		
Appeal of rejected GMA claims	Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth	30 days	Completed appeal request	600 MKD	GOAL 1: No Poverty
Application for parental allowance (third child)	Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth	30 days	Birth Certificate, Marriage Certificate (if applicable), ID card, transaction account	600 MKD	GOAL 1: No Poverty, GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-Being

3. Health services

Access to healthcare is a fundamental right for Roma, including returnees, who need to navigate through the system to ensure coverage and care.

Service	Institution/Authority	Response time	Necessary documents	Recommended price	Relevant SDGs
Applying for health insurance	Health Insurance Fund	1 day	Birth Certificate, unemployment document, ID card	500 MKD	GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-Being
Registration with family doctor	Family doctor	1 day	Health card, ID card	300 MKD	GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-Being
Dental services	General dentist	1 day	Health card, ID card	300 MKD	GOAL 3: Good Health

					and Well-Being
Vaccination services	Family doctor	1 day	Health card, ID card	300 MKD	GOAL 3: Good health and well-being

4. Educational services

Education is compulsory and free in North Macedonia, and Roma who return to the country should ensure that their children are enrolled in the appropriate institutions.

Service	Institution/ Authority	Response time	Necessary documents	Recommended price	Relevant SDGs
Kindergarten Enrollment Request	Municipality	15 days	Child's Birth Certificate, parent's ID card, employment/unemployment certificate, immunization record	900 MKD	GOAL 4: Quality Education
Enrollment in primary/secondary education	Primary /Secondary Schools	-	Birth Certificate, parent's ID card, immunization records, academic records (for high school)	900 MKD	GOAL 4: Quality Education
Request for continuing education (primary/secondary)	Municipality/ Ministry of Education	7 days	Application, Birth Certificate, previous school records, fee	900 MKD	GOAL 4: Quality Education
Request for notification of certificates	Ministry of Education	60 days	Application, Birth Certificate, foreign school certificates (translated), notarized documents, fee	1,500 MKD	GOAL 4: Quality Education

5. Employment services

Employment is key to reintegration, and the Employment Agency of North Macedonia renders various services to help Roma enter the labor market.

Service	Institution/Authority	Response time	Necessary documents	Recommended price	Relevant SDGs
Training information	Employment Agency	It depends on the program	Active job seeker status, ID card	According to the UNDP Price List for mentors	GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
Request to register as an active job seeker	Employment Agency	1 day	Identity card	According to the UNDP Price List for mentors	GOAL 8: Decent work and economic growth
Appeal for rejected registration as an active job seeker	Employment Agency	30 days	Completed appeal request, ID card	600 MKD	GOAL 8: Decent work and economic growth

6. Housing services

Housing remains a critical issue for many Roma, including returnees, who often live in informal settlements or rely on family and friends.

Service	Institution/Authority	Response time	Necessary documents	Recommended price	Relevant SDGs
Request for property legalization	Municipality	Minimum 15 days	Technical documents, ID card, fee	2,500 MKD	SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
Request for inheritance procedure	Court	Starts within 5 days	Birth Certificate, Death Certificate, property documents, fee	2,500 MKD	SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Request for a title deed	Cadastre	1 day	Request for Property Certificate, identity card	600 MKD	SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
Address registration request	Ministry of Interior (MIA)	7 days	Completed application, ID card, fee	300 MKD	SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

7. Specialized social services

In addition to general services, there are also specialized services focused on violence prevention, foster care, mediation and other support for the Roma community.

Service	Institution/Authority	Response time	Necessary documents	Relevant SDGs
Prevention and reporting of violence	Ministry of Interior (MIA)	Immediately	ID card, any of proof of violence	GOAL 5: Gender Equality
Application for reporting of domestic violence	Ministry of Interior (MIA)	Immediately	Smartphone, app access	GOAL 5: Gender Equality
Access to a shelter for victims of violence	National Network for the Prevention of Violence against Women	Immediately	Identity card, referral from social services or the police	GOAL 5: Gender Equality
Care services for Roma children	Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth	Varies by case	Foster care application, ID, home assessment documents	GOAL 10: Reducing Inequalities
Roma health mediators	Ministry of Health, supported by NGOs (eg. HERA)	Continuously	Identity card, health card if available	GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-Being
Educational mediators for Roma children	Ministry of Education	Continuously	School enrollment documents	GOAL 4: Quality Education
Roma cultural mediators	Ministry of Culture, supported by NGOs	Continuously	No, a community-based service	GOAL 10: Reducing Inequalities

Subsidized employment for vulnerable groups	Employment Agency	Varies by application	Identity card, active job seeker status	GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
Legal aid for Roma returnees	Free legal aid (Ministry of Justice)	Varies by case	Identity card, relevant legal documents	SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Annex 2

Institutions for social protection

The key implementers of the social protection activity are the social protection institutions. The Law on Social Protection regulates the manner and procedure for establishment, operation and cessation of operation of social protection institutions as an organizational form for performing social protection work. The provisions of the Law on Institutions have subsidiary application and are applied unless otherwise regulated by the Law on Social Protection.

