SHADOW REPORT

WESTERN BALKANS

REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

SHADOW REPORT

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Skopje, March 2026

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AVRSM – Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia
- BIJK – Request for public information
- CPPD – Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination
- ENER – Single National Electronic Register of Regulations
- FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
- IMR – Infant Mortality Rate
- IPA – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
- MES – Ministry of Education and Science
- MKD – Macedonian Denar
- MYLA – Macedonian Young Lawyers Association
- MSPDY – Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth
- OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
- RNM – Republic of North Macedonia
- SMA – Spinal Muscular Atrophy
- WHO – World Health Organization

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1.INSTITUTIONAL SET UP

Institution	Role and Description
Minister without Portfolio Responsible for Roma Integration and the Implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy (also serving as the National Roma Contact Point for the implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022–2030	• A Government-appointed representative responsible for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy. As the National Roma Contact Point, the Minister ensures coordination and cooperation with all relevant institutions and stakeholders at the political level and chairs the National Coordination Body for the Implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022–2030. • The Minister without Portfolio does not have a dedicated budget for the implementation of Roma-related activities.
Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth	• The Ministry has the leading role in the preparation, coordination, and monitoring of the Roma Inclusion Strategy and the National Action Plans. Within the Ministry, the Department for the Implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy is responsible for the preparation and monitoring of the strategic documents. • The Ministry has a dedicated budget for the implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy.
National Coordination Body for the Implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy	• The National Coordination Body was established to monitor the implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022–2030. • It is chaired by the Minister without Portfolio, who also serves as the National Roma Contact Point. • Its members include representatives from the: Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio; Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth; Ministry of Local Self-Government; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Transport; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry for Inter-Community Relations; Ministry of Digital Transformation; Ministry of European Affairs; Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Economy and Labor; and Ministry of Finance. • Representatives of other institutions, international organizations, independent experts, and civil society organizations may also participate in meetings when necessary. • Participation of civil society organizations: Compared to the previous reporting period, the participation of civil society organizations in the work of the National Coordination Body has increased. In addition to Roma civil society organizations that are members of the Body, other civil society organizations working in the fields of human rights and anti-discrimination are regularly invited to participate in its meetings. This contributes to broader civil society

	participation in monitoring and implementing the Roma Inclusion Strategy and promotes a more inclusive dialogue in the development and monitoring of public policies.
Committee on Inter-Community Relations	• The Committee on Inter-Community Relations is a standing working body of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, established pursuant to Constitutional Amendment XII. It consists of 19 members, including seven Members of Parliament from the Macedonian community, seven from the Albanian community, and one representative each from the Turkish, Vlach, Roma, Serbian, and Bosniak communities. Where a particular community is not represented in Parliament, the Ombudsperson, after consulting relevant representatives of that community, proposes a member to the Committee. • In April 2025, pursuant to this constitutional provision, a representative of the Roma community was appointed to the Committee, given that there is currently no Roma Member of Parliament in the Assembly. A Roma person was appointed as the Roma representative, thereby ensuring the continued participation and representation of the Roma community in the Committee's work.
Inter-Party Parliamentary Group for the Promotion of Roma Rights, Inclusion and Integration	This inter-party parliamentary group was established in May 2025. It is chaired by Member of Parliament Igor Zdravkovski, with Members of Parliament Amar Mecinović and Arbana Pasholli serving as Deputy Chairs.
Deputy Minister of Local Self-Government and Deputy Minister for Political System	As part of the governing coalition, Roma participation in executive positions has remained unchanged compared to the previous reporting period. Two members of the Roma community currently serve as Deputy Minister of Local Self-Government and Deputy Minister for Political System.

Regarding future activities, the Office of the Minister without Portfolio reported that the Government plans to strengthen its systematic approach to improving housing conditions for Roma through reforms of the legal framework on social housing and the preparation of new action plans. According to the information provided, the process of aligning and improving the social housing legislation is underway, with the aim of establishing long-term and sustainable solutions for vulnerable groups, including the Roma community.[1]

Another encouraging development is the joint initiative of the Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio and the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth to prepare a new set of Action Plans for the implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy. The preparation process has involved consultations with relevant ministries, civil society organizations, Roma representatives, and other stakeholders, with support from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The Action Plans are expected to be adopted in the forthcoming period and will define concrete measures, institutional responsibilities, and implementation mechanisms across the different policy areas covered by the Strategy. Their timely adoption and effective implementation will be essential for translating strategic commitments into measurable results. While these initiatives demonstrate an intention to establish a more coordinated and systematic approach, their impact will depend on the timely adoption of the proposed legislative amendments, the allocation of adequate financial resources, the establishment of clearly defined implementation monitoring indicators, and the effective implementation of the measures at both the national and local levels.
According to the Office of the Minister without Portfolio, these plans are intended to contribute to more efficient allocation of budgetary resources and improved coordination with international partners.[2]

During 2026, certain positive developments were observed in the area of institutional coordination related to the implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy. Compared to previous years, the Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio responsible for the implementation of the Strategy for Roma has demonstrated improved transparency and communication with civil society organizations, Roma representatives, and other relevant stakeholders. The consultation process has become more open and inclusive, allowing for more regular exchange of information and greater opportunities for stakeholder participation in discussions concerning Roma inclusion policies.
An important improvement has also been noted in the functioning of the National Coordinating Body for the Implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy. During the reporting period, the Coordinating Body convened several meetings and demonstrated a more transparent and participatory approach to its work. Its renewed activity represents a positive step towards strengthening institutional coordination, facilitating cooperation among relevant institutions, and monitoring the implementation of strategic priorities.

These developments demonstrate a gradual improvement in institutional coordination and stakeholder engagement compared to previous years. Nevertheless, significant challenges remain. Although communication and transparency have improved, political commitment to addressing the structural inequalities faced by Roma remains insufficient. The implementation of Roma inclusion policies continues to depend largely on the commitment of individual institutions rather than on a strong, coordinated political agenda supported across the Government. As a result, the alignment of national strategies with the realities and priorities of Roma communities remains uneven, limiting the overall effectiveness of the Strategy.

[1] Ibid.
[2] Ibid.

Furthermore, substantial efforts are still required to strengthen the legal and policy framework for Roma inclusion. Existing legislative and policy gaps continue to hinder the effective implementation of Roma rights, while the adoption of necessary legal reforms and policy measures has been slower than anticipated. Strengthening anti-discrimination mechanisms, improving accountability, ensuring adequate budget allocation, and advancing reforms across sectors such as education, employment, housing, healthcare, and social protection remain critical priorities.

COORDINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ROMA STRATEGY

During 2025 and the beginning of 2026, the Department for the Implementation of the National Roma Strategy and the National Action Plans for Roma carried out a number of activities aimed at improving Roma inclusion policies and strengthening institutional coordination. With the support of the OSCE Mission, several strategic documents were prepared, including an Analysis of the Status of Roma Women in North Macedonia, an Evaluation Report on the National Action Plan for the Protection, Promotion and Fulfilment of the Human Rights of Roma Women and Girls (2022–2024), and a financial analysis of the Draft Law on Social Housing.

On 10 March 2026, a panel discussion entitled "Achievements of Roma Women – Successes and Challenges" was organized with the aim of exchanging experiences, identifying systemic challenges, and exploring opportunities for economic empowerment, social inclusion, and the advancement of the status of Roma women. The event contributed to strengthening cooperation between public institutions, civil society organizations, and representatives of the Roma community.

Furthermore, on 24 March 2026, a coordination meeting was held with mayors and municipal representatives to plan interventions under the IPA III Annual Action Programme for 2024. The meeting examined opportunities for involving municipalities in the implementation of projects related to housing for Roma and other vulnerable groups, with the participation of representatives from the sectors responsible for urban planning, spatial planning, and social housing.

At the time of drafting this report, the process of preparing new National Action Plans for all priority areas of the Roma Strategy was ongoing, together with the preparation of a dedicated National Action Plan for Roma girls and women. This represents an important step towards ensuring the continuity of Roma inclusion policies and aligning them with the current needs of the Roma community

2.EDUCATION

1.1 PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

The Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth (MSPDY) implements the measure exempting parents from paying participation fees for preschool education. For the 2025/26 school year, a total of 187 Roma children benefited from this measure in 19 kindergartens across 19 municipalities. According to data provided by the Ministry, during the 2025/26 school year, the total number of children enrolled in preschool institutions was 36,354, of whom 526 were Roma children nationwide, representing 1.45% of the total number of children enrolled in kindergartens. Of these, 187 Roma children, or approximately 34%, benefited from the Government's recommendation on exemption from participation fees for Roma children from socially vulnerable families.[3] According to data from the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth for the 2025/26 school year, 526 Roma children were enrolled in preschool education nationwide, representing, according to the Ministry's calculations, 1.45% of the total number of children enrolled in preschool education.[4]

This low percentage highlights the continued underrepresentation of Roma children in early childhood education, despite its critical importance for long-term educational success and social inclusion. During the 2025/26 school year, the participation fee exemption measure was implemented in the following municipalities: Radoviš, Negotino, Vinica, Kavadarci, Prilep, Kočani, Delčevo, Kriva Palanka, Pehčevo/Crnik, Centar, Karpoš, Ohrid, Čair, Berovo, Gostivar, Bitola, Kumanovo, Veles, and Gazi Baba. The Government recommendation also included the municipalities of Šuto Orizari and Kičevo; however, according to the data received, these municipalities did not proceed with the implementation of the measure.

Table 1: Total Number of Children in Kindergartens – Early Childhood Development Centres

	2023		2024		2025	
	Total	Roma	Total	Roma	Total	Roma
Total	37.804	583	37.871	549	37.742	553

Source: State Statistical Office.

Table 2: Total Number of Children in the Developmental Period from Age 2 Until School Entry

Category	**2023 Total**	**2023 Roma**	**2024 Total**	**2024 Roma**	**2025 Total**	**2025 Roma**
Children in the developmental period from age 2 until school entry	30.793	492	30.864	456	31.246	486

Source: State Statistical Office.

Table 3: Number of Children Exempted from Paying Kindergarten Participation Fees

Children exampted from paying kindergarden participation fees	2023	2024	2025
	248	150	187

Source: Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth

[3] Data from the State Statistical Office.
[4] Information obtained through a freedom of information request.

To implement this activity, the Ministry concluded tripartite cooperation agreements between municipalities and public preschool institutions (kindergartens), covering a total of 20 municipalities included under the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia's Recommendation on exempting Roma children aged 3–6 years from socially at-risk families from paying participation fees.[5]According to data from the State Statistical Office, the total number of children enrolled in public preschool institutions nationwide in 2025 was 37,742, of whom 553 were Roma children. This represents 1.47% of the total number of children enrolled in public preschool institutions.

Table 4: Number of children exempt from participation at the kindergarten

Kindergarten	Municipality	Total number	Total number Roma		Participation for Roma childred	
			M	F	Exempt from participation	Paying participation
Aco Karamanov	Radovis	426	3	5	7	1
Femo Kulakov	Negotino	517	8	6	2	12
Goce Delcev	Vinica	330	14	11	15	10
Rada Poceva	Kavadarci	1117	15	18	14	19
Nasa Idnina	Prilep	1484	6	11	11	6
Pavlina Veljanova	Kocani	767	16	11	19	8
Veseli Cvetovi	Delcevo	302	8	12	15	5
Detelinka	Kriva Palanka	346	8	12	15	11
7th of September	Pehcevo	79	4	7	8	3
RJP Korcagin	Centar	663	2	2	0	4
Prolet	Karpos	770	9	2	0	11
Jasna Risteska	Ohrid	1287	2	0	1	1
Snezana	Cair	637	19	16	3	32
23 Avgust	Berovo	254	9	16	16	9
Detska Radost	Gostivar	1273	33	19	26	26
E.O.Mara	Bitola	852	12	8	16	4
Angel Sajce	Kumanovo	1922	2	4	3	3
Dimce Mircev	Veles	1093	7	5	1	11
25 Maj	Gazi Baba	1184	10	10	15	5

[5] Ibid.

1.2 PRIMARY EDUCATION

According to the data from the Ministry of Education and Science acquired in April 2026, the total number of enrolled Roma students for academic 2025/26 is 9,515 students. In comparison with the academic year 2024/25, there is a decline in enrollment for about 773 students. While in the 2022/23 and 2023/24 school years, the number of enrolled Roma students remained consistent at 11,055, according to data submitted by the Ministry of Education and Science in April 2025. While the number of dropouts and reintegrated students in the school system for academic 2024/25 decreased in comparison with the previous academic year.
The drop of the number of enrolled Roma students in primary education may have series of reasons from the high rate of emigration from the country to discrimination, language barriers and other reasons that impact the number of Roma students enrolled in the primary education. While previous figures suggested stable trends, this recent drop emphasizes the need for continuous monitoring and responsive measures to ensure Roma children remain included in the education system despite demographic shifts.

Table 5: Enrolled Roma students in primary Education in school year 2025/2026

Year	Total	Boys	Girls
2025/2026	9,515	4,948	4,567
2024/2025	10288	5284	5004

Source: Ministry of Education and Science

Table 5: Roma students in primary education

2020/2021		2021/2022		2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025	
Total	**Roma**	**Total**	**Roma**	**Total**	**Roma**	**Total**	**Roma**	**Total**	**Roma**
185,925	10184	184910	10256	182245	9959	181311	10014	178918	9979

Source: Makstat, State Statistical Office

Table 7: Students Completing Regular Primary Education by ethnicity

2020/2021		2021/2022		2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025	
All	**Roma**	**All**	**Roma**	**All**	**Roma**	**All**	**Roma**	**All**	**Roma**
19173	615	19012	617	18791	575	19179	646	19673	712

Source: Makstat, State Statistical Office

Table 8: Roma Students completing regular primary education by gender

2020/2021		2021/2022		2022/2023		2023/2024		2024/2025	
Girls	Boys	**Girls**	Boys	**Girls**	Boys	**Girls**	Boys	**Girls**	Boys
306	309	314	303	281	294	309	337	342	370

Source: Makstat, State Statistical Office

Table 8: Overview of Roma Students that have been enrolled and completed Primary Education 2021-2025

School year	Total Number of Enrolled Students in Primary Education	Dropout	Reintegrated in the school system	Total number of student that completed the education
2021/22	10,155	694	185 (26,66%)	9,646 (94,99%)
2022/23	11,055	530	262 (49,43%)	10,787 (97,57%)
2023/24	11,055	530	262 (49,43%)	10,787 (97,57%)
2024/25	10,288	455	172 (37,80)	9,522 (92,55%)

Source: Ministry of Education and Science

1.2 SECONDARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION

The number of Roma students enrolled in secondary education has also dropped over the past two academic years, from 1,867 enrolled students in 2023/2024 to an increase of 2,157 students in 2024/2025 and a decline to 1,504 students in 2025/2026. The decline in the 2025/2026 academic year may result due to the declining completion rate of primary school, the emigration, the stigma in schools and the general demographic decline in the country. This data shows that inclusive policies are needed which would retain Roma students within the education system. Targeted support measures are still needed to make sure that the decline stabilizes in numbers and keep Roma students in secondary schools. Maintaining consistency in enrollment and completion rates is a key indicator of progress toward inclusive and equitable education for Roma children and youth.

Table 9: Roma Students in the Secondary schools 2021-2025

School year	Enrolled	Dropout	Students that completed education
2021/2022	2,227	243	1,984 (89,08%)
2022/2023	1,867	95	1,772 (94,91%)
2023/2024	1,867	95	1772 (94,91%)
2024/2025	2,157	187	1,970 (91,33%)

Source: Ministry of Education and Science

Table 10: Roma students enrolled in secondary schools

School year	Enrolled
2025/2026	1,504

Source: Ministry of Education and Science

Table 11: Roma students that received scholarship by the Ministry of Education and Science in Secondary Education

Grade-based achievement categories	School Year	Total	Boys	Girls
I (4.5-5)	2023/2024	212	72	140
	2024/2025	202	54	148
	2025/2026	205	60	145
II (3.5-4.9)	2023/2024	279	105	174
	2024/2025	299	117	182
	2025/2026	307	120	187
III (3.0-3.49)	2023/2024	166	76	90
	2024/2025	213	104	109
	2025/2026	213	102	111
IV (2.0-2.99)	2023/2024	237	140	97
	2024/2025	220	107	113
	2025/2026	379	209	170
TOTAL for school year	2023/2024	894		
TOTAL for school year	2024/2025	934		
TOTAL for school year	2025/2026	1,104		

Source: Ministry of Education and Science

Scholarships remain a key incentive for Roma children to enroll in and complete their education. They help reduce the economic barriers many Roma families face, which often affect regular attendance and academic progress. An important strength of this policy is its inclusive approach: scholarships are awarded across the full grading scale, from students with the minimum passing grade (2) to those with the highest grade (5). This

recognizes the different starting points of Roma students and supports both excellent students and those who need additional encouragement, thereby promoting educational equity and retention.

