



DECADE OF  
ROMA  
INCLUSION  
2005-2015

## PROGRESS REPORT 2013

### BASIC INFORMATION ON THE SITUATION OF THE ROMA MINORITY

A new estimate for the total number of Roma population in Macedonia is not prepared in 2011. According to the last census, in Republic of Macedonia live 53,847 Roma, which amounts to 2.66% of the total population in Macedonia.

Overall level of poverty rate in Republic of Macedonia is approximately 30%. Roma are particularly affected by poverty and social exclusion because of a range of factors such as lack of education and unemployment, consequently the rate of poverty among Roma is approximately three times higher than at the national level and is approximately 88%.

### 1. INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND FUNDING FOR ROMA INCLUSION

#### **Activities carried out by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy within the Strategy for the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia and the Decade of Roma Inclusion**

#### **Roma Information Centers (RICs) within the local municipalities in 12 cities**

In the period from January to December of 2013, a total of 4,883 persons contacted the 12 Roma Information Centers (337 persons contacted the RIC in Shtip, 643 persons contacted the RIC in Gostivar, 358 persons contacted the RIC in Delchevo, 535 persons contacted the RIC in Prilep, 220 persons contacted the RIC in Kochani, 422 persons contacted the RIC in Kumanovo, 250 persons contacted the RIC in Bitola, 699 persons contacted the RIC within the NGO Sumnal in the settlement of Topaana, 340 persons contacted the RIC in Tetovo, 684 persons contacted the RIC in Vinica, 185 persons contacted the RIC in Berovo, and 170 persons contacted the RIC in Shuto Orizari). These persons asked for support from the Roma Information Centers for various needs and services, most of which referred to obtaining information, logistic support, advice on the entitlement to certain rights and obligations related to education, housing, employment, healthcare, social protection and obtaining personal identification documents.

In the last week of April of 2013, a training event on issues related to human trafficking was conducted in Skopje, and was attended by the Roma Information Centers and Roma non-governmental organizations that work on such issues. The training was supported and conducted by the OSCE Office in Macedonia.

In the period from 23–24 December 2013, training intended for the Roma Information Centers with the purpose of preparing the Operational Plan for the operating of the RICs for the year of 2014 was conducted. Apart from the persons engaged by the RICs, the training was also attended by representatives of the relevant line ministries.

For the purposes of the RICs in terms of informing and referring the citizens to the appropriate institutions, Handbooks for exercising the rights in the field of employment and housing were prepared in cooperation with the OSCE Office in Macedonia.

#### **Project for provision of legal aid to the Roma community**



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Since May of 2013, a total of 70 persons contacted the mobile legal offices in Skopje for the purpose of requesting legal aid and advice. All of the 70 beneficiaries that contacted the mobile legal offices were of Roma ethnicity (42 of which come from the Municipality of Shuto Orizari, 12 from Topaana, and 16 from Zlokukjani). Out of the total number of beneficiaries, 33 were women whereas 37 were men, and 48 were adults whereas 22 were minors.

The legal advisor undertook the following activities during the reporting period:

- initiated proceedings for complaints concerning the entitlement to certain rights and obligations of the citizens before the institutions;
- initiated private divorce proceedings before the Court of First Instance Skopje II;
- initiated proceedings before the Administrative Court of the Republic of Macedonia;
- initiated procedures before the Ministry of the Interior; provided ad-hoc advice on late registration in the birth registers, advice on certain health problems and their solution and advice on obtaining a temporary residence permit.

A total of 44 persons contacted the mobile legal offices in Tetovo and Gostivar for the purpose of requesting support and legal advice (to be precise, 25 persons contacted the office in Tetovo, whereas 19 persons contacted the office in Gostivar).

During the reporting period, 30 persons contacted the mobile legal offices in Tetovo and Gostivar for the purpose of obtaining advice on legal aid for exercising their rights and obtaining support for contacting the relevant institutions (the Ministry of the Interior, the Office for Management of Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths, the Agency for Real Estate Cadastre of the Republic of Macedonia and the Embassy of the Republic of Austria) whilst seeking for solutions to certain problems.