Institutions for social protection are established as: a center for social work, an institution for non-family social protection and a center for social services.

Center for Social Work

The Center for Social Work is a public institution for social protection with public powers for the purpose of performing social protection works for the territory of one or more municipalities. A center for social work can be established if it has the following educational profiles: a social worker, a psychologist, a pedagogue and a lawyer who have a valid work license. The Center for Social Work performs the following tasks: decides on the rights of social protection, child protection, international and temporary protection, family-legal relations, social security of the elderly, acts on the matters of its activity set out in the criminal law regulations and performs other matters stipulated by law.

Institutions for Social Protection

The Law on Social Protection makes a clear distinction between the organizational forms for providing social services in the home and in the community, on the one hand, and social services for non-family protection, on the other hand. It entailed various changes in the regulation regarding the establishment and organization of the delivery of services according to their type and nature. The term "center for social services" was introduced as an organizational form for the provision of day or temporary residence services in the home and in the community.

The Center for Social Services that provides daily services is organized as: a center for social services in the home, a daycare center, a rehabilitation center, a resocialization center and a counseling center. The center for social services that provides temporary services is organized as: a temporary residence center, a family care respite center and a halfway house.

The Center for Social Services can provide integrated services in the home and in the community, depending on the category of users and the standards and norms for providing the service. The Center for Social Services carries out work ranging from social protection to the provision of social services in accordance with the type, description and beneficiaries of the social service in the home or community, as set out in the Law on Social Protection.

Non-family care services are provided by non-family social care institutions that are established as: foster homes; homes for assistance and care; educational institutions; treatment and rehabilitation facilities; group homes; and institutions for the reception of asylum seekers. The treatment and rehabilitation facility can be organized as a therapeutic community. A counseling center can be established within the institution, as a separate organizational unit.

Centers for Social Services and institutions for non-family protection are established as public and private institutions for social protection.

Annex 3

Questions for municipalities as regards social services in accordance with Article 22 of the Law on Local Self-Government

1. What kind of social services do you have in the social protection programs or in some other program (eg. program for equal opportunities, for child protection, etc.) for the years 2023 and 2024?

2. Do you have special programs for Roma in the field of social services?

3. Do you have data from 2023 until June 2024 as to how many Roma resorted to the municipality for some kind of social service? How many people received some kind of assistance, and how many were rejected and why?
(According to the Law on Equal Opportunities - Article 18, the data should be separated by gender and preferably by age groups).

4. Does the municipality have a practice of exchanging data with the Centers for Social Work regarding the provision of social services for Roma?

Annex 4

Questionnaire on access to social services for the Roma

Organization:.....

1. In which region/municipality do you work?
2. How many years have you been working with issues related to Roma integration?
3. Which group do you most often work with or which group most often turns to you for help (please describe: by gender, age, education, work status, size of households, etc.)

(1) Questions about accessing social services:

1. Current access to social services:

- 1.1. Do you know which social services are available for your target group in your area?

(Yes/No)

- 1.2. Do you know what services they can apply for in the municipality, in the Center for Social Affairs or in other NGOs?

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1.3. Have you helped your target group to access certain social services within the past 3 years and which ones? (Multiple choices: healthcare, education, housing, employment, social protection, etc.)

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1.4. How would you rate your experience with these services? (Scale of 1-5)

1.5. How often does your target group use social services?

(Often, occasionally, rarely, never)

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2. Barriers to access:

2.1. What challenges do you and your target group face in accessing social services?

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2.2. Have you ever been denied access to a social service? If so, why?

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2.3 Are there any specific factors (eg. discrimination, lack of information) that hinder your target group's access to social services?

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3. Suggestions for improvement:

3.1. What improvements do you propose for better access to social services and to centers for social work and to the municipality?

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3.2. Are there any specific services that you feel are missing or inappropriate for your target group?

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4. Feedback on existing practices:

4.1. What aspects of the current system do you find beneficial?

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4.2 Can you share any positive experiences with social services?

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4.3. How do you think these positive aspects can be expanded or improved?

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ROMACTED phase II “Promoting good governance and empowerment of Roma at local level” is a Joint Programme between the European Union (DG NEAR) and the Council of Europe.

ROMACTED Programme phase II is implemented in the period January 2021 and December 2024.

The Programme is designed to build up political will and sustained policy engagement of local authorities, to enhance democratic local governance and to build up capacity and stimulate the empowerment of local Roma communities to contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of plans and projects concerning them through the following outcomes:

1. empowering Roma community - on the individual level (assisting people to practice their basic rights and to expand their capacity and skills), as well as on the community level (assisting people to get organised to voice out their interests around community problem solving, and;
2. improving and expanding the institutions’ commitment, capacities, knowledge and skills in working for Roma inclusion, putting in practice the concepts of good governance;
3. contributing to preparation of the local development actions that aim to improve the quality of life for Roma and to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma, including in relation to mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

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