Table 12: Graduated students from tertiary education / latest available data from 2024

	Total	Male	Female	Total – Roma	Male – Roma	Female Roma
2023						
2024	7,021	2,853	4,168	21	9	12

Source: State statistical office

The Ministry of Education and Science holds data exclusively on Roma students who are recipients of scholarships. In the academic year 2025/2026, out of a total of 115 selected Roma students who met the requirements and criteria outlined in the Call for the allocation of 150 scholarships for Roma students from public and private universities, scholarships were awarded to 27 students enrolled in the first year of studies. Out of 27 students, 15 are female and 14 are male are enrolled at state universities.

1.3 ADULT EDUCATION

Romalitico requested information from the Ministry of Education and Science regarding preparation of a program for primary and/or secondary education for Roma adults in 2025, with the aim of integrating them into appropriate levels of primary or secondary education. The Ministry responded that the Adult Education Center is a public institution established by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia in 2008, with the aim of coordinating and developing the adult education system in the country. Its main tasks include:

- Monitoring, analysis and development of the adult education system: The Adult Education Center continuously monitors and analyzes the educational needs of adults and proposes measures to improve the system.
- Preparation of programs and materials: The Adult Education Center participates in the preparation of programs and teaching materials for adult education in order to ensure quality and relevant education.
- Professional supervision and evaluation: The Adult Education Center conducts professional supervision and evaluation of adult education service providers, in order to ensure quality and compliance with standards.

Regarding the development and verification of adult education programs, the process is as follows:

1. **Development of programs:** Adult education providers, such as schools, higher education institutions and specialized institutions, develop specific adult education programs leading to vocational qualifications.

2. **Verification of programs:** In order to be recognized, these programs need to be verified. The request for verification is submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science through the Center for Adult Education. The Center conducts a professional assessment of the program and makes a recommendation to the Ministry for its verification.

This process ensures that adult education programs are of high quality and aligned with the needs of the labor market and society as a whole. The Ministry of Education and Science is the state institution responsible for this validation and/or verification, providing formal support for Roma education in the Republic of North Macedonia.

At the same time, based on Article 15 paragraph (10) of the Law on Primary Education ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 161/19, 229/20, 3/25 and 74/25), the Ministry of Education and Science adopted a Decision on establishing a new Curriculum for Primary Education for Adults. Teaching in accordance with the Curriculum in educational institutions is organized and implemented in a school that has verification for adult education, and teaching in accordance with the Curriculum for Primary Education is implemented in the student's native language in a school with appropriate verification for adult education.

In accordance with Article 14 (Education of children who were not included in regular schooling) of the Law on Primary Education ("Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" No. 3/2025), children who were not included in regular primary education and have exceeded the corresponding age limit have the right to enroll under the same conditions as other students. They are placed in the appropriate grade, with age difference restrictions depending on the stage of education. If a student over the age of 15 has never attended school, they continue their education in an adult education institution. Students who enroll for the first time between the ages of 11 and 14 are placed in the fourth or fifth grade and remain there until achieving the necessary results.

If students lack documentation of previous school attendance but their parents or guardians submit a notarized statement confirming previous attendance, an assessment of knowledge is conducted through tests and oral exams. Based on the results, the school issues a certificate for enrollment in the appropriate grade. Teachers create individualized curricula for these students. If they achieve the expected outcomes, they may advance within the same school year. This option is available for overage students up to fifth grade. Based on the Bureau's proposal, the Ministry prescribes the form and content of these certificates. Upon successful completion of the grade, the student receives an official school report (certificate). Schools are required to maintain annual records for these students.

In 2025, adult training programs reached a total of 3,457 participants, including 1,905 women and 1,552 men. From the total number of participants, 109 were members of the Roma community. These activities mark an important step in strengthening adults' skills through educational programs and supporting their integration into the labor market, with particular attention to gender and ethnic inclusion.

The Ministry's response mainly outlines the legal and administrative framework for adult education but does not show how this framework addresses the educational exclusion of Roma adults. Although the Adult Education Center is responsible for program development, verification, and quality assurance, the Ministry provides no evidence of targeted measures to overcome the specific barriers faced by Roma communities, including poverty, discrimination, early school leaving, and limited access to education. Similarly, while legal provisions allow overage students to complete primary education, they create procedural pathways without addressing the systemic causes of their exclusion from compulsory schooling.

Although the Ministry states that 109 Roma participated in adult training programs in 2025, this figure alone does not demonstrate meaningful inclusion or improved outcomes. The response provides no data on participation rates in relation to the Roma population, completion and certification rates, employment results, or the effectiveness of individualized support. Without evidence of implementation, monitoring, and targeted interventions, the Ministry has not demonstrated that its adult education policies are reducing the long-standing educational inequalities affecting Roma communities.

1.5 ROMA EDUCATIONAL MEDIATORS

According to information provided by the Ministry of Education and Science, as of April 2026, there are 43 Roma educational mediators engaged in 24 municipalities in North Macedonia for children in primary education. These mediators are tasked with enhancing awareness about educational opportunities, facilitating communication between schools and Roma communities, and supporting the academic success and retention of Roma students in primary education. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Science this

academic year introduced the educational mediators for students in secondary school. There are 21 mediators covering 16 municipalities in the country. The role of the educational mediator in secondary schools is to assist and undertake activities to improve awareness of opportunities and access to secondary schools, conduct regular meetings to sensitize the population and secondary school employees to the specifics and needs of persons from vulnerable groups in the area of education, regularly collaborate with professional associates and professors to improve student achievement, and undertake activities to reduce student dropout.

This provision represents a positive and progressive measure by the state, aimed at improving the inclusion, retention, and success of marginalized students in the educational process. Although the Ministry of Education and Science has employed Roma educational mediators for both primary and secondary education across various municipalities, however, there are significant issues with transparency and accountability. The reports of these mediators are not publicly available and cannot be monitored, as the Ministry states that the reports contain personal data and therefore cannot be shared. However, the Ministry does not provide any annual report or comprehensive overview of the mediators' work, which hinders any external assessment or evaluation of their effectiveness. This lack of transparency limits the ability of civil society organizations and other stakeholders to monitor and assess the impact of these efforts. Furthermore, the limited number of mediators remains inadequate to address the needs of the Roma population, and the overall process of employing mediators has not involved significant input from relevant civil society groups, which could help enhance the program's effectiveness and sustainability.

1.6 TUTORING SUPPORT FOR ROMA CHILDREN IN EDUCATION

In response to the question of how tutoring support is provided for Roma students in the 2025/2026 academic year, in accordance with the legal provisions of the Law on Primary Education, the Ministry of Education and Science answered:

- In accordance with the amendments and additions to the Law on Primary Education ("Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" No. 3/2025), Article 36 (Tutoring of Students) provides additional support for students who have learning difficulties and are unable to achieve satisfactory results in subjects according to the curriculum for the current academic year. This support is provided with prior written consent from the parent or guardian.

- Tutors can be anyone with three years of experience in teaching, employed teachers, as well as university students in their last academic year of studies in designated studies. Their role is to provide additional educational support, help in mastering the curriculum, reduce the risk of dropping out, encourage regular attendance at classes and improve educational achievements, especially among students from vulnerable categories, including Roma students.

- The Ministry of Education and Science publishes a public call for the engagement of tutors on its website at least once a year. The selection is carried out by a three-member commission consisting of administrative staff within the Ministry, appointed by the Minister. The commission prepares a list of candidates who meet the requirements, which is then published on the Ministry's website. Tutors receive financial compensation for their work in accordance with the legal provisions

- The measure will begin to be implemented after the full launch and processing of the optimization of the school network, which is a comprehensive process of reorganization and rationalization of schools, with the aim of more efficient use of resources, improving the quality of teaching and ensuring equal access to education. In this context, the engagement of tutors will be aligned with the new organizational structure of schools and the identified needs of students.

This is a new measure adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science with the latest amendments to the law, allowing tutoring support for primary school students to be financed from the national and local budgets. Although this measure was adopted in 2024, it has not yet been implemented on the ground, as the Ministry is in a process of optimization of the school network which reorganizes the rationalization of schools in order to adjust the efficiency of the schools and resources

This measure, if implemented starting from the next academic year, should ensure that the public call is published before the start of the year, meaning no later than the end of June in the previous school year, so that tutors can be engaged for the upcoming academic year and provide the necessary support to children who truly need it. Roma children, through the practice and implementation of various projects for tutoring, have shown excellent results, with improvements in academic performance and an increase in grades when tutored.

1.7 ROMA STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

According to the data from the Ministry of Education and Science, the total number of educational assistants in primary education is 1,346, while there are 2,674 students with disabilities in primary education. From the total of 2,674 students with disabilities, 313 are Roma or 11,7%. In secondary education, there are 147 educational assistants, while the total number of students with disabilities in secondary education is 430. From the total number of students with disabilities, 40 are Roma or 9,30%

Table 13: Roma students with disabilities

	Total number of students with disabilities	Total number of educational assistants	Total number of Roma students with disabilites
Primary education	2,674	1,346	313 (11,70%)
Secondary education	430	147	40 (9,30)

Educational assistants in primary education are provided based on the recommendation from the assessment system according to the international classification of functioning. After the resource centers receive the approvals, they publish a call specifying the number of educational assistants to be employed based on the language of education. Educational assistants are not engaged based on the ethnic background of the students but based on specific criteria.

Although the number of Roma students with disabilities represent a small percentage of the total number, still data shows that there are students with disabilities that are not assigned with an educational assistant. Which is an issue that needs to be addressed by the Ministry of Education and Science together with the relevant stakeholders in order to close the gap between the number of students with disabilities and the number of educational assistants. In primary education there is a need for 1,328 educational assistants or 49,6% in order to close the gap and appoint an assistant to a student. While in secondary education, there is a need of 283 educational assistants or 65,81% in order to close the gap and appoint an assistant to a student. There is a need for a consistent intersectoral cooperation among the Ministry of Education and Science, social protection and other authorities relevant to such cases in order to monitor and track the progress of the student-assistant relationship and the progress of the student because The lack of attention to this issue reflects a systemic oversight that undermines efforts to ensure equal educational opportunities for all children, particularly those from marginalized communities.

1.8 SEGREGATION OF ROMA CHILDREN IN EDUCATION

In terms of segregation of Roma children in education, the Ministry for Education and Science, explained that apart from the implementation of the policies, the Ministry increased the budget for 31% for two budget programs for education of Roma. Thus, one of the priorities for the Ministry is the desegregation process in education. After the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Elmazova and Others v. Republic of North Macedonia, the Ministry of Education and Science has taken specific measures to overcome the established segregation of Roma students in primary schools and to prevent similar cases in the future. In this regard, amendments to the Law on Primary Education have been adopted, aimed at creating systemic and long-term solutions for the promotion of inclusive education and the elimination of all forms of discrimination on ethnic grounds.

The key changes in the law include changes in:

1. **Article 5 – Protection against discrimination and promotion of equality, paragraph** (1): All forms of direct or indirect discrimination in primary education on the grounds of sex, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, citizenship, social origin, education, religion, political opinion, age, marital status, health or any other legally or internationally recognised ground are prohibited.
2. **Article 5, Paragraphs (7) and (8) -** Paragraph (7): Retaliation against school employees or other persons for reporting or acting against discrimination, including participation as witnesses or in related proceedings, is prohibited. Paragraph (8): Discrimination and physical segregation of students on discriminatory grounds in the enrolment or formation of classes is explicitly prohibited, except when there is an objective justification.
3. **Article 16 – Inclusive Teams** - The law provides that school inclusive teams shall ensure equal access to primary education for all children by implementing appropriate anti-discriminatory measures.
4. **Article 53 - Paragraph (15) - Balanced distribution of students** - Schools are obliged to ensure a balanced distribution of students from different ethnic communities within classes, avoiding physical separation, except in cases where there is only one class per grade. This process is coordinated by the school principal based on the recommendations of the inclusive team.
5. **Article 63 - Amended school districting regime** - The most controversial provision in the law was districting, which has also been amended:

- Parents are obliged to enroll their children in schools belonging to their school district, unless there are specific conditions that justify a different choice (for example, when mother tongue instruction is not available in the local school).
- Local authorities are obliged to ensure that districting does not create ethnic segregation, except in areas predominantly populated by one ethnic community.
- Comprehensive lists of children who meet the requirements for enrollment according to their place of residence are kept in order to ensure compliance with these rules.

6. **Article 66 - Prevention of violence**

- Paragraph (1): Schools are obliged to implement programs to prevent violence, abuse, neglect, discrimination and misuse of psychoactive substances.
- Paragraph (6): Financial resources are provided for these programs, which are managed by a commission appointed by the Ministry.
- Paragraph (15): Municipalities are obliged to develop action plans to address and overcome cases of physical segregation of students during enrollment or class formation.

These legal amendments aim to establish a solid framework for inclusive and non-discriminatory primary education, in accordance with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights and international human rights standards. In due time, the Ministry of Education and Science accepted cooperation with the Council of

Europe for the preparation of a feasibility study and also became part of the European family by joining the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education as a member state, with the aim of improving the creation and implementation of educational policies related to inclusion.

The Ministry of Education and Science presents legislative amendments, increased funding, and international cooperation as evidence of progress. However, these measures remain largely formal unless they lead to measurable changes in schools. Anti-discrimination provisions alone cannot ensure the desegregation of Roma children without effective implementation, monitoring, and enforcement.

Key responsibilities for desegregation have been delegated to municipalities, school principals, and inclusive teams. Yet the Ministry does not explain how these actors will be monitored, what sanctions will apply in cases of non-compliance, or whether they have sufficient resources and training to carry out their duties effectively. Without clear monitoring, adequate resources, targeted training, and enforceable accountability mechanisms, legal obligations risk remaining aspirational rather than producing meaningful change in schools. The provision also gives municipalities discretion to maintain school catchment practices that may continue the segregation of Roma children, particularly where Roma communities live in geographically concentrated and often segregated neighborhoods near specific schools. The exemption stating that anti-segregation requirements do not apply where one ethnic group is predominant effectively risks legitimizing existing segregation. It allows municipalities to justify systemic ethnic separation as a result of demographic concentration, raising serious concerns about the state's commitment to inclusive and equitable education for all children.

1.9 ROMA HISTORY AND IDENTITY TEACHING

In terms of Roma history and identity teaching the Ministry of Education and Science explained that the elective subject "Roma Language and Culture" is taught from grades 3 to 9 in primary education. Although textbooks existed for grades 3 to 5, earlier attempts to develop textbooks for grades 6 to 9 were unsuccessful due to quality issues or lack of applicants. To address this, the Ministry of Education and Science amended the Law on Textbooks in Primary and Secondary Education in 2025, allowing more flexible criteria for authors and reviewers for community language and culture subjects, including Roma.
The amendments make it easier to form author teams and review committees when there are not enough candidates with ten years of experience. For these subjects, reviewers and authors may qualify with higher education in the relevant field and shorter teaching experience, helping ensure the preparation of needed textbooks. The Ministry also adopted rules that allow the subject "Language and Culture of the Community" to be organized in groups of fewer than 15 students for smaller communities, based on criteria proposed by the Bureau for the Development of Education.

As a result, calls were announced for textbooks for "Roma Language and Culture" for grades 6 and 7.

For the first time, a textbook for grade 6 has been provided, improving continuity in the study of Roma language and culture, while the procedure for developing the grade 7 textbook is ongoing.

3.HEALTH

3.1 HEALTH INSURANCE

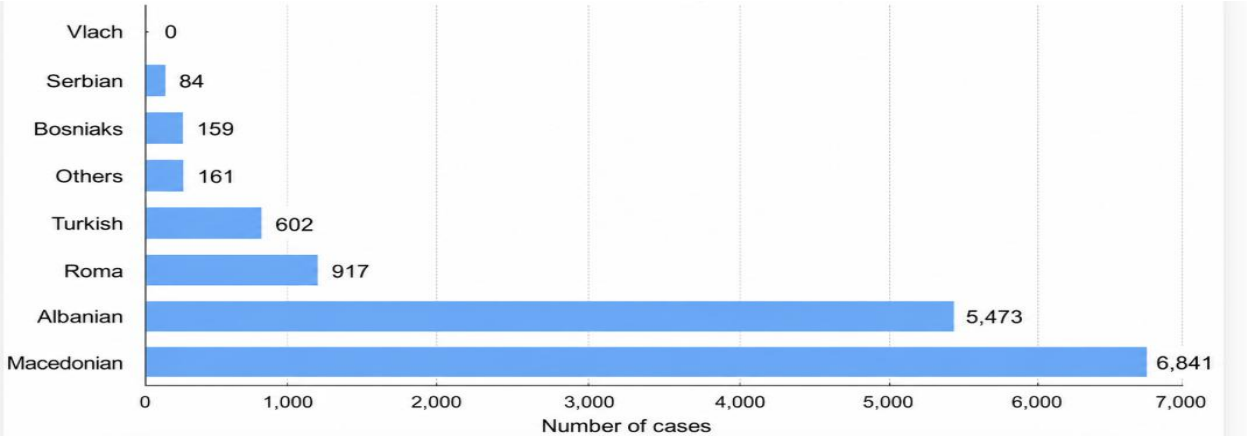
The Law on Health Insurance in North Macedonia regulates the rights and obligations of citizens regarding health insurance and defines how mandatory and voluntary insurance is implemented. Mandatory health insurance applies to all citizens and aims to ensure access to comprehensive health services and financial protection, based on the principles of solidarity, equality and efficient use of resources. Health insurance coverage is a key indicator of access to health services and is aligned with the core European health indicators. According to a 2024 survey by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), around 77% of the Roma population in North Macedonia is covered by the national health insurance scheme or supplementary insurance.