In the mobile legal offices, ten persons were provided with support and legal advice on the preparation of complaints on various grounds, and four persons were provided with support in the process of obtaining personal identification documents.

### **Project for registration of persons in the register of birth**

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and the Office for Management of Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths started implementing the activity aimed at identification of persons that are not registered in the registers. As regards the identified issues for registering persons in the register of birth, during the year of 2013, DNA analyses were organized and conducted for 32 persons, and a total of 92 cases were solved positively.

### **Project for enhancement of the implementation of the Strategy for the Roma and the National Action Plan**

The Project includes:

- preparation of Operational Plans for the Strategy for the Roma in compliance with the EU 2020 Strategy;
- revision and redesign of the Strategy for the Roma in compliance with the EU 2020 guidelines;



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- restructuring the National Coordination Body and forming operating groups within the line ministries;
- strengthening the capacities of the Unit for Implementation of the Strategy for the Roma and the Decade of Roma Inclusion;
- strengthening the capacities for preparation of project fiches of the National Coordination Body and the operating groups within the ministries.

During the year of 2013, the following activities were realized within the project:

- a public debate was organized on 25 November 2013 in Skopje as part of the participatory process for the development of the Strategy. The meeting was attended by about 45 participants, representatives of the relevant state institutions, international organizations and non-governmental organizations;
- Operational Plans for the Decade of Roma Inclusion for all priority areas in the year of 2013 were prepared;
- the Strategy for the Roma was revised and redesigned in compliance with the EU 2020 guidelines;
- the National Coordination Body (NCB) was restructured, and the forming of the operating groups within the line ministries is currently in progress;
- a series of workshops and training events for strengthening the capacities of the Unit for Implementation of the Strategy for the Roma and the Decade of Roma Inclusion was conducted;
- a series of workshops and training events for strengthening the capacities for preparation of project fiches of the National Coordination Body and the operating groups within the ministries.

### **Project: Regional support for improving the capacities to make real progress on Roma inclusion in the labor market**

- A detailed analysis of the participation and the success rate of the Roma in the Programmes and Measures for Employment of the Roma in the 2007–2012 period, including recommendation for improvement, was made;
- A Pilot Programme for employment of Roma, which is a part of the Operational Plan for Employment for the year of 2014, was developed;
- Four trainers and two mentors were engaged, and are in continuous coordination with the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia (the Employment Centers), the Centers for Social Work, and the Roma Information Centers. A joint training event was organized (trainers – responsible for information gathering, animating, motivating and referring interested persons, depending on their qualifications and skills, to the competent persons at the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia, the Centers for Social Work, the Roma Information Centers, developing partnerships; and mentors – providing advice, consultation and monitoring of the candidates in order for them to be able to complete the application process successfully and to finally take up employment, as well as providing support following the employment or business registration);
- In the period from January of 2013 to April of 2014, in the four pilot municipalities (Skopje, Tetovo, Prilep and Kumanovo), the trainers held meetings with 325 Roma persons, 189 of which were interested in getting further familiarized with the employment programmes;



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- The mentors performed an analysis of the professional skills and educational level of all of the aforementioned 189<sup>1</sup> persons, 87 of which applied<sup>2</sup> for any of the employment measures/ or whose status in the Employment Service Agency changed / or who expressed interest to apply in the cycle in the month of May:
  - Twenty-six persons have already entered the following measures: 13 in training for occupations that are deficient in the labor market, six in self-employment, six in training for obtaining D category driving license , and one in subsidized employment;
  - three persons took up employment during the application process with the help and support of the mentors;
  - twenty-four applied, but were not selected to enter any of the employment measures;
  - twenty-three persons have changed their status from “other job-seekers” into “active job-seekers” or have registered at the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia for the first time and are in coordination with trainers and mentors concerning a possible application for some of the measures in the month of May of 2014;
  - eleven new persons have expressed their interest in entering the self-employment or the subsidized employment measure in May of 2014.