The high number of uninsured Roma is largely linked to the lack of personal documentation, which often prevents individuals from obtaining their first ID card and registering with the Health Insurance Fund. Access is further limited by seasonal, informal or unregistered work, as mandatory state-funded insurance is usually contingent on formal employment. In addition, administrative obstacles and limited information about health rights make it difficult for many Roma to navigate the health system and access preventive services and subsidized medicines.

3.2 MORTALITY RATE

Of the 16,061 live births in North Macedonia in 2024, almost all were born in a health facility. Only 2 children were born elsewhere with professional assistance and only 1 without professional assistance — an extremely positive indicator for the perinatal care system.

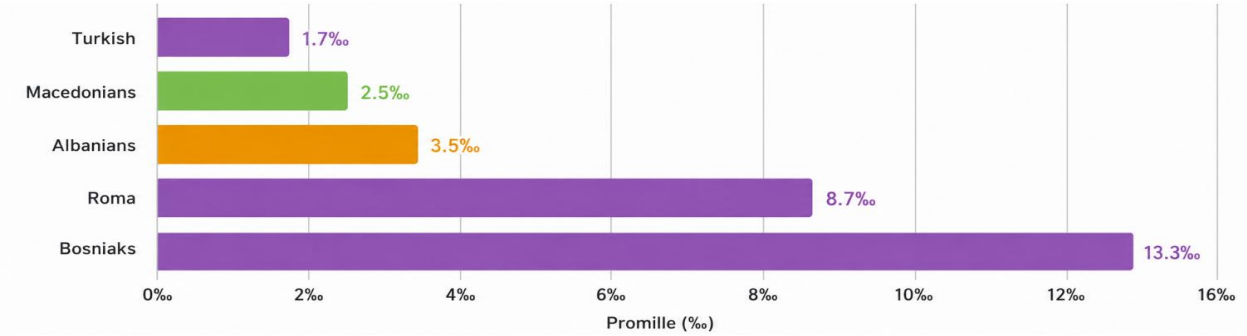
Chart 1: Liveborn Children 2024



Source :MAC stat base – Liveborn children

Among Roma mothers (917 births), 100% were registered in a health facility — not a single birth outside without professional assistance. This is a significant improvement compared to previous years and indicates the success of health mediation programs among Roma in Macedonia. For context, the Roma community accounts for 5.7% of all births in 2024 (917 out of 16,061), but only 2.5% of the population according to the 2021 census — this means that Roma have a significantly higher birth rate and a younger age structure, with strong implications for future demographics.

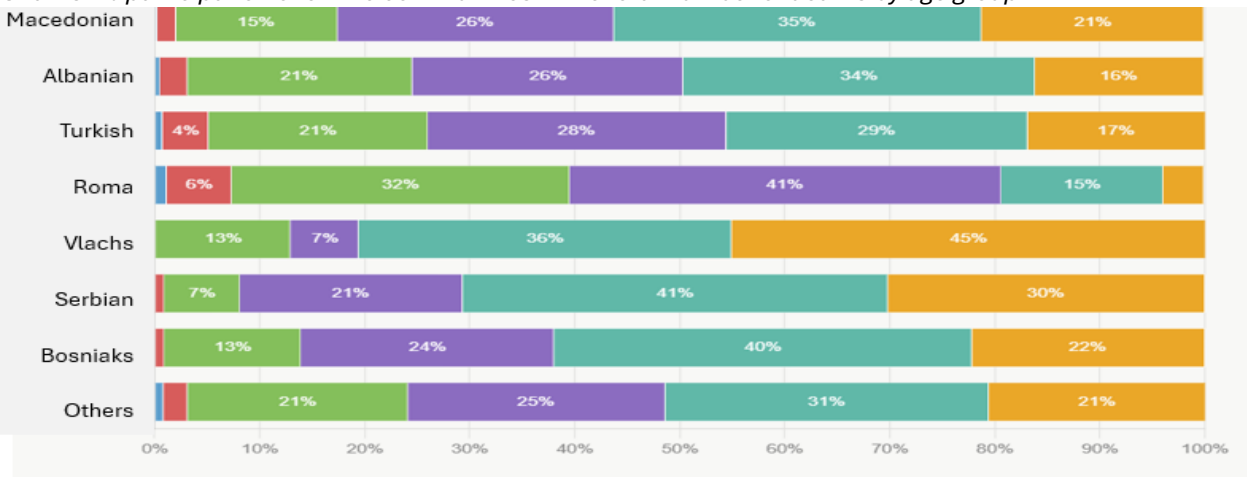
Chart 2: Infant mortality rate by ethnicity



Source: Own calculation

The Roma community has a mortality rate of 8.7‰ — almost 3 times higher than the Macedonian average (2.5‰) and 3 times higher than the national average (2.9‰). This despite the fact that 100% of Roma births are in a health facility — the problem is not in access to birth, but in postnatal care, nutrition, living conditions and monitoring of infants. The Bosniak community shows the highest IMR (13.3‰), but with only 2 deaths per 150 live births — a statistically unstable number, a small sample. The national average of 2.9‰ is at the European level (EU average ~3.2‰ for 2023), but differences between communities indicate deep structural inequalities. The Roma community is 3 times above the national average and ~2.7 times above the EU average — a clear signal of inequality in postnatal care.

Chart 3: % participation of ethnic communities in the total number of deaths by age group



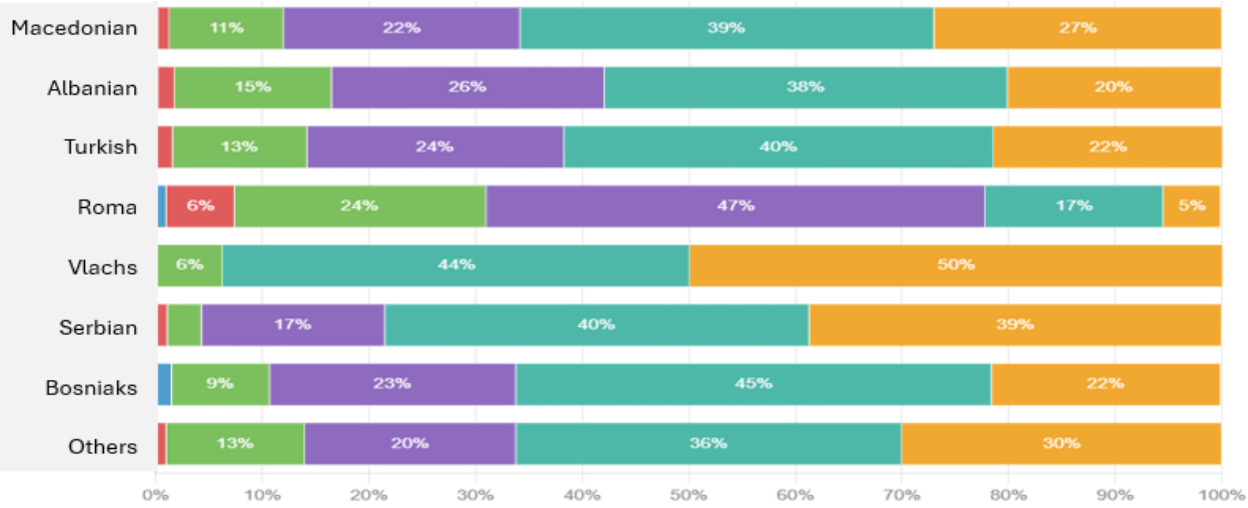
Source:MAK state database - Deaths by ethnicity and age groups

Given this, the mortality of Roma (435 deaths in 2024 or ~2.2% of the total) is roughly proportional to their demographic share — but the age structure clearly shows premature mortality compared to other communities. This is a signal of systemic inequalities in access to healthcare and living standards.

1. Concentration in middle age - Roma die significantly earlier than other communities. The share of Roma in the 45–64 age group is 4.1% — twice as high as in the 75+ age group. This indicates earlier mortality, associated with worse socioeconomic and health conditions.
2. Sharp decline in the elderly groups - In the 85+ age group, Roma make up only 0.4% of deaths — compared to 7.2% among Macedonians. This does not mean that Roma live longer, but the opposite: the majority die before reaching that age, so they are simply not included in the statistics on the elderly.

3. Gender asymmetry - Among Roma women, mortality is more strongly concentrated in the 65–74 age group (95 deaths, 4.3% of all female deaths in that group). Roma women have a higher share of mortality in middle and older age compared to men, which is unusual for the population in general. Roma women — the share of the 65–74 age group (47%) is exceptionally high, even higher than among male Roma. At the same time, the 75–84 age group among Roma women (17%) is much lower than among Macedonian women (39%) — another indicator of premature mortality.

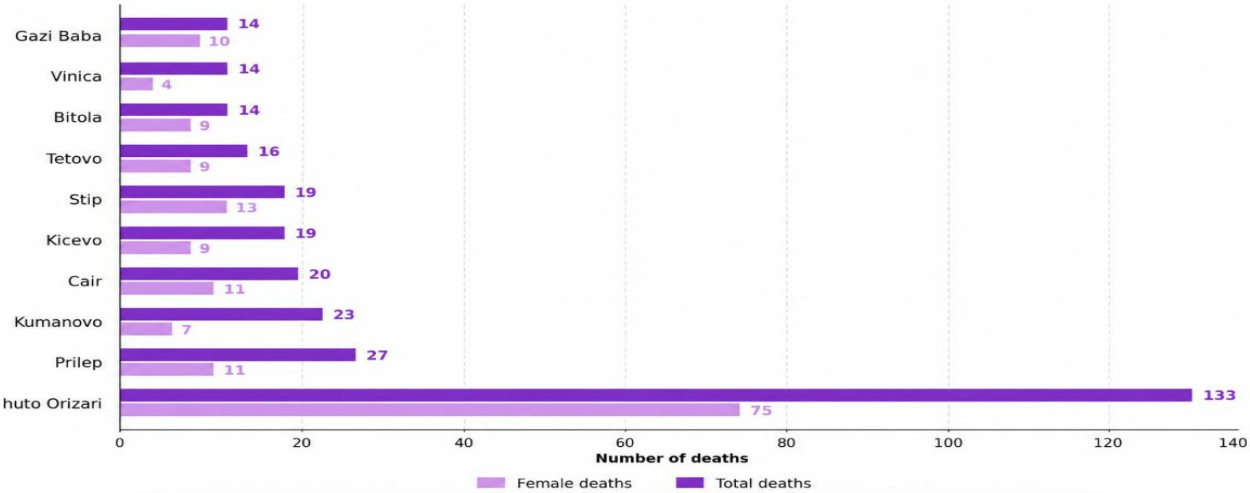
Chart 4: % participation of ethnic women in the total number of female deaths by age group



Source: MAK Stat Database – Deaths by ethnicity and age groups

The graph shows the top 10 municipalities ranked by total Roma deaths in 2024, with a separate bar for women. Shuto Orizari absolutely dominates with 133 deaths (75 women) — almost 5 times more than the next municipality. This is a direct reflection of the fact that Shuto Orizari is the only municipality in the world with a Roma majority. The gender structure differs by municipality: in Bitola and Gazi Baba women make up ~65–70% of Roma deaths, while in Vinica only ~29% — an interesting regional variation. Concentration in Skopje: if you add up only the Skopje municipalities (Shuto Orizari + Chair + Gazi Baba + the rest), that gives ~211 deaths, or almost half of the total Roma deaths in the country.

Chart 5: Number of Roma deaths by municipality – 10 municipalities with the highest Roma mortality rate



Combined with the previous mortality charts, a clear picture emerges: Roma in Macedonia have a high birth rate but premature mortality. This scissors — many births, but dying earlier, indicates an urgent need for health

interventions among the adult and middle-aged Roma population, even though obstetric care is already well covered.

3.3 PROGRAM FOR ACTIVE HEALTH PROTECTION OF MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

A comparison of the budget data for 2025 and 2026 shows that the total budget remains unchanged and amounts to 17,000,000 denars in both years. At first glance, this can be interpreted as budgetary stability and maintaining the institutional obligation to finance the envisaged measures. However, a deeper analysis shows that although the total amount is identical, the internal distribution of funds has changed significantly, indicating a change in priorities and targeting of funds towards more vulnerable categories.

The most significant positive shift is observed in the budget line intended for direct protection of vulnerable women, including women without personal documentation, women without health insurance and victims of violence. In 2026, this item increased by over 2.3 million denars compared to 2025. This represents the largest positive shift in the analyzed period and indicates greater recognition of the specific risks faced by women from vulnerable categories, especially Roma women who are exposed to multiple discrimination.

This increase is particularly important because direct protection is not only a social measure, but also a mechanism for accessing fundamental rights. Undocumented and uninsured women are often excluded from regular institutional services, while victims of violence need rapid, accessible and coordinated support. Therefore, the increase in funds in this area can be interpreted as a step towards more sensitive and fair budgeting. From a public policy perspective, this change shows that institutions are gradually recognizing the need for targeted support for the most vulnerable groups. However, for this budget change to have a real effect, it is necessary for the funds to be accompanied by clear criteria for use, a transparent monitoring mechanism and regular reporting on the number of women covered, the type of support provided and the specific results. Therefore, although the unchanged total budget indicates limited fiscal space, the increase in funds for direct protection of vulnerable women is a significant positive signal. The next challenge is to ensure that this change does not remain just a budgetary reallocation, but rather turns into real, accessible, and timely support for women who are most exposed to institutional exclusion, poverty, and violence.

Table 14: Comparison of Healthcare Programme Budgets for 2025 and 2026

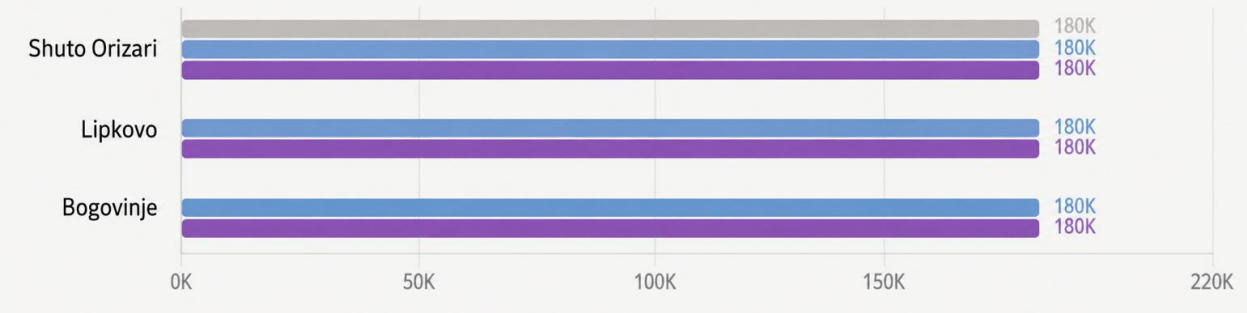
Activity	2025	2026	Change
Free medical check-ups/childbirth without insurance/without documents	660,000	1,500,000	+127%
Medical abortion / abortion with medication for vulnerable women	300,000	500,000	+67%
Contraceptives	300,000	500,000	+67%
Medical examinations for victims of violence	150,000	300,000	+100%
Breastfeeding Week	30,000	100,000	+233%
Information on health status	10,000	100,000	+900%

Source: Ministry of health

The budget for direct protection of vulnerable women (undocumented, uninsured, victims of violence) has increased by over 2.3 million denars compared to 2025 — this is the largest positive shift in three years.

Gynecological stimulation for vulnerable municipalities — unchanged, 540,000 denars for all three municipalities (Šuto Orizari, Lipkovo, Bogovinje).