Furthermore, within the project:

- needs for completing education was identified: 50 persons from Prilep, Shuto Orizari, Kumanovo and Tetovo who have expressed interested in completing their education (primary and secondary) via the informal education system were identified;
- a need for adjusting the grant for formalization in order for it to meet the needs of the type of informal business that Roma do was identified. Research was conducted in four pilot municipalities in which 229 persons took part, over 40% of which have a market stall for selling apparel goods. One hundred and fifty-six of all the respondents (i.e. almost 70%) believe that the most appropriate composition of the grant for formalization of a business would be: 40% for procurement of equipment and raw materials, 30% for procurement of trade goods in Macedonia, and 30% for rent expenses (a market stall, a shop, etc.);
- three project for community useful work which include the Roma in the part of service providers and end users have been supported.

### **Support to the Holocaust victims – humanitarian and legal aid**

In September of 2013, the project for provision of support to Holocaust victims (humanitarian and legal aid) aged 65 and beyond started being implemented. The project is being implemented with the support of the International Organization for Migration. The aforementioned persons are supported via the provision of free-of-charge legal aid, medical assistance and help in the sphere of social protection.

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<sup>1</sup>102 were not able to apply for the measures due to their status of “other job-seekers”, or because they had been imposed a ban for applying by the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia, or due to other reasons.

<sup>2</sup>By April of 2014, Roma have applied for six different measures within the programme which are supported with Operational Plans (self-employment, subsidized employment, training for demanded occupations, training for obtaining D category driving license, practical work, subsidized training at a known employer).



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### Other activities

The fourth working meeting on Inclusion of Roma and Roma refugees was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2013 at the premises of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. Relevant important topics related to the current problems that the Roma community in the Republic of Macedonia faces were presented and discussed at this meeting. Moreover, the representatives of the institutions presented the development of the visa liberalization process thus far, as well as the current issues, the system for protection against discrimination, the rights of women with special focus on Roma women, and the situation of persons without personal identification documents.

The latest developments in the field of housing with a focus on the progress of the legalization of illegal buildings process, as well as the preparations for regulating the legal framework concerning social housing, were presented by the non-governmental sector and one municipality as a positive example.

About 60 participants attended the meeting (specifically, representatives from the line ministries, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions).

## 2. EDUCATION

The language used in the education process is an important prerequisite for continuous education. Roma often live in closed environments where Romany is used. Curricula in schools is taught in Macedonian language, and taking into account that the number of children who have preschool preparation is small, pupils usually encounter serious difficulties in learning the subject matter, which is one of the major barriers in the education cycle.

- **Policies and programmes implemented in preschool education:**

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, in collaboration with the Roma Education Fund (REF), has been implementing the “Inclusion of Roma Children in Public Preschool Institutions” project for eight consecutive years.

About 2,200 Roma children have been covered with the implementation of the project throughout the years, 82% of which have enrolled in primary education.

The main objective of the project is to enhance and support the integration of Roma children by increasing the number of Roma children in preschool institutions, one year before they enroll in primary education.

**The main goal of the project** is to improve and support the integration of Roma children by increasing the number of Roma children in pre-school institutions, a year before starting primary school.

### **Direct beneficiaries 2013/2014:**

- 477 Roma children aged from 3.8 to 5.7 years (two year before starting primary school)
- At least 850 Roma parents whose children will be supported during the project implementation but also closer family members
- Project activities are implemented in 18 municipalities throughout Macedonia.



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- For the purposes of this project 17 nursery nurses from the Roma ethnic community were engaged and 15 Roma NGO partners were involved in the implementation of the Project.

For the implementation of this project the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy has so far provided from its budget.

### **Policies and programs implemented in primary education:**

#### **Extension and reconstruction of the capacities of two primary schools in Shuto Orizari “Brakja Ramiz i Hamid” and “26 Juli”.**

The Ministry of education and science in cooperation with the municipality of Shuto Orizari performs spatial extension and expansion of the primary schools “Brakja Ramiz Hamid” and “26 Juli”. The objective of this intervention is to expand the capacity of the school to ensure the complete conditions for education of students in this community. The PS “Brothers Ramiz and Hamid” has been extending with an additional 18 classrooms and three cabinet rooms, a total of 21 classrooms with a capacity for about 1000 students. The PS “26 Juli” has been extending with additional capacities for classrooms and cabinet rooms. Additional this PS has been reconstructed with new windows and doors.

The extension of the school is ongoing. The new extended capacities of both of the schools will be started from 01 September 2014, with the new academic year 2014/2015. This will additionally help in the improvement of the educational quality of the Roma students from this school. The classes will be held in two regular shifts with full implementation of the curricula, which at the moment is reduced. The funds are fully secured from the budget of the Ministry of Education and Science. It will allow significantly better conditions for education of students and improve the quality of the teaching.

### **Policies and programs implemented in secondary education**

#### **Project for scholarship and tutoring for Roma students from 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year 2013/2014**

The Ministry of education and science in cooperation with the Roma Education Fund for Budapest since academic 2009/10 year implements the project “Scholarships, mentoring and tutoring for secondary Roma students”.

Within the project the secondary Roma students who meet the criteria had the opportunity to be scholarships in two categories of scholarships:

**The first category** refers to those students who have achieved an average success of 3.50 to 5.00 that will receive 2,200 denars per month for nine months.

**The second category** refers to students with an average success of 3.00 to 3.49 that will receive 1,500 denars a month for nine months.

**The Project for scholarships and tutoring of Roma students 2013/14 is implemented in 3 phases:**



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1. Scholarships - **financial support for students for the academic year 2013/14, of which 412 receive scholarships from the first category, and 211, receive scholarship from the second category.**
2. Mentoring – The Commission, which is under the Ministry of Education, consists of **102 professors** of different subjects for which the Roma students have expressed the need for extra help to master the subject.

### **Project result for the academic year 2012/13:**

1. As a result of the scholarships, **from a total number of 593 student** beneficiaries of high school scholarship, 591 students have successfully crossed into the next school year without repeating a year or dropping out, or 99,66% from the total number of scholarship recipients
2. Two students have dropped out, or 0,33% from the total number of scholarship recipients;
3. From the total number of scholarships recipients (593) 84.65% in the end of the school year were finished with GPA over 3.00.
4. 153 scholarships recipient successfully finished the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade and completed their secondary education. From the total number 112 were with 4<sup>th</sup> level and 41 were with 3<sup>rd</sup> level of secondary education.
5. From the total number of students who completed the secondary education with 4<sup>th</sup> level of education (112), 49 students or 43.75% have been enrolling in the higher university education.

Except continuity of education, increased average success of the students and easier learning of the school material, as project results should also be mentioned:

- Increased attendance of the students or reduced absence from school;
- Improved communication between the school-parent-child;
- Increased socialization and participation in extra-curricular activities;
- Easier access to textbooks, transportation and other necessary school aids;

### **Construction of a secondary school in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari**

The Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with the municipality of Shuto Orizari has built a high school in suburb. The funds in total amount of 100.000.000 denars are fully secured/covered by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. The high school has a capacity of 400 students in one shift. The school will start working in September 2014 for the academic 2014/15.

### **Twining project for Supporting of the integration of ethnic communities in within educational system**



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The project was realized in cooperation among Macedonia as a beneficiary country and Austria as a country member of EU. The project implementation was in a period from 1 July 2012 till 31 August 2013 year.

For implementation of the project were responsible the following institutions:

- The Department for development and promotion of education on languages of the communities within the Ministry of education and science
- Agency for Europe integration and economic development

The overall goal of this project was to contribute for further improvement of the integration of the ethnic community in society. The specific project's objectives were the following:

1. Equal access to education;
2. Equal opportunities through education;
3. Equal respect between the groups with different ethnic and cultural origin.

The mandatory results which were planned and achieved within the project are divided in two components:

First component: Including intercultural aspects in educational system:

- Assessment and evaluation of the level of integration;
- Updating the educational curricula;
- Introduction of innovative programs;

Second component: Strengthening of the capacities for supporting of integration of the ethnic communities:

- Training for school directors and teachers;
- Training for Roma student's parents;
- Training for Roma mediators.

The additional results were achieved:

- 40 workshops and trainings were organized;
- Around 100 persons were participating in the workshops, and around 200 persons were participating in the trainings.