Chart 6: Gynaecological support



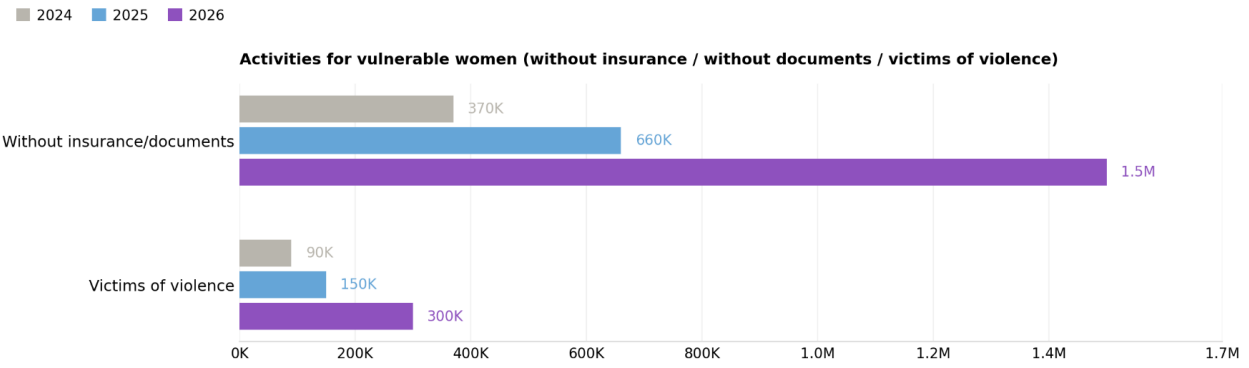
The 2026 program introduces a pilot screening for spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) — a completely new activity with a budget of 3,000,000 denars for 6,000 newborns. SMA is a genetic disease where early detection is critical for treatment. This is a significant step forward in neonatal care that applies to all newborns, including Roma. At the same time, the budget for metabolic screening has been reduced, the price per test drops from 900 to 600 denars, probably due to optimization or a change of supplier.

For the first time, budgets for training health workers have been provided: 100,000 denars for perinatal care and 100,000 for the mortality screening system. This is important because the quality of health workers directly affects vulnerable groups.

Broader definition of uninsured persons

In 2024, the wording was: "persons without an identification document" — i.e. mostly Roma without an ID card. In 2025, it was expanded to: "women who were left without health insurance AND persons without an identification document" — this also includes women who lost their jobs, divorced women without insurance, etc. The budget for this activity has been increased from 370,000 to 660,000 denars — almost double.

Chart 7: Activities for vulnerable women



In 2026, the wording "removal of all types of geographical, financial and cultural barriers, especially among vulnerable groups" is returned in specific goal 6 — a wording that was omitted in 2025. This is symbolic, but it signals increased awareness.

Practically most important: the budget for free examinations and childbirth for undocumented women increases to 1,500,000 denars — almost 4 times more than in 2024 (370,000). This directly covers Roma women without ID cards, who were systematically excluded from healthcare.

Chart 8: Contraceptives and medical abortion



This measure indirectly also covers Roma women, who are statistically at higher risk of domestic violence. Both measures target socially vulnerable categories — in practice, mostly Roma women and women without insurance.

3.4 MANDATORY IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM 2024 AND 2025 – FOCUS ON ROMA

There are no measurable targets for Roma women. The specific targets mention "Roma women" in the text, but no performance indicators are disaggregated by ethnic community and it is impossible to measure whether the program is actually reaching Roma women.

The program for 2025 and 2026 has been incrementally improved, wider geographic coverage with gynecologists, a larger budget for vulnerable women, and an expanded definition of beneficiaries. But it remains a reactive, institutional program without a proactive outreach component. To significantly reduce the Roma IMR (8.7‰ in 2024), structural changes are needed outside of this program — improving living conditions, education, and health literacy in Roma communities. Unlike all previous programs, this one directly names Roma as a priority target group. The "Programme Objectives" section for both 2024 and 2025 contains identical wording: emphasis should be placed on achieving greater coverage among hard-to-reach populations: residents of rural areas, the Roma population, and people who frequently change their place of residence (migrants, refugees). The recommended methods are outreach activities, field surveys, and door-to-door vaccination.

- Methodology designed for Roma - The recommendation for door-to-door vaccination and field surveys is a standard WHO methodology for reaching Roma and marginalized communities. However, neither 2024 nor 2025 has a separate budget for this outreach work — it is recommended but not funded separately.
- The only concrete change 2024→2025 related to accessibility is the introduction of an afternoon shift at vaccination points at least once a week — this directly helps working Roma parents who cannot take their child for vaccination during working hours.
- The budget grows (+7.5%), but not promotion — funds for promotion and education of parents remain frozen at 600,000 denars in both years, although low awareness is a key barrier among Roma.
- Linkage with IMR - With a Roma IMR of 8.7‰ in 2024, insufficient vaccination coverage among Roma children is a structural risk. Incomplete MMR vaccination in infants is particularly associated with mortality under 1 year of age — precisely the age group where the Roma IMR is three times higher.

4. HOUSING

Although it was reported by the Ombudsman in 2024, the housing and living conditions of children whose families have lived for several years in the abandoned facilities of the public institution “Ranka Milanović” in Skopje remain unchanged. These families continue to face unresolved housing issues, leaving children in inadequate and unsafe environments that seriously undermine their basic rights and well-being.
Based on direct observations, the Ombudsperson found that many children and their families live in extremely inhumane and substandard conditions, including:

- no access to water or electricity;
- lack of basic hygiene conditions;
- exposure to health and safety risks; and
- continued absence of a coordinated institutional response.

These conditions represent a serious violation of children’s fundamental rights and highlight the urgent need for coordinated action to secure safe, dignified, and sustainable housing for the affected families. Similar cases have been identified in other cities across the country, pointing to a broader pattern of insufficient continuous care and ineffective measures by both local and central authorities.

In July 2025, the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination issued a general recommendation to municipalities and other stakeholders relating to the housing situation of Roma. Evidence indicates that Roma communities in North Macedonia continue to face systemic barriers in the enjoyment of the right to adequate housing, resulting in persistent socio-economic exclusion and unequal access to public services. The General Recommendation of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (2025) recognizes that a significant number of Roma continue to reside in informal and substandard settlements characterized by inadequate infrastructure, insecure tenure, and limited access to essential public utilities, including drinking water, sanitation, electricity, road infrastructure, and administrative services. These structural deficiencies create conditions of legal insecurity and reinforce patterns of social exclusion and discrimination.

The Commission concludes that these inequalities are not merely the result of socio-economic disadvantage but are closely linked to the failure of competent authorities to implement systematic, non-discriminatory housing policies, urban planning measures, and infrastructure investments in settlements predominantly inhabited by Roma. In particular, the absence or non-implementation of General and Detailed Urban Plans prevents the legalization of residential buildings, limits public investment, and restricts access to basic public services, thereby placing Roma communities at a disproportionate disadvantage compared to the general population.

These findings should be assessed within the broader framework of national and international human rights obligations. Article 8 of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia establishes equality, social justice, and the rule of law as fundamental constitutional values, while Article 9 guarantees equality of all citizens before the Constitution and the law without discrimination. Furthermore, the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination explicitly prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination, including practices that have the purpose or effect of limiting the equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms. The Commission specifically notes that the denial of access to infrastructure, public services, and adequate housing conditions may constitute discriminatory treatment under this legal framework.

North Macedonia is also bound by several international human rights instruments that recognize the right to adequate housing. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the right of every person to an adequate standard of living, including housing. Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights obliges States Parties to progressively realize the right to adequate housing without discrimination. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, through General Comment No. 4, clarifies that adequate housing extends beyond the existence of shelter and includes legal security of tenure, availability of services and infrastructure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, suitable location, and cultural adequacy. General Comment No. 7 further establishes that housing policies must protect residents against forced eviction and ensure procedural safeguards consistent with human dignity.

The Commission further recalls North Macedonia's commitments under the Western Balkans Partners' Declaration on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process, which requires the progressive legalization of informal settlements where possible and the provision of permanent, dignified, affordable, and desegregated housing solutions for Roma communities. These commitments require municipalities and national authorities to adopt targeted measures addressing the structural inequalities experienced by Roma in access to housing and related public infrastructure.

The evidence demonstrates that inadequate housing conditions have far-reaching implications beyond the housing sector itself. Limited access to water, sanitation, transportation, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities perpetuates cycles of poverty, segregation, and social exclusion. Consequently, improving housing conditions should be understood not solely as an infrastructure intervention but as a prerequisite for the realization of a broad range of economic, social, and cultural rights. Sustainable policy responses therefore require coordinated action by central and local authorities to ensure equal access to public infrastructure, urban planning, legalization processes, and public services in accordance with national anti-discrimination legislation and international human rights standards.

In February 2025, the Ministry of Transport and Communications announced a public call for communal infrastructure projects for municipalities with Roma populations at the local level. Within the framework of the program under which the call was announced, 20 million denars were allocated.

4.1 INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS

According to the official gazette no. 129/25 the reallocation of the total 20.000.000 MKD was allocated to the following municipalities.

Table 15: Allocation of funds

No.	Municipality	Project	Amount (MKD)
1.	Shuto Orizari	Reconstruction of street 1673 in Shuto Orizari	1.791.065,00
2.	Bitola	Reconstruction of the roadway infrastructure for part of Mukos Street and reconstruction of the roadway infrastructure for part of Ljubojno Street	1.672.931,00
3.	Tetovo	Reconstruction of local road UB. 19 ul. Prohor Pchinski	1.629.656,00
4.	Delchevo	Reconstruction of a part of Solunska Street from 0+0.000 to 0+478.89 on KP No. 9035 and KP No. 8142 and from 0+0.000 to 0+182.83 on KP No. 8119/2 and KP No. 9038	1.568.941,00

5.	Zelenikovo	Reconstruction of part of section 2 of the sewage system in the village of Zelenikovo	1.550.383,00
6.	Kratovo	Reconstruction of a linear infrastructure facility - local road in the village of Vakuf	1.431.505,00
7.	Strumica	Reconstruction of 5th November Street in old urban block 6, from Slavcho Stojmenski Street to Gjorgi Vasilev Street	1.315.297,00
8.	Jegunovce	Reconstruction of a street in Jegunovce	1.308.020,00
9.	Gevgelija	Installation of urban equipment playground at KP 6727/3	1.306.814,00
10.	Kavadarci	Reconstruction of sewage system for part of Bel Kamen settlement	1.094.722,00
11.	Vasilevo	Construction of a fecal sewage system in the village of Vasilevo, collector K26 km 0+00 to km 0+321.4	1.064.494,00
12.	Berovo	Extension of the fecal sewage system in the Roma neighborhood off 23 August Street	946.360,00
13.	Delchevo	Reconstruction of part of the distribution network in the city of Delchevo, Staro Delchevo zone	913.990,00
14.	Rankovce	Reconstruction of local road in Rankovce village, Zerdi Dub, phase 3	855.182,00
15.	Vinica	Replacement of existing street lights in Roma neighborhood of Vinica with more energy efficient street lights and installation of LED lights	850.640,00
16.	Bosilovo	Reconstruction of a street in the village of Staro Baldovci	700.000,00

Source: Official gazette of RSM, 2025

According to the Ministry of Transport, in February 2026, at the proposal of the Ministry of Transport, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted a Program for Support of the Implementation of the Roma Decade and Strategy for 2026 ("Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" No. 29/26). The funds for the implementation of this Program are determined by the Budget of the Ministry of Transport for 2026 in the amount of 20 million denars, and they are intended for the implementation of communal infrastructure projects for places inhabited predominantly by the Roma population. The beneficiaries of these funds are the local self-government units in which there are places inhabited predominantly by the Roma population.

Based on this Program, the Ministry of Transport on March 24, 2026, published a public call inviting local self-government units to submit a request for the use of funds from the Budget of the Ministry of Transport for 2026 to support the implementation of the Roma Decade and Strategy. The public call lasted until 24.04.2025. The procedure for evaluating the projects received is ongoing.

It is important to emphasize that the decision regarding the allocation of funds from the current budget is not being implemented in a timely, effective, and efficient manner. Specifically, it has been a practice that the call for applications from municipalities is always made towards the end of the year, in September, while the funds must be utilized by December of the same year. This timing limits municipalities from submitting high-quality projects that are in line with the real needs of the Roma population, and their implementation is significantly rushed. This has been a practice every year, regardless of the government in power, and it continues to pose challenges for municipalities in adequately planning and executing projects. The Ministry of Transport should change this practice and issue the call for applications earlier, to allow municipalities adequate time to prepare and implement projects effectively or issue a longer period for implementation of these projects.

4.2 LEGALIZATION

Although legalization of dwellings remain as one of the biggest problems for Roma families, still it is reported from the Roma Integration phase III that From January to September 2025, 54 Roma families in five municipalities of North Macedonia (Kavadarci, Kochani, Prilep, Veles and Vinica) received official ownership certificates for their homes.

4.3 SOCIAL HOUSING

During 2025, steps were taken towards establishing a comprehensive legal framework for social housing in North Macedonia. As part of this process, an expert working group was established, composed of representatives of relevant state institutions, civil society organizations, international organizations, and experts, with the task of preparing the draft text of the Law on Social Housing.

The working group held three consultative meetings, as well as several thematic meetings with stakeholders, in cooperation with experts engaged through the joint European Union and Council of Europe project "Roma Integration – Phase III". The process enabled the involvement of various institutional and civil society actors in the development of the legal solution, with the aim of ensuring a more inclusive and sustainable approach to housing for vulnerable groups of citizens, including the Roma community.

On 15 December 2025, a public debate on the draft law was organized, with the participation of representatives of state institutions, civil society organizations, the expert community, and international partners. During the debate, the key solutions contained in the law were presented, as well as their alignment with European standards on the right to adequate housing. Comparative experiences and models for financing social housing applied in other European countries were also presented.

In order to ensure transparency and broader public consultation, the draft law was published on the Single National Electronic Register of Regulations (ENER) for a period of 30 days. At the time of preparing this report, the process of reviewing and harmonizing the received comments and proposals was ongoing.
Following the completion of the consultation process, the law was expected to be submitted to the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for review and adoption. The adoption of the Law on Social Housing represents an important step towards establishing a systemic approach to addressing housing exclusion and improving access to adequate housing for socially vulnerable groups, including Roma families. However, despite the progress made in preparing the legal framework, there remains a need to monitor the process of adoption and implementation of the law, as well as to ensure adequate financial mechanisms that will enable its effective implementation in practice.

5. CIVIL REGISTRATION AND PREVENTION OF STATELESSNESS

In 2018, approximately 700 persons without adequate civil registration were identified, prompting the state to initiate a process of identifying these individuals and ensuring their access to fundamental rights. During the period 2020–2023, several legislative amendments were adopted to facilitate birth registration, the issuance of personal identity documents, the regulation of residence, and the reduction of the risk of statelessness. These reforms enabled the gradual transfer of individuals from the special civil registry into the regular civil registration system and created the conditions for obtaining full legal identity and access to public services.

As part of the implementation of the Law Amending the Law on Civil Registration (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 129/23), between March 2023 and the first half of 2024, a total of 526 persons from vulnerable groups who had previously not been properly registered in the civil registry were recorded. Of these, 460 persons were subsequently entered into the regular Birth Register (223 women and 237 men). By mid-2024, 296 persons had already been assigned a unique personal identification number and had been fully registered in the civil registration system, while the procedures for 164 persons were still ongoing. During this period, civil society organizations continued to provide support in collecting the necessary documentation.[6]

The process continued throughout 2025. According to the latest available data, out of the initially identified 526 persons, a total of 395 persons had obtained a birth certificate with an assigned personal identification number. In addition, 146 persons had been entered into the civil registry and possessed a birth certificate but had not yet been assigned a personal identification number due to unresolved administrative or legal issues. Of these 146 cases, 81 persons remain in the process of resolving their status, while the remaining 65 cases involve specific obstacles, including persons born abroad (20), deceased persons (18), persons who have not collected the issued administrative decisions (26), and one case currently subject to additional verification by the Ministry of Interior.[7] During 2025, an additional six newly identified persons without adequate civil registration were recorded, together with eight children at risk of non-registration, while one case was assessed as particularly complex. The need to strengthen coordination between the Ministry of Interior and the Civil Registry Office was also highlighted in order to ensure the faster and more efficient resolution of the remaining cases.

In addition to the ongoing registration process for persons without identity documents, several activities were undertaken during 2025 to improve access to legal aid and strengthen institutional coordination.
Within the implementation of the Law Amending the Law on Civil Registration, and with the support of the OSCE Mission to Skopje, two workshops were organized to address the challenges faced by persons without personal identity documents. The workshops presented pilot initiatives aimed at providing free legal aid through legal clinics, as well as initiatives to facilitate the issuance of birth certificates in healthcare institutions. Furthermore, mobile teams were established in Skopje, Bitola, and Štip, enabling members of the Roma community and other vulnerable groups to receive free legal assistance and support in procedures for regulating their civil status.

In March 2025, the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia hosted a working meeting of the Working Group for Monitoring the Registration Process of Persons Without Documentation in the Birth Register, during which the current challenges and opportunities for further improving the process were discussed in coordination with the competent institutions. Additionally, during 2025, a Working Group was established to prepare a Protocol for the Determination of the Status of Stateless Persons, led by the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth, in cooperation with the Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio Responsible for the Integration and Implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022–2030.