The project was financed from the European Union from the IPA, within the Component IV: Development of human resources

### **Policies and programs implemented in higher education:**

#### **Quotas for enrolment of Roma students in the institutions for higher education**

This practice for years operates as a positive measure for easier access of Roma students in institutions for higher education.

#### **Romany language as a facultative subject in the higher education**



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From the academic 2011 year, Romany language and culture operates as a facultative subject at the Faculty of Philology in Skopje.

### 3. EMPLOYMENT

According to the data from the State Statistical Office, in 2013 in the Republic of Macedonia the unemployment rate is about 28.6% at national level. The unemployment rate according to the same data source, in the Roma community is about 70%.

At the Employment Agency of Republic of Macedonia 1743 unemployed Roma are registered, of whom 554 women (as to 31.11.2013).

Qualification structure of many of them is unfavorable to the needs and demands of the employers, something that reduces their opportunities for employment, while the low level of education of a large number of them makes it more difficult to be included in some of the programmes and active employment measures and successful navigation on the labor market.

#### OVERVIEW of registered unemployed Roma by level of education

	Level of education							TOTAL
	With no education and with primary education	Uncompleted secondary education	Completed secondary education	High secondary education	Higher education	Master's degrees	Doctoral degrees	
<b>Total</b>	1282	162	272	3	23	1	-	1743
<b>Women</b>	400	41	101	1	11	-	-	554

\*Registered unemployed Roma by level of education (status by 30 November 2013)

#### Active employment measures for the Roma

In the Operational Plan for the Active Employment Programmes and Measures for the year of 2013, the Roma were included as a target group of the Programmes for Inclusive Growth (Programme for Subsidizing, Pilot Programme for Subsidizing Usufructuaries of State Agricultural Land, Programme for Organizing Public Works, Programmes with combined packages for support for employment, etc.). The target groups are gender sensitive, which means that the target groups are not deprived of the right to participate in various types of programmes included in the Operational Plan, taking into account the conditions and criteria set therein.



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The employment of Roma began being supported with the start of the implementation of the Operational Plan for the Active Employment Programmes and Measures for the year of 2013.

- As regards the Self-Employment Programme, a total of 76 Roma persons submitted applications, 64 of them filled out a questionnaire. Seventeen of these persons were referred to training which was completed by 11 Roma persons, and grants (signed contracts) were approved for a total of eight Roma persons;
- As regards the Training Programme for meeting the needs for the demanded occupations in the labor market, a total of 30 Roma persons submitted applications, 14 persons underwent training, and all 14 Roma persons were awarded certificates;
- As regards the Self-Employment by Crediting Programme, a total 12 Roma persons applied in the year of 2013, and contracts were concluded with eight Roma persons;
- As regards the Programme for practical training as a first work experience prior to employment, a total of 13 persons submitted applications in the year of 2013, and contracts were concluded with two of them;
- As regards the Programme for Subsidizing Employment, a total of 91 Roma persons applied, and 13 Roma persons took up employment;
- As regards the programme for the Survey on job vacancies during the year of 2013, a total of three Roma persons applied, and a contract was concluded with one of them.

In addition to the active employment measures, the Employment Centers, as part of their regular operations, also provide other types of services to unemployed Roma persons, such as, mediation in employment, services in the work clubs (informing, counseling, various types of training), etc. The objectives of the activities in the work clubs within the Employment Centers are to encourage the initiative and to strengthen the capacities of persons seeking employment, aimed at their successful presentation in the labor market, active job search and employment.

The Employment Centers are in constant cooperation with the employers with the purpose of providing information on the situation on the labor market, the legal regulations, the possibilities, conditions, advantages and benefits for employment of unemployed persons. The employers also received services such as help with organizing training, retraining, or additional training of unemployed persons for the needs of the employers, providing qualified labor force, mediation in employment, etc.

In the Employment Centers located in towns in which Roma Information Centers are established, there are responsible persons—employees of the Employment Service Agency—who regularly collaborate with the Roma Information Centers in relation to the services that the Employment Centers provide.