Despite the progress achieved in the civil registration process, according to data from the Ministry of Justice, 145 persons still remained without regulated citizenship in 2025. Of these, approximately 60 cases are

[6] Information provided by the **Bureau for the Promotion and Improvement of Inter-Community Relations (BPIICR)** based on data received from the **Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth**, 2026.
[7] Information provided by the **Bureau for the Promotion and Improvement of Inter-Community Relations (BPIICR)** based on data received from the **Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth**, 2026.

considered particularly complex and challenging, while the remaining individuals possess a birth certificate but have not yet been able to fully regularize their legal status. An additional challenge concerns persons originating from the Kosovo crisis who have resided in North Macedonia for an extended period. Although some of them have obtained permanent residence permits as foreign nationals, there remains a need to establish permanent and formalized cooperation between the competent institutions of North Macedonia and Kosovo in order to achieve a long-term resolution of their legal status and prevent the risk of statelessness.

Table 16: Persons Without Civil Registration Documents

Indicator	Status as of mid-2024	Status in 2025
Total identified persons	526	526
Persons assigned a personal identification number	296	395
Persons registered without a personal identification number	164	146
Cases still pending	164	81
Unsolved cases with specific obstacles		65
Persons without regulated citizenship		145 (60 have birth certificates)

Source: Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth.

6.DISCRIMINATION AND ANTIGYPSYISM

Data from the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination for 2025 show that ethnic affiliation was the most frequently reported ground of discrimination, accounting for 22% of all complaints submitted. During the year, a total of 371 complaints were filed, of which 19 complainants (5%) identified themselves as members of the Roma community, while 164 complainants (44%) did not declare their ethnic affiliation.

The fact that ethnic affiliation was the most frequently reported ground of discrimination indicates that ethnic discrimination remains a significant challenge in North Macedonia. At the same time, the high proportion of complainants who did not declare their ethnic affiliation limits a comprehensive assessment of the impact of discrimination on individual ethnic communities, including the Roma community.

Table 17: Complaints Submitted to the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination by Ethnic Affiliation (2023–2025)

Ethnic Affiliation	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Macedonians	254	169	129
Albanians	14	29	15
Turks	2	3	11
Roma	12	7	19
Serbs	7	2	3
Bosniak	2	1	5
Vlachs	2	8	4
Other ethnic affiliation	9	8	21
Ethnic affiliation not declared	140	124	164
Total complainants	**442**	**351**	**371**

Source: Annual Reports of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination.

The ethnic composition of complainants shows that the Roma community was consistently represented throughout the period 2023–2025. In 2023, 12 complainants identified as members of the Roma community (2.7% of the total number of complainants), followed by 7 complainants in 2024 (3.1%), while in 2025 the number increased to 19 complainants (5%).At the same time, a significant proportion of complainants did not declare their ethnic affiliation—140 persons in 2023, 124 in 2024, and 164 in 2025—indicating that the actual ethnic composition of complainants cannot be fully determined. Nevertheless, the available data indicate an increase in both the number and the proportion of complainants from the Roma community in 2025 compared with the previous two years.

Table 18: Roma Complainants to the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (2023–2025)

Year	Number of Roma Complaints	Share (%)
2023	12	2,7%*
2024	7	3,1%
2025	19	5,0%

Source: Annual Reports of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination.

In January 2025, the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination found that the segregation of Roma pupils at the Primary School "Panko Brašnarov" in Veles constituted discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnic affiliation. The Commission recommended that the school prepare and implement a desegregation plan for its classes and organize inclusive extracurricular activities to promote interaction among pupils from different ethnic communities.
At the same time, the Municipality of Veles was recommended to ensure a balanced distribution of pupils during the reorganization of the school network, discontinue the unjustified practice of enrolment outside designated school catchment areas, organize training on the prevention of discrimination and segregation in education, and take measures to address the underlying causes that led to the segregation.

According to information provided by the Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio, in cooperation with the Council of Europe and Romalitico, three training sessions for teaching and educational staff were conducted at the beginning of 2026, including teachers from primary and secondary schools, as well as educators and caregivers in preschool institutions. These activities represent a positive step towards raising awareness of antigypsyism within the education sector, while also highlighting the need to expand such activities to other sectors.[8]The Cabinet announced that during 2026 this type of training is planned to be expanded and delivered to other public administration institutions, with the aim of systematically strengthening institutional capacities to recognize, prevent, and combat antigypsyism. The effectiveness of these activities will depend on their timely implementation, institutional coverage, and the establishment of mechanisms to monitor their impact.[9]

Within the framework of the joint European Union and Council of Europe Programme "Roma Integration III", a training on non-discrimination and antigypsyism for managers of Centres for Social Work was organized on 23 February 2026. The activity was aimed at strengthening institutional capacities to recognize and prevent

[8] Information provided by the **Bureau for the Promotion and Improvement of Inter-Community Relations (BPIICR) – Office of the Minister without Portfolio Responsible for the Implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy**, 2026.
[9]Ibid.

discrimination and antigypsyism in the provision of public services. In addition, training on antigypsyism for judges and public prosecutors, as well as for police officers, was organized during 2025 by Romalitico in cooperation with the OSCE and the Council of Europe.[10]
According to information provided by the Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio, no specific legislative amendments or legal harmonization measures integrating the concept of antigypsyism into the national legal framework were adopted during the period from March 2025 to February 2026. Instead, the Government indicated that the process of incorporating the concept of antigypsyism remains at the stage of inter-institutional consultations and analysis of the possibilities for its integration into existing legislation and strategic documents.

According to the Government's response, the competent institutions are examining opportunities to incorporate the concept of antigypsyism into policies related to equality, non-discrimination, and social inclusion. Furthermore, within the preparation of the new action plans, consideration is being given to the inclusion of specific measures and activities for the prevention of and response to antigypsyism.[11] Although these activities demonstrate an institutional commitment to addressing antigypsyism, by the end of the reporting period no concrete legislative amendments, adopted policies, or formal integration of the concept into the national legal framework had been recorded.

7.SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN / GENDER BASED VIOLANCE AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Data provided by the Ministry of Interior for the period 2020–2024 indicate that a total of 508 cases of child sexual abuse were recorded. Although the majority of victims were Macedonian (245), Roma children represented the second most affected ethnic group, with 145 recorded victims, accounting for 28.5% of all registered cases. Considering that Roma constitute a significantly smaller share of the total population of North Macedonia, their disproportionate representation among victims indicates increased vulnerability and highlights the need for targeted measures for prevention, early identification, and protection.

The data further indicate that sexual abuse most frequently affects girls and children aged 11 to 15 years. At the same time, they point to the need to strengthen mechanisms for early reporting, particularly within educational institutions and centres for social work, as well as to ensure the availability of specialized support services for child victims.[12]

Table 19: Victims of Child Sexual Abuse by Ethnic Affiliation (2020–2024)

Ethnic Affiliation	Number of Victims	% of Total (508 Victims)
Macedonians	245	48,2%
Roma	**145**	**28,5%**
Albanians	55	10,8%
Other/Unknown	63	12,4%
Total	**508**	**100%**

[10] *Information provided by the Bureau for the Promotion and Improvement of Inter-Community Relations (BPIICR), based on data received from the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth, 2026.*
[11] Information provided by the Bureau for the Promotion and Improvement of Inter-Community Relations (BPIICR), based on information received from the Office of the Minister without Portfolio Responsible for the Implementation of the Roma Inclusion Strategy, 2026.
[12] Ombudsperson's Report, Sexual Abuse of Children in the Republic of North Macedonia: Situation, Institutional Response, and Challenges.

Source: *Ombudsperson Annual Report 2026.*

Roma children account for 28.5% of all recorded victims of child sexual abuse, a proportion that is significantly higher than their share of the total population. This highlights the need for targeted policies and programs aimed at prevention, early intervention, victim support, and strengthening trust in public institutions within Roma communities. Gender-based and domestic violence continue to represent serious challenges for women in North Macedonia, including Roma women, who often face multiple discrimination and limited access to protection and support mechanisms.

According to data from the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth, in 2025 a total of 1,269 women victims of domestic violence were recorded, of whom 168 were Roma women. Roma women accounted for 13.2% of the total number of registered women victims of domestic violence during the year.
Compared to 2024, when 1,332 women victims of domestic violence were recorded, of whom 142 were Roma women, 2025 saw a decrease in the total number of victims, but at the same time an increase in both the number and share of Roma women among victims of domestic violence. While in 2024 Roma women accounted for 10.66% of the total number of victims, in 2025 their share increased to 13.2%.

With regard to trafficking in human beings, four women victims of trafficking were identified in 2025, with no women of Roma ethnic affiliation recorded among the identified victims.

The data show that, despite the decrease in the total number of women victims of domestic violence, Roma women remain disproportionately affected by this phenomenon. This points to the need to further strengthen prevention, protection, and support mechanisms, as well as to ensure culturally appropriate and accessible services for Roma women exposed to violence.

Table 20: Women Victims of Domestic Violence (2020–2025)

Year	Total women victims	Roma Women	% Roma Women
2020	1.540	153	9,94%
2021	1.608	182	11,32%
2022	1.559	154	9,88%
2023	1.605	109	6,79%
2024	1.332	142	10,66%
2025	1.269	168	**13,24%**

Source: *Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth*.

8. HOMELESS PERSONS AND CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATION

Homelessness and living in informal settlements continue to represent significant challenges for the Roma community in North Macedonia. In 2018, state institutions and civil society organizations provided temporary accommodation for approximately 120 persons from families relocated from the settlement beneath Kale ("Polygon"), while activities were carried out to facilitate their integration into the social protection, healthcare, education, and employment systems.

In 2025, support for homeless persons continued through the services established under the Law on Social Protection. The Temporary Shelter for Homeless Persons in Čičino Selo provides temporary accommodation, psychosocial support, counselling, and meals, while the "Momin Potok" Day Centre for Homeless Persons, operated by the Red Cross of the City of Skopje, provides day care services, hygiene facilities, educational support, counselling, and activities aimed at developing life and employment skills.
According to data from September 2025, 15 families comprising a total of 89 persons continue to reside at the Reception Centre in Vizbegovo, including 28 adults and 61 children. Of the total number of children, 44 are of school age and are enrolled in the educational process at the primary schools "Brakja Ramiz i Hamid" and "Vizbegovo", where they are provided with textbooks, school uniforms, free meals, and transportation to school.

During 2025, measures were also undertaken to strengthen the institutional response to homelessness and persons living in informal settlements. With the support of the OSCE Mission to Skopje, an Action Plan for the Support of Homeless Roma and Persons Living in Informal Settlements in Skopje was prepared, and an inter-institutional working group was established to coordinate its implementation. With regard to children living and working on the streets, during 2025, mobile teams composed of the Inter-Municipal Centre for Social Work – Skopje and the Ministry of Interior conducted more than 100 field visits to identify and support children at risk. In addition, the Day Centre in Kisela Voda continues to provide day care, educational support, counselling, and activities for developing life and employment skills for children and their families.

According to data provided by the NGO "Ljubeznost", which supports persons accommodated at the temporary housing facility "Ranka Milanović", as of the end of 2025, a total of 59 persons had been fully registered, of whom 30 had resolved their legal status. In addition, 8 persons remain on the waiting list, while 5 cases are still undergoing administrative procedures, indicating that the need for temporary accommodation continues to persist.

Table 22: Data on Persons Accommodated at the Temporary Housing Facility in Vizbegovo

Indicator	2024	2025
Number of families	15	15
Adults	25	28
Children	55	61 (44 school-age children and 17 children aged 0–6 years)
Total number of persons	80	89

Source: Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth.

Table 23: School-Age Children in Temporary Accommodation in Vizbegovo (2024–2025)

Indicator	2024	2025
Total number of children enrolled in education	25	44

Primary School "Brakja Ramiz i Hamid"	12	Part of the total of 44 children
Primary School "Vizbegovo" / Branch School in Vizbegovo	11	Part of the total of 44 children
Textbooks, school uniforms, free meals and transportation provided	No data available	Yes

Source: Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth.

For 2025, the data are reported only as a total of 44 children enrolled in the educational process at Primary School "Brakja Ramiz i Hamid" and Primary School "Vizbegovo", without a breakdown by individual school.

ROMA INFORMATION CENTRES

Roma Information Centres represent an important mechanism for providing information, mediation, and support to the Roma community in accessing public services and exercising rights related to social protection, healthcare, education, employment, housing, and personal documentation.

As of December 2024, four Roma Information Centres were operational, located in Gostivar, Negotino, Bitola, and Šuto Orizari. During 2024, they provided a total of 2,869 services, with as many as 99% of these services related to access to rights and services within the social protection system. The remaining services concerned healthcare, housing, education, employment, and assistance in obtaining personal documentation.
During 2025, the network of Roma Information Centres was expanded, and by December, centres were operating in Tetovo, Kičevo, Gostivar, Negotino, Bitola, and Šuto Orizari. Between January and December 2025, these centres provided a total of 929 services.

The majority of services (95%) were related to social protection, while the remaining services concerned healthcare, housing, education, employment, and personal documentation. Although the territorial coverage of the Roma Information Centres expanded in 2025, there was a significant decline in the number of services provided compared to 2024. The total number of services decreased from 2,869 in 2024 to 929 in 2025, representing a reduction of approximately 68%.

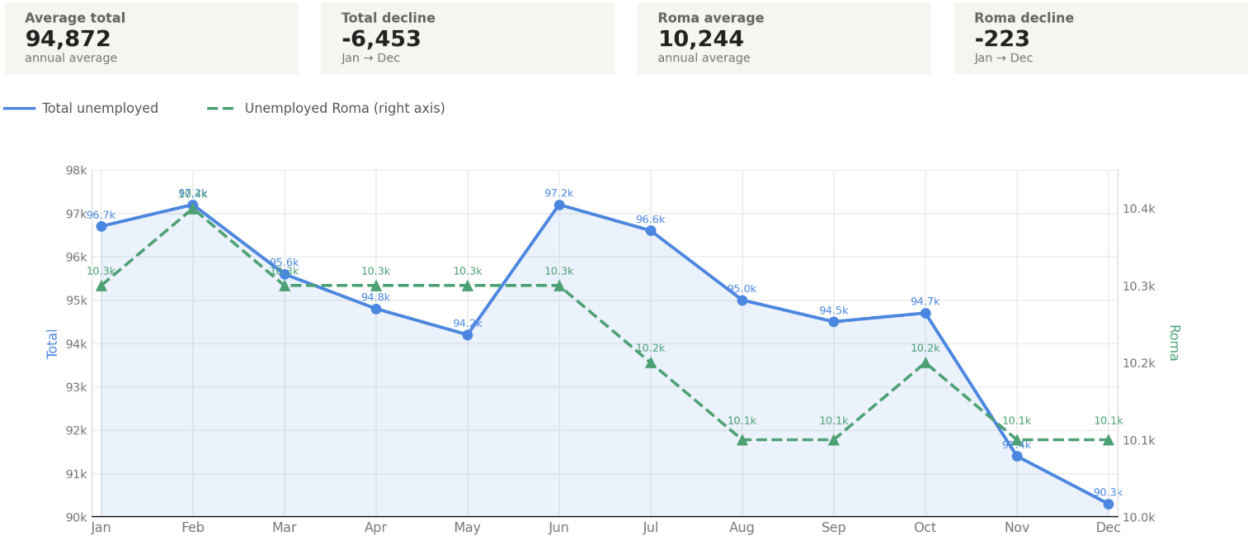
An additional challenge is that, during January and February 2026, all Roma Information Centres temporarily ceased operations. Between February and March 2026, only three centres resumed their activities, namely those in Šuto Orizari, Tetovo, and Gostivar. This indicates insufficient sustainability of the system and creates a risk of limiting the Roma community's access to information and services, particularly in municipalities where the centres ceased to operate. Given their important role in facilitating communication between the Roma community and public institutions, continuous funding and long-term institutional support are needed to ensure their uninterrupted operation.

9.EMPLOYMENT

9.1 REGISTERED UNEMPLOYMENT 2025

The analysis of registered unemployment in 2025 shows a general trend of decreasing the number of people registered as unemployed with the Employment Agency. However, when the data are examined by ethnicity and gender, it is noted that the decrease is not evenly distributed. Total registered unemployment is decreasing faster than registered unemployment among Roma, while among Roma women there is almost no significant change during the year. This indicates that positive movements in the labor market are not transmitted with the same dynamics to the Roma community, especially to Roma women. It is important to emphasize that registered unemployment does not measure total unemployment in the country, but the number of people registered in the AVRSM system. Therefore, a decrease in the number of registered unemployed does not necessarily mean real employment. It can also be the result of deletion from records, migration, transition to inactivity, unregistered work or loss of trust in institutional services. This is particularly important for Roma, for whom access to institutions, documentation, information and active employment measures is often limited.

Chart 13: Registered Unemployment in 2025, Total and Roma



Source: BIJK, AVRSM

During 2025, the total number of registered unemployed persons decreased from 96,731 persons in January to 90,278 persons in December. This represents a decrease of 6,453 persons, or approximately 6.7%. The highest number of registered unemployed persons was recorded in February, with 97,297 persons, while the lowest number was recorded in December, with 90,278 persons.

Among the Roma, the decrease is significantly slower. The number of registered unemployed Roma persons decreased from 10,311 persons in January to 10,088 persons in December, which represents a decrease of only 223 persons, or approximately 2.2%. This shows that although there is some decrease in absolute numbers, it is significantly weaker compared to the general trend. This data is particularly important for the Shadow Report, as it shows that a formal decrease in unemployment at the national level does not automatically mean an improvement in the situation among the Roma. On the contrary, as overall unemployment is decreasing faster than Roma unemployment, the relative share of Roma in total registered

unemployment is increasing. *In January 2025, Roma accounted for around 10.7% of all registered unemployed persons, while in December their share increased to around 11.2%.*

This means that, despite the small absolute decrease, Roma are becoming relatively more represented in registered unemployment. Such a trend points to structural inequality: the labor market may show an improvement for the general population, but Roma do not benefit from that improvement to the same extent.

Gender analysis shows even stronger concerns. The total number of registered unemployed women decreased from 50,200 in January to 47,369 in December 2025. This represents a decrease of 2,831 women, or about 5.6%. For Roma women, however, the decrease is almost symbolic. The number of registered unemployed Roma women decreased from 5,372 in January to 5,329 in December, or by only 43 people, which represents a decrease of about 0.8%. This is the weakest decrease of all analyzed categories

Chart 14: Registered Unemployment in 2025, Total Women and Roma Women

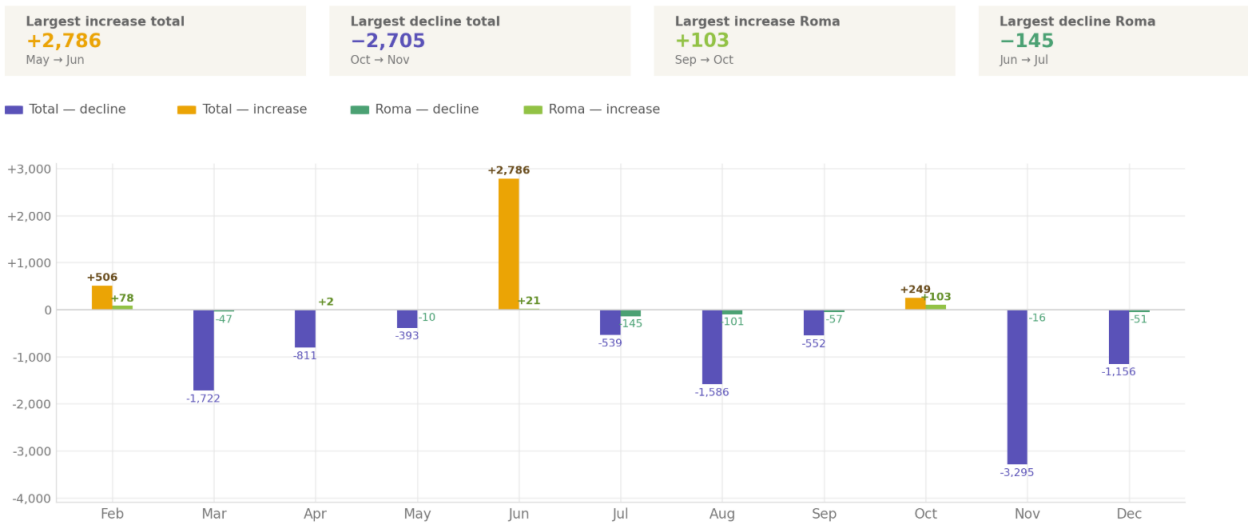


Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

This data shows that Roma women remain the least covered by the positive movements in the labor market. While there is a visible decrease in total female unemployment, the situation for Roma women remains almost unchanged. This indicates a multifaceted exclusion that can be related to low education, limited access to formal employment, discrimination, family care obligations, lack of transportation, lack of documents, low trust in institutions and limited participation in active employment measures.

In addition, Roma women make up more than half of registered unemployed Roma throughout the year. In January, they represented around 52.1% of unemployed Roma, while in December their share increased to around 52.8%. This shows that unemployment among Roma has a strong gender dimension and that employment measures must be specifically designed for Roma women, and not just formally open to all.

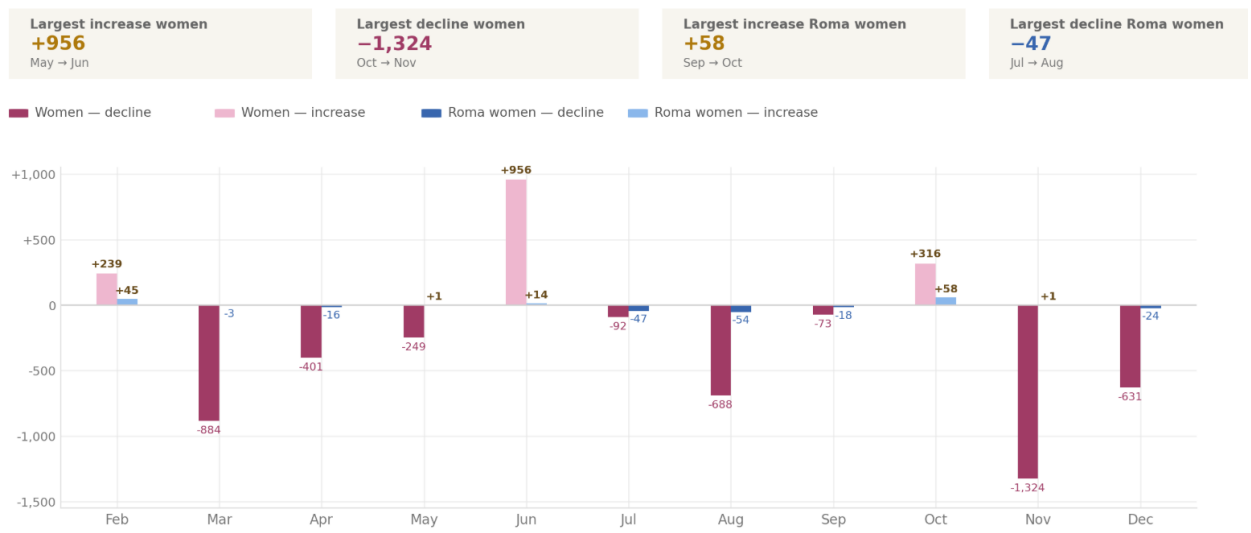
Chart 15: Absolute changes by month 2025, Total and Roma



Source: BIJK data and authors' calculations.

Monthly changes in 2025 show that the decrease in unemployment is not linear. Significant oscillations are observed in total registered unemployment. The largest increase is in June, when the number of registered unemployed increases by 2,786 people compared to May. The largest decrease is observed in November, when the number decreases by 3,295 people compared to October. Among the Roma, monthly changes are smaller in absolute numbers, but indicate a weak dynamics of exit from unemployment. The largest monthly decrease among unemployed Roma is observed in July, with a decrease of 145 people, while the largest increase is in October, with an increase of 103 people. This shows that the number of registered unemployed Roma is not decreasing steadily, but rather fluctuates in a narrow range of around 10,000 people throughout the year. Among Roma women, the situation is even more static. Monthly changes are small and do not show a clear trend of improvement. The largest decrease was observed in August, with a drop of 54 people, while in October there was an increase of 58 people. This instability shows that existing policies and measures do not create a sufficiently strong and sustainable effect for the inclusion of Roma women in the labor market.

Chart 16: Absolute changes by month 2025, Total Women and Roma Women



Source: BIJK data and authors' calculations.

The graph of monthly absolute changes in registered unemployment of women and Roma women in 2025 shows different dynamics between the general category of women and Roma women. While significant monthly oscillations are observed in the total number of registered unemployed women, the changes in Roma women are much smaller in absolute numbers and move within a narrow range. This indicates that Roma women remain in a relatively stable, but worrying state of long-term registered unemployment.

In the total category of women, the largest monthly increase was recorded in the period May–June, when the number of registered unemployed women increased by 956 people. This increase comes after several consecutive months of decrease, which indicates instability in the movement of female unemployment. The largest monthly decrease was recorded in the period October–November, when the number of registered unemployed women decreased by 1,324 people. There was also a significant derease in March, with a decrease of 884 women, as well as in August, with a decrease of 688 women. These larger monthly changes in total female unemployment may be the result of seasonal movements in the labor market, administrative changes in the records, activation or completion of employment measures, but also deletion of persons from the records. Therefore, the decline in the number of registered unemployed women should not be automatically interpreted as a direct increase in real employment without additional verification of the reasons for leaving the records.

Among Roma women, the monthly changes are far smaller. The largest monthly increase was recorded in the period September–October, when the number of registered unemployed Roma women increased by 58 persons. The largest decrease, according to monthly data, was recorded in the period July–August, with a decrease of about 54 persons. Additionally, in July there was a decrease of 47 persons, in September a decrease of 18 persons, while in December the decrease was 24 persons. The main message from the graph is that among Roma women there is no strong or continuous trend of decreasing unemployment. On the contrary, the numbers move in a small range, with small increases and decreases from month to month. This indicates that existing policies and active employment measures do not have a strong enough effect on this group. Roma women remain “trapped” in the system of registered unemployment, without clear evidence that a significant exit towards formal and sustainable employment is created during the year.

It is particularly important that the dynamics among Roma women do not always follow the general trend among women. For example, in May the number of unemployed women decreases by 249 people, while among Roma women there is a minimal increase of 1 person. In June, when total female unemployment increases by 956 people, among Roma women there is an increase of only 14 people. In October, however, total female unemployment increases by 316 people, while among Roma women the increase is 58 people, which is the largest monthly increase among this group during the year.

This shows that Roma women are not just part of the broader trend of female unemployment, but have a special dynamics that should be analyzed separately. Small monthly changes should not be interpreted as stability in a positive sense, but as an indicator of weak mobility in the labor market. In other words, while the total category of women has higher entries and exits from the records, the system shows much lower dynamics for Roma women, which may indicate long-term unemployment, low involvement in active measures and limited opportunities for real employment. From a public policy perspective, the graph confirms the need for targeted measures for Roma women, especially measures that combine employment mediation, further training, support for completing education, childcare, transportation, documentation, mentoring and work with employers. General measures for women are not sufficient if they do not address the specific barriers that

Roma women face. Therefore, this graph should be read as evidence that gender unemployment also has an ethnic dimension. A decrease in total female unemployment does not automatically mean an improvement in the position of Roma women. To achieve real progress, institutions need to report not only on the number of registered unemployed, but also on how many Roma women have engaged in active measures, how many have received training, how many have been mediated with employers, and how many have achieved formal and sustainable employment.

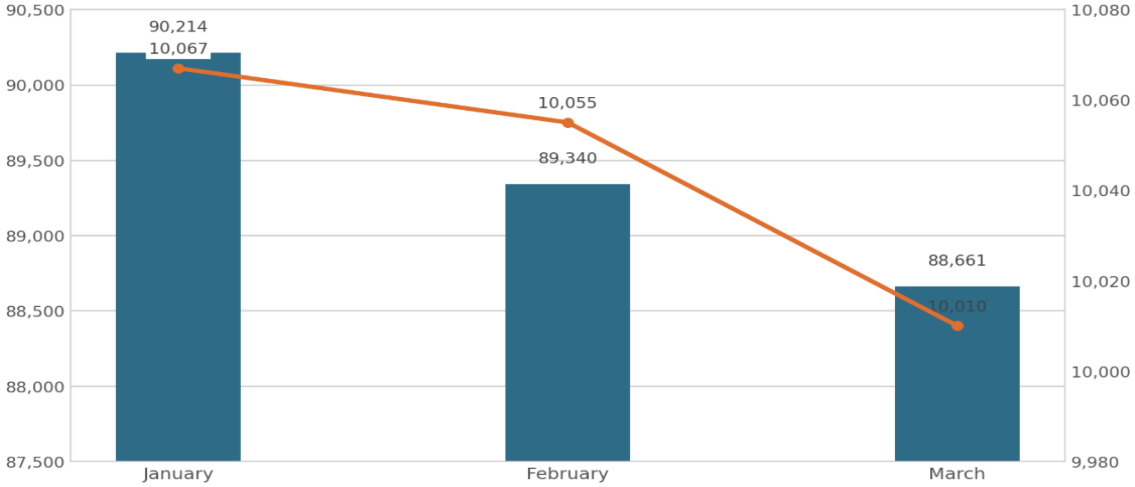
9.2 REGISTERED UNEMPLOYMENT 2026

Data for the first three months of 2026 show a continuation of the trend of decreasing registered unemployment at the national level. The total number of registered unemployed persons decreased from 90,214 in January to 88,661 in March 2026, which represents a decrease of 1,553 persons, or approximately 1.7% in just three months.

Registered unemployed Roma also recorded a decrease, but at a significantly slower pace. The number of unemployed Roma decreased from 10,067 in January to 10,010 in March, or by only 57 persons, which represents a decrease of approximately 0.6%. This indicates that although total unemployment continues to decrease, the Roma community is not following the same intensity of improvement. The monthly dynamics further confirm this conclusion. Total unemployment decreased by 874 persons between January and February, and by another 679 persons between February and March. In contrast, among the Roma, the decline is only 12 people between January and February, and 45 people between February and March. This shows that the general system is recording greater movement and exit from the records, while among the Roma the changes are minimal. It is particularly important that, despite the absolute decrease in the number of registered unemployed Roma, their share in the total registered unemployment is increasing.

In January 2026, the Roma make up about 11.2% of all registered unemployed persons, while in March their share increases to about 11.3%. This indicates that the decline in unemployment among the general population is faster than the decline among the Roma, which creates a relative deterioration of the position of the Roma in the unemployment structure. Hence, the data for the beginning of 2026 should not be interpreted only as a positive trend of decreasing numbers. They show that the improvement is not evenly distributed and that Roma remain structurally more exposed to long-term unemployment and limited access to real employment opportunities.

Chart 17: Registered unemployment in Jan – March 2026, Total and Roma



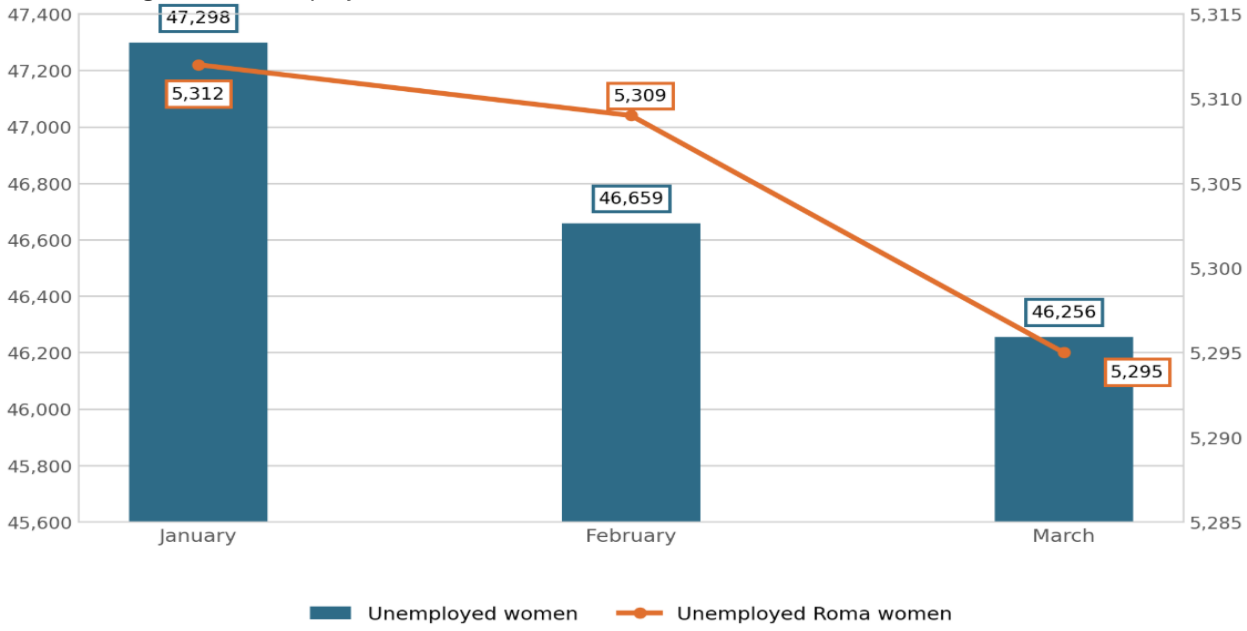
Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

The gender analysis for the first three months of 2026 shows that the number of registered unemployed women decreased from 47,298 in January to 46,256 in March, which represents a decrease of 1,042 women, or approximately 2.2%. This is a larger relative decrease than that of total unemployment, which may indicate a more pronounced decrease in female registered unemployment at the beginning of the year.