#### 4. HOUSING

##### Utility infrastructure projects



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In the Budget of the Republic of Macedonia for the year of 2013 (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” No. 167/2012), in Section 130.01-Ministry of Transport and Communications, Programme 1 – Administration, Sub-programme 11 – Supporting the implementation of the Decade and Strategy for Roma, paragraph 488 – Capital grants to the Local Self-Government Units, funds in the amount of **10,000,000.00** MKD were allocated for implementation of utility infrastructure projects, in compliance with the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 and the Strategy for the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia, i.e. the planned activities and measures in accordance with the Action Plan for Housing of the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia.

The following projects were realized:

1. **Municipality of Berovo** 1,000,000.00 MKD for the project: Reconstruction and construction of “Bratstvo i edinstvo” street in Berovo, with length of 450 meters;
2. **Municipality of Bitola** 1,500,000.00 MKD for the project: Reconstruction of the roadway of “Karaorman” street, sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 in Bitola;
3. **Municipality of Vinica** 1,500,000.00 MKD for the project: Construction of a section of “Vancho Prke” street in length of 140.00 meters in Vinica, and Reconstruction of the water supply system in part of “Makedonska” street and part of “Goce Delchev” street in Vinica;
4. **Municipality of Gazi Baba** 1,000,000.00 MKD for the project: Construction of fecal sewerage system in “12” street in the settlement of Jurumleri in the Municipality of Gazi Baba;
5. **Municipality of Kochani** 2,000,000.00 MKD for the project: Construction of a section of “Stamen Manov” street with retaining walls in Kochani;
6. **Municipality of Prilep** 927,922.00 MKD for the project: Adaptation and paving of part of “Korab” street and “Dabnichki Zavoj” street, sections 1 and 2 in Prilep;
7. **Municipality of Probishtip** 798,835.00 MKD for the project: Construction of “5” street in Probishtip;
8. **Municipality of Shtip** 1,000,000.00 MKD for the project: Construction of a section of “Kosovska” street in Shtip;

### Project for housing of socially vulnerable groups – F/P 1674

Within the Project for housing of socially vulnerable groups F/P 1674, residential buildings with a total of 220 social housing units were built (78 residential units in Bitola, 91 in Shtip and 51 in Berovo).

In accordance with the distribution of the social housing units intended for housing of socially vulnerable groups of citizens characterized with housing insecurity, a total of 158 persons applied for the 78 residential units in Bitola, a total of 156 persons applied for the 91 residential units in Shtip, and a total of 41 persons applied for the 51 residential units in Berovo.

For all of the applicants to the calls for distribution of the social housing units, the Minister of Transport and Communications adopted Decisions for the beneficiaries of the social rental housing units, specifically:

- in Shtip, 15 of the 91 social housing units were granted to Roma families;
- in Bitola, 12 of the 78 social housing units were granted to Roma families; and
- in Berovo, 6 of the 30 social housing units were granted to Roma families.



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The Ministry of Transport and Communications re-announced the call for the remaining 20 undistributed housing units in the town of Berovo, and reached Decisions for renting the social housing units; further eight of the housing units were distributed to Roma families that applied for all of the categories in this announcement.

As regards the future distribution of social housing units, the number of housing units distributed to members of the Roma community will depend on the number of applicants.

Furthermore, within the Project for housing of socially vulnerable groups F/P 1674, three residential buildings are currently being constructed, specifically, in the towns of Prilep –Tochila 2 (with 76 residential units), Demir Hisar (with 25 residential units) and Resen (with 18 residential units).

Moreover, in compliance with the “Water supply and disposal of wastewater” project in the amount of 50,000,000.00 EUR financed with a loan from the European Investment Bank, implementation of sub-project is envisaged in all municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia. What is envisaged within the project includes the construction of fecal sewerage on “Pelagonija” street and “Brsjachka Buna” street in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari, with the unrealized assets of the total amount of allocated funds (100,000 EUR) for Shuto Orizari.

### 5. HEALTH

#### Programme for Roma Health Mediators

The general aim of the program for Roma Health Mediators is to promote the social and health status of Roma in Macedonia by improving access to services and information which are culturally and socially adapted to their needs and requirements, and in accordance with the obligations taken by the Strategy for Roma in Republic of Macedonia, the Roma Inclusion Decade 2005-2015, and the National Action Plans/Operational Plans for the implementation of the Roma Inclusion Decade.

The specific aims of the programme are:

- Increased awareness among the Roma in RM to take better care for their health;
- Improved information of the Roma regarding the opportunities and access to health care;
- Eased health care access;
- Increased sensitivity of the health institutions to the specific health needs of Roma;
- Eased access to social rights achievement;
- Eased access to civil rights achievement;
- Increased trust by the Roma in the health care and social institutions

In 2013, Roma Health Mediators provided 1000 persons to realize their right to health insurance and to choose a primary care physician/gynecologist/dentist; in 1800 families they had educational counseling to promote healthy life styles and assisted in detecting 1600 irregularly immunized or unimmunized children. Also, they provide assistance to 280 persons in the realization of the right to financial social assistance and to 700 in the provision of personal documents.



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### 6. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

- *measures that were designed to support the fight against anti-Roma discrimination and racism*

During the year of 2013, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination worked actively on the received complaints on various grounds of discrimination. Upon determining the factual situation concerning the discrimination, the Commission gave opinion with recommendations on the manner of removing the discriminatory action. Some of the received complaints the Commission worked on related to discrimination on grounds of Roma ethnicity.

#### **Project – Best practices for Roma integration**

The Commission for Protection against Discrimination also participated in the implementation of the “Best practices for Roma integration” project—a regional project financed by the European Union, supported by OSCE and implemented by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). One of the project activities is providing technical support to the Commission for Protection against Discrimination of the Republic of Macedonia.

About ten informative workshops and roundtable discussions took place throughout the Republic of Macedonia as part of this activity, mainly in cooperation with Roma non-governmental organizations, or participants from the Roma community as well as from other communities. These workshops were realized with the purpose of raising the awareness of the Roma community about the existence of the legislation, especially the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, as well as the special bodies for combating discrimination, such as the Commission for Protection against Discrimination and becoming closely informed about the role and competences thereof.

- *measures that were designed to support gender equality between Roma women and men*

More than 20 workshops intended for young persons from the smaller ethnic communities, which is the case with the Roma community in several municipalities, were held in cooperation with the International Organization for Migrations (four workshops were intended for young Roma men and women). The purpose of these workshops was to raise the awareness of the young population in relation to migrating abroad, abusing the migration and the consequences of illegal migration, as well as about exercising of the right to protection in cases of unequal treatment and protection against discrimination.

Within the “Support to the Implementation of the Strategy for the Roma” project supported by the European Union, two one-day training events intended for the Roma non-governmental organizations that work on women’s issues and the rights of the Roma were realized. The objective of the training events was to familiarize the attendees with the mechanisms of realization of the right to equal treatment on grounds of gender and the right to protection against discrimination. Special attention was paid to the possibility for participation of the civil sector as an involved party in the initiation of



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proceedings for exercising the right to equal treatment on grounds of gender and the right to protection against discrimination. In this respect, a short handbook was printed as part of this project, which handbook is intended to help the non-governmental organizations should they get involved in such cases. Furthermore, a Guidebook in which the methodology of the training on equal treatment is presented was also printed as part of the project.

In the past period, the National Action Plans for enhancements of the social status of Roma women in the Republic of Macedonia were prepared and implemented, as an obligation deriving from the Strategy for the Roma for the year of 2005, in which the specific needs of Roma women were one of the priorities, whilst at the same time constituting an affirmative measure aimed at improving the status of Roma women in the society.

Given that the needs of Roma women have a certain specificity due to the traditional and cultural norms, the activities that were covered by the National Action Plan for enhancement of the social status of Roma women have been integrated in several strategic documents, such as: the Revised Strategy for the Roma (currently in draft version), the National Strategy for Gender Equality, and the National Strategy for Equality and Non-discrimination. In the period to come, the activities concerning Roma women will be conducted under the aforementioned strategic documents.