However, among Roma women, a much slower dynamics is again observed. The number of registered unemployed Roma women decreased from 5,312 in January to 5,295 in March, or by only 17 people, which represents a decrease of approximately 0.3%. This is an almost symbolic decrease and shows that Roma women remain the least affected by the positive changes in the labor market. Monthly, among all unemployed women there is a decrease of 639 people between January and February, and an additional decrease of 403 people between February and March. Among Roma women, however, the decline is only 3 people between January and February, and 14 people between February and March. This shows very low mobility among Roma women and confirms that their position on the labor market remains almost unchanged.

In addition, the participation of Roma women in total female unemployment is increasing. In January 2026, Roma women accounted for around 11.2% of all registered unemployed women, while in March their participation increased to around 11.4%. This means that although the number of unemployed Roma women is slightly decreasing, their relative representation in female unemployment is increasing. Roma women also account for more than half of registered unemployed Roma. In January 2026, they represent around 52.8% of unemployed Roma, and in March around 52.9%. This confirms the strong gender dimension of Roma unemployment and indicates that Roma women are the most affected group within the Roma community.

Chart 18: Registered Unemployment in Jan – March 2026, Total Women and Roma



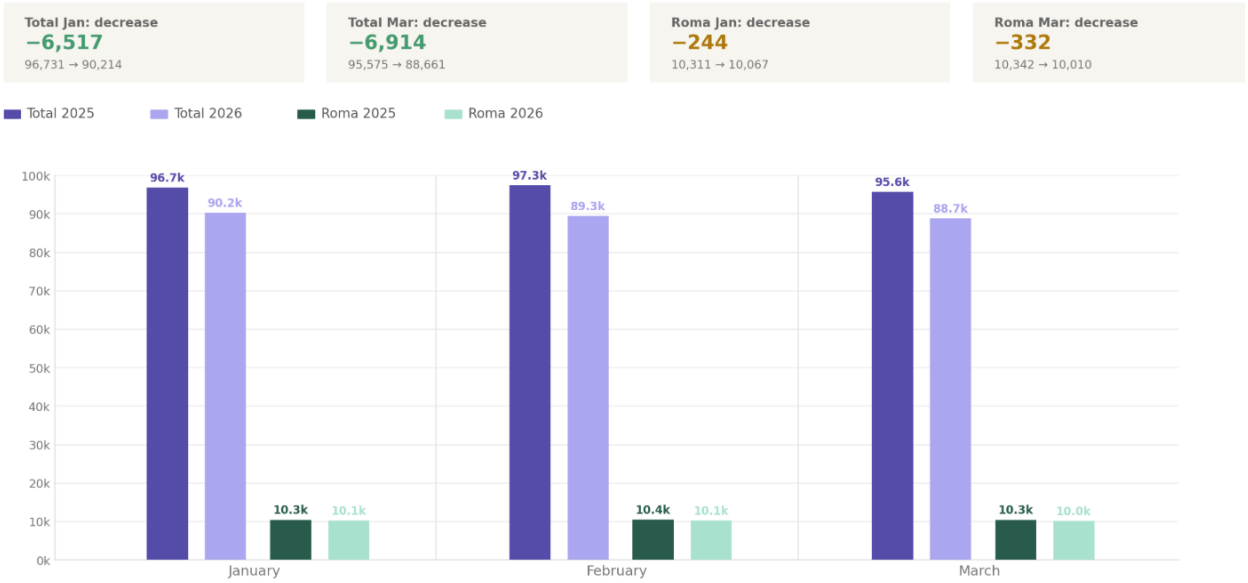
Source: BIJK, Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

Data for January–March 2026 show that registered unemployment is formally decreasing in all categories, but the decrease is uneven. Total unemployment and female unemployment are recording a more significant decline, while the decline among Roma and especially among Roma women is minimal. This creates an important analytical conclusion: the decrease in registered unemployment does not mean an equal

improvement for all groups. Roma, and especially Roma women, do not benefit from the general improvement in the labor market to the same extent as the rest of the population. On the contrary, their relative share in total unemployment is increasing, which indicates a continuation of structural inequalities.

Therefore, the beginning of 2026 confirms the need for specifically targeted measures for Roma and Roma women. General active employment measures are not sufficient if they are not accompanied by outreach information, individual mentoring, support for completing education and qualifications, overcoming administrative barriers, childcare and active work with employers to reduce discrimination. Otherwise, there is a risk that positive statistical trends in registered unemployment will conceal actual stagnation among the most vulnerable groups, especially Roma women.

Chart 19: Comparison of January–March 2025 and January–March 2026, Total and Roma



Source: BIJK, Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

The graph shows a comparison of registered unemployment in the first three months of 2025 and 2026, with a focus on the total number of unemployed persons and the number of unemployed Roma. The data show that in 2026 there is a visible decrease in registered unemployment compared to the same period in 2025. However, the decrease among Roma is significantly smaller than the decrease among the total population, which indicates that positive movements in the labor market are not distributed evenly. In January 2026, the total number of registered unemployed persons was 90,214, compared to 96,731 in January 2025. This represents a decrease of 6,517 persons, or about 6.7%. In the same month, the number of registered unemployed Roma decreased from 10,311 in 2025 to 10,067 in 2026, i.e. by 244 people, or about 2.4%. A similar trend is observed in March. Total registered unemployment decreased from 95,575 people in March 2025 to 88,661 people in March 2026, which represents a decrease of 6,914 people, or about 7.2%. Among Roma, the number decreased from 10,342 to 10,010 people, i.e. by 332 people, or about 3.2%.

This gap between the general decrease and the decrease among Roma is key for interpretation. Although among Roma there is also a certain decrease in absolute numbers, it is almost two to three times weaker compared to total registered unemployment. This means that Roma are not following the same pace of improvement as the general population. On average, in the period January–March 2025 there were about

96,534 registered unemployed persons, while in the same period in 2026 the average was about 89,405 persons. This represents an average decrease of about 7,129 persons, or 7.4%. Among Roma, the average decreases from about 10,347 persons in 2025 to about 10,044 persons in 2026, i.e. by only 303 persons, or 2.9%.

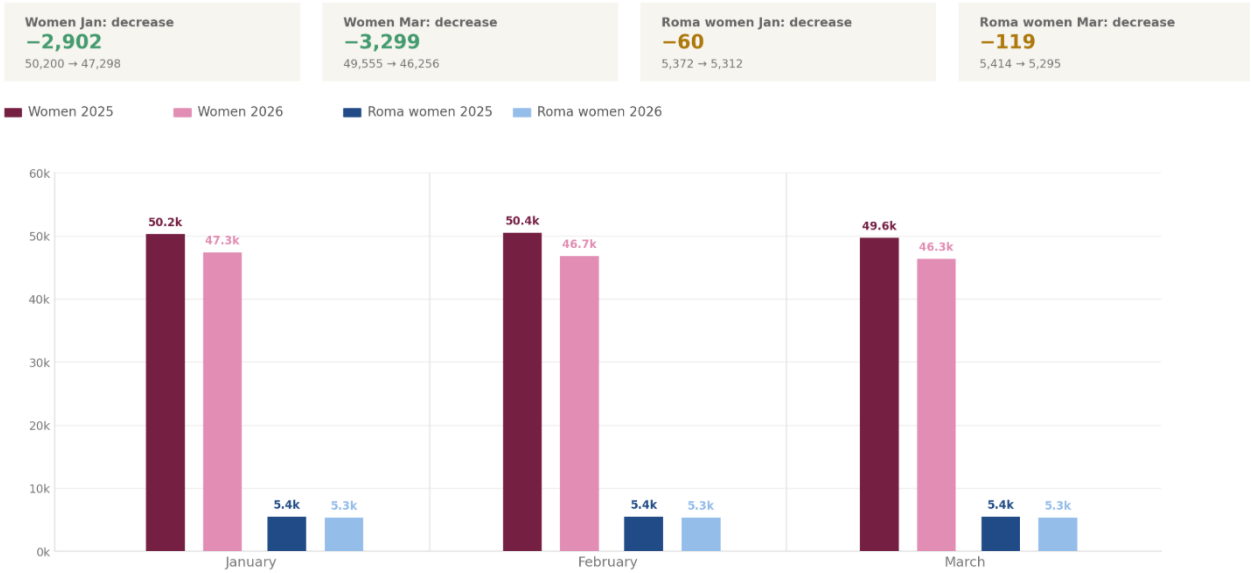
Additionally, although the number of unemployed Roma is decreasing, their share in the total registered unemployment is increasing. In January 2025, Roma represented about 10.7% of all registered unemployed persons, while in January 2026 their share increases to about 11.2%. In March, the participation increases from around 10.8% in 2025 to around 11.3% in 2026. This shows an important structural problem: a decrease in unemployment at the national level does not automatically mean an improvement in the position of Roma in the labor market. On the contrary, since the number of total registered unemployed is decreasing faster than the number of unemployed Roma, the Roma community is becoming relatively more represented in the structure of registered unemployment.

Therefore, the graph should not be read only as a positive trend of decreasing numbers. It indicates that general policies and developments in the labor market have a limited effect on Roma. This may be the result of structural barriers such as low education, lack of qualifications, discrimination in employment, limited access to active measures, insufficient information, territorial distance and weak institutional support. The key conclusion is that in 2026 registered unemployment is decreasing, but unevenly. Overall unemployment is decreasing at a faster pace, while unemployment among Roma is decreasing more slowly and remains structurally high. This confirms the need for specific, targeted and measurable measures for the employment of Roma, rather than relying solely on general measures to activate the labor market.

The graph shows a comparison of registered unemployment among women and Roma women in the first three months of 2025 and 2026. The data show that in 2026 there is a decrease in registered unemployment among both the total category of women and among Roma women. However, the decrease among Roma women is significantly weaker, indicating that positive movements in the labor market are not transmitted equally to all women. In January 2026, the number of registered unemployed women was 47,298, compared to 50,200 in January 2025. This represents a decrease of 2,902 women, or about 5.8%. In the same month, the number of registered unemployed Roma women decreased from 5,372 to 5,312, i.e. by only 60 people, or about 1.1%.
In March 2026, the total number of registered unemployed women was 46,256, compared to 49,555 in March 2025. This represents a decrease of 3,299 women, or about 6.7%. Among Roma women, the number decreased from 5,414 in March 2025 to 5,295 in March 2026, i.e. by 119 people, or about 2.2%.

On average, in the period January–March 2025 there were about 50,065 registered unemployed women, while in the same period in 2026 the average decreased to about 46,738 women. This represents an average decrease of about 3,327 women, or 6.6%. For Roma women, the average decreases from around 5,401 in 2025 to around 5,305 in 2026, i.e. by only 96 people, or approximately 1.8%. This gap is key to interpreting the graph. Although there is also a decrease in absolute numbers for Roma women, it is significantly slower than the decrease in overall female unemployment. In other words, women are generally more likely to leave the unemployment register than men, while for Roma women the change is very limited.

Chart 20: Comparison Jan – March 2025 and Jan – March 2026, Total Women and Roma Women



Source: BIJK, Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

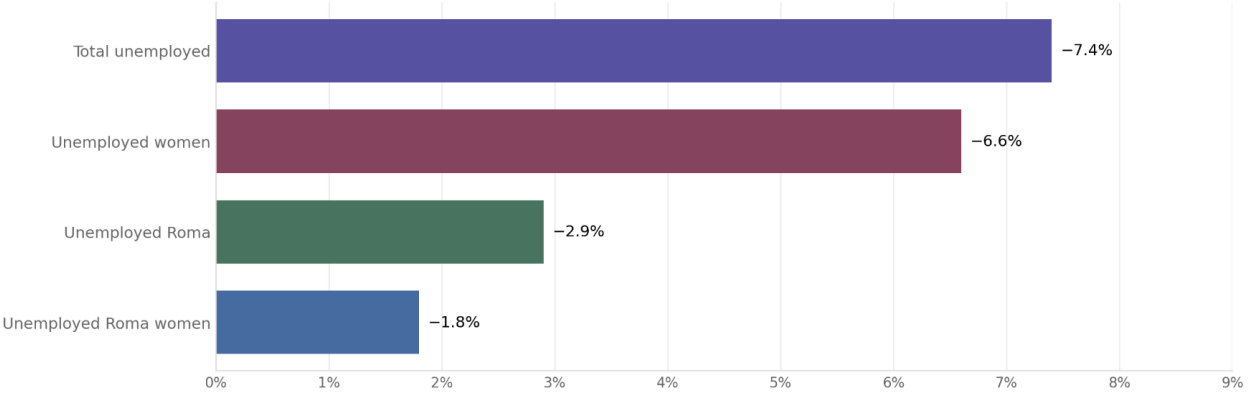
In addition, the share of Roma women in total female unemployment is increasing. In January 2025, Roma women accounted for around 10.7% of all registered unemployed women, while in January 2026 their share increased to around 11.2%. In March, their share increased from around 10.9% in 2025 to around 11.4% in 2026. This means that, although the number of unemployed Roma women is decreasing slightly, their relative share in female unemployment is increasing. This points to a structural problem: Roma women are not following the pace of improvement observed in the total female population.

This trend is particularly important because Roma women face multiple barriers in the labor market — gender discrimination, ethnic discrimination, lower educational attainment, limited access to training and active measures, unpaid care at home, lack of transportation, low trust in institutions, and limited opportunities for formal employment. Therefore, general measures to reduce female unemployment are insufficient if they are not designed to address the specific needs of Roma women.

The key conclusion from the graph is that in the first three months of 2026, registered unemployment among women is decreasing, but this improvement is much weaker among Roma women. Therefore, the decrease in overall female unemployment should not be interpreted as evidence that the position of Roma women is significantly improving. On the contrary, the data show that Roma women remain a structurally more vulnerable group in the labor market.

From a public policy perspective, this confirms the need for special measures for economic activation and employment of Roma women. Such measures should include individual counseling, retraining, outreach, childcare support, mediation with employers, and monitoring of the actual outcomes of active measures — not only the number of registered individuals, but also the number of Roma women who received training, were mediated, and achieved formal and sustainable employment.

Chart 21: Percentage Decrease Between 2025 and 2026 (January–March Average)



Source: Own calculations based on RPI data.

The graph shows the percentage decline in registered unemployment in the period January–March 2026 compared to the same period in 2025, according to four categories: total unemployed, unemployed women, unemployed Roma and unemployed Roma women. The data show that registered unemployment is decreasing in all categories, but with very different intensity. The largest percentage decline was observed in the total number of registered unemployed persons, where the decrease was -7.4%. This indicates a general positive trend in the records of unemployed persons at the national level. Among unemployed women, the decline was -6.6%, which also shows a significant decrease compared to the first three months of 2025. However, among Roma the decline is significantly weaker. The number of registered unemployed Roma is decreasing by only -2.9%, which is more than half the decrease compared to total unemployment. Even more worrying is the data for Roma women, where the decrease is only -1.8%, which is the weakest decrease of all analyzed categories.

This difference shows that the improvement in registered unemployment is not evenly distributed. Total unemployment is decreasing at a significantly faster pace than unemployment among Roma, and Roma women remain the least affected by the positive trends. In other words, the general decrease in unemployment does not mean automatic improvement for all groups. The gap between women in general and Roma women is particularly important. While unemployment among all women is decreasing by -6.6%, among Roma women the decrease is only -1.8%. This means that the decrease among Roma women is almost four times weaker than the decrease in total female unemployment. This data confirms the need for a separate gender and ethnically sensitive analysis of the labor market.

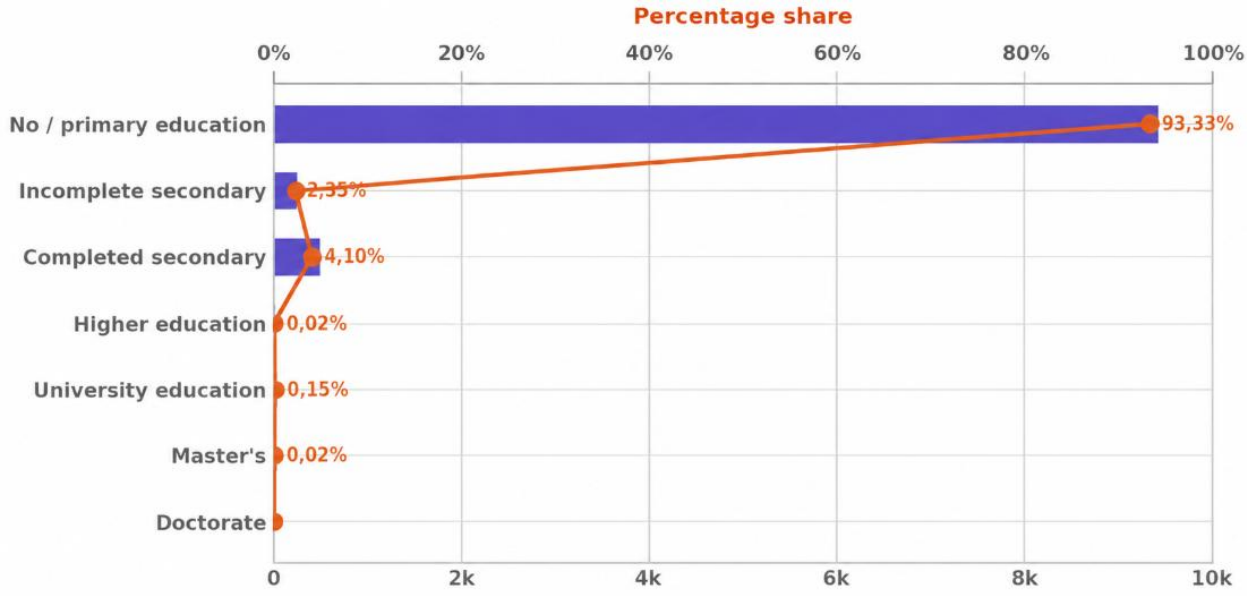
The graph indicates the so-called gap in the pace of improvement. While all categories are declining, the categories that are structurally more vulnerable — Roma and especially Roma women — are moving much more slowly towards improvement. This may mean that general employment measures have a limited effect on the Roma community, especially on Roma women, who face combined barriers related to gender, ethnicity, education, home care, discrimination and limited access to institutional services. Therefore, this graph should not be interpreted solely as evidence that unemployment is decreasing. On the contrary, it shows that the decrease is uneven and that there is a risk that general positive trends may mask structural inequalities. If unemployment among the total population is decreasing faster than unemployment among Roma, then Roma are becoming relatively more represented in the structure of registered unemployment. The key conclusion is that in the period January–March 2026 there is a formal improvement in registered unemployment, but this improvement is weakest among Roma women. This confirms the need for special targeted measures for the

economic activation of Roma and Roma women, with clear indicators for inclusion in active measures, completed training, mediation with employers and real formal employment.

9.3 EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE UNEMPLOYED

The graphs show the educational structure of registered unemployed Roma by number and percentage. The data clearly show that unemployment among Roma is strongly concentrated among people with no education and with primary education, while people with higher education levels are almost unrepresented in the records. In the first graph, the largest number of registered unemployed are in the category of people with no education and with primary education, with around 9,426 people, which represents approximately 93.5% of the total number of registered unemployed Roma.

Chart 22: Educational structure of the unemployed 2025



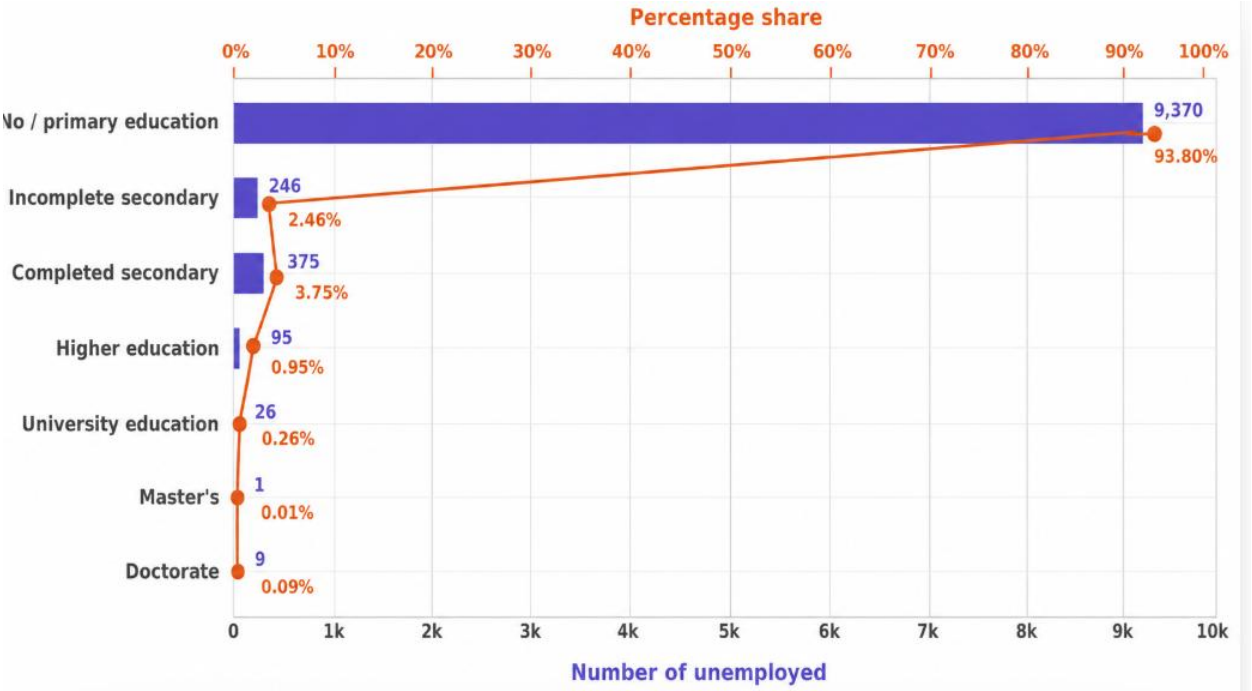
Source: BIJK, Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

This means that almost one in nine of ten registered unemployed Roma have no education beyond primary level. This data is a key structural indicator of the limited employability of the Roma community. The category with incomplete secondary education includes around 234 people, or around 2.3%, while those with completed secondary education are around 411 people, or around 4.1%. This shows that only a small proportion of unemployed Roma have secondary education, which significantly limits their access to formal jobs, especially in sectors where qualifications, professional skills or completed secondary education are required. Comparatively, the two graphs show a stable but problematic structure: the majority of registered unemployed Roma are concentrated in the lowest educational level, while the number of people with secondary and higher education remains very small. This means that unemployment among Roma cannot be treated only as a problem of lack of jobs, but as a result of long-term educational inequalities.

The key interpretation is that low educational attainment is one of the strongest barriers to economic integration for Roma. Without a secondary education, a large proportion of people are confined to low-paid, precarious, seasonal or informal jobs. At the same time, they have less access to active employment

measures that require a certain level of education, qualifications or administrative preparedness. These data suggest that employment policies must be directly linked to education and training policies. Employment mediation alone is not enough if the majority of the target group does not have a completed education or formal qualification. Adult primary and secondary education completion programmes, short vocational training, recognition of informally acquired skills, mentoring and support for the transition to formal employment are needed. The graphs should therefore be read as evidence of structural educational exclusion. Without investment in education, training and qualifications, registered unemployment among Roma will remain high and resistant to general labour market measures.

Chart 23: Educational structure of the unemployed 2026



Source: BIJK, Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

The second graph shows an almost identical structure. The category with no education and with primary education dominates again, with around 9,370 people, i.e. approximately 93% of registered unemployed Roma. The category with incomplete secondary education includes around 246 people, while people with completed secondary education are around 376 people. This indicates that there is no substantial change in the educational profile of registered unemployed Roma between the two comparison periods. Of particular concern is the fact that the categories of higher education, higher education, master's and doctorate degrees are almost invisible in the structure. Although minimal numbers appear in the graphs for higher education and master's degrees, their percentage share is practically negligible. This indicates that the transition of Roma towards higher education and a qualified labor market remains extremely limited. Data on the educational structure of registered unemployed persons show an exceptionally high concentration among people with no education and primary education. In 2026, this category accounts for 94% of the registered unemployed, while in 2025 it was 93%. This indicates that the educational profile of the unemployed remains almost unchanged, but with a slight deterioration towards an even greater concentration at the lowest educational level. The category with incomplete secondary education remains stable at 2% in both 2025 and 2026, while persons with completed secondary education account for 4% in both years. This shows that only a small proportion of the registered unemployed have at least secondary education, which significantly limits their opportunities for

access to formal jobs, especially to jobs that require qualifications, certificates or completed vocational education. Of particular concern is the fact that the categories of higher education, university education, master's and doctorate degrees are shown with 0%. This does not necessarily mean that there is not a single person with higher education, as the percentages may be rounded, but it clearly shows that higher education is almost completely absent from this group of registered unemployed.

These data confirm that unemployment cannot be analyzed only as a matter of job availability, but also as a matter of structural educational deficit. When more than nine out of ten registered unemployed persons are uneducated or have only primary education, access to the labor market is significantly limited even before looking for a job. This creates a circle of exclusion: low education leads to low employability, low employability leads to poverty, and poverty further limits access to education and training. The stability of the data between 2025 and 2026 indicates that there is no significant change in the educational structure of the unemployed. This means that existing employment policies and measures are not sufficient if they are not combined with measures for further education, retraining and the acquisition of practical skills. Mere mediation with employers cannot have a significant effect if the majority of the target group has not completed education or has no formal qualification.

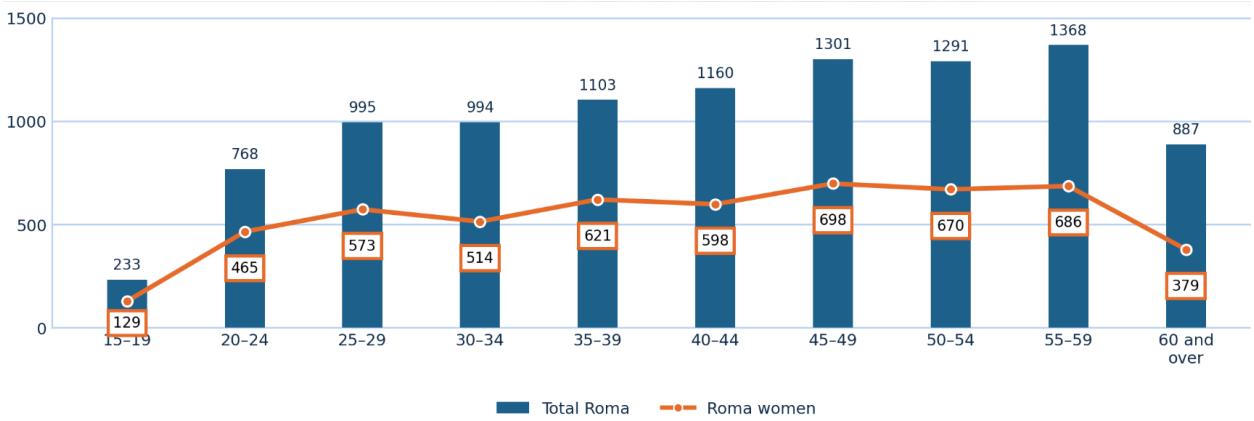
From a public policy perspective, this confirms the need for an integrated approach that will link education, active employment measures and social support. Programs for completing primary and secondary education for adults, short vocational training linked to real demand on the labor market, recognition of informally acquired skills, mentoring support and active work with employers are needed. mThe key conclusion is that the educational structure represents one of the greatest barriers to employment. If there is no investment in education, further training and practical skills, a large part of the registered unemployed will remain formally registered in the system, but without a real opportunity to access stable and dignified employment.

9.4 AGE STRUCTURE OF THE UNEMPLOYED

The graph shows the age structure of registered unemployed Roma, with a special focus on Roma women. The data show that unemployment among Roma is not concentrated only among young people, but is also strongly present among older categories, especially among people aged 45 to 59. The total number of registered unemployed Roma in the age groups shown is around 10,100 people, of which 5,333 are Roma women. This means that Roma women make up approximately 53% of registered unemployed Roma, which confirms the strong gender dimension of Roma unemployment. The largest number of registered unemployed Roma is in the age group 55–59, with 1,368 people. High numbers are also observed in the groups 45–49 years old with 1,301 people, 50–54 years old with 1,291 people, as well as 40–44 years old with 1,160 people. This shows that unemployment among Roma is particularly pronounced among the middle-aged and older working-age population. If the data are grouped, people aged 35 to 59 years make up over 60% of all registered unemployed Roma. This indicates long-term and structural unemployment, as these are people of working age, but apparently have limited access to stable and formal employment.

Among Roma women, the largest number of unemployed is observed in the 45–49 age group, with 698 women, followed by the 55–59 age group with 686 women, the 50–54 age group with 670 women, and the 35–39 age group with 621 women. This shows that Roma women are strongly represented in almost all age categories, but especially in the middle and older working age. Interestingly, in the younger age groups, although the absolute numbers are lower, the participation of Roma women is high. In the 20–24 age group, Roma women make up about 61% of unemployed Roma in that age group, while in the 25–29 age group they make up about 58%. This indicates that young Roma women face serious barriers to entering the labor market even at the beginning of their working lives.

Chart 24: Age structure of unemployed Roma 2025

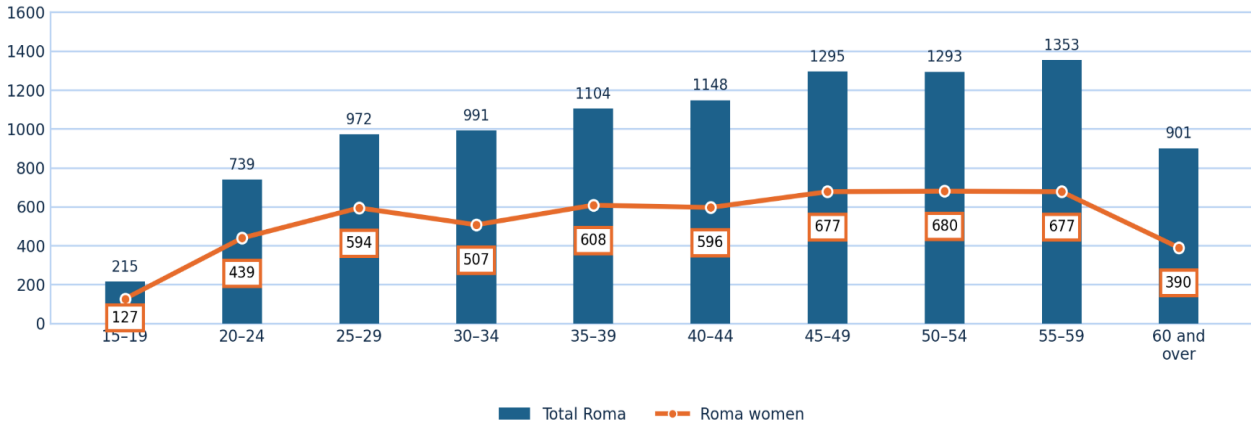


Source: BIJK, Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

The lowest representation of Roma women in relation to the total number of unemployed Roma is observed in the group 60 years and older, where women are 379 out of a total of 887 people, or about 43%. This can be linked to various factors, such as different models of economic activity, pension status, inactivity or administrative record-keeping. The key message from the graph is that unemployment among Roma has a dual character: on the one hand, young Roma and especially young Roma women have difficulties entering the labor market; on the other hand, older groups remain "trapped" in long-term unemployment. Therefore, employment policies cannot be the same for all age groups. For young Roma women and men, measures for the transition from education to work, internships, career counseling, first employment and further training are needed. For people aged 35 to 59, measures for retraining, recognition of previously acquired skills, subsidized employment and direct mediation with employers are needed. For Roma women, measures must additionally include childcare support, flexible training, on-the-job motivation and protection from discrimination.

The graph therefore shows that Roma unemployment is not just a matter of numbers, but of structure. It is linked to age, gender, education and long-term exclusion from the formal labour market. Without targeted measures by age and gender, general employment policies will have limited impact on the Roma community.

Chart 25: Age structure of unemployed Roma Jan-March 2026



Source: BIJK, Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

The graph shows the age structure of registered unemployed Roma for the period January-March 2026, with a special focus on Roma women. The data show that unemployment among Roma is most pronounced among the middle-aged and older working-age population, especially among people aged 45 to 59. The total number of registered unemployed Roma in the age groups shown is 10,011 people, of which 5,295 are Roma women. This means that Roma women make up about 52.9% of registered unemployed Roma. This data once again confirms the strong gender dimension of Roma unemployment. The largest number of registered unemployed Roma is in the age group 55–59, with 1,353 people. High figures are also observed in the groups 45–49 years with 1,295 people, 50–54 years with 1,293 people, as well as 40–44 years with 1,148 people. This shows that unemployment is particularly concentrated among people of later working age, which may indicate long-term unemployment, outdated qualifications, limited access to retraining and greater barriers to re-entry into the labor market.

If the data are grouped, people aged 35 to 59 years make up about 62% of all registered unemployed Roma. This is particularly important, as these are people who are still of working age, but remain outside the formal labor market. This trend shows that Roma unemployment is not only a problem of young people entering the labor market, but also a problem of keeping older people in unemployment for the long term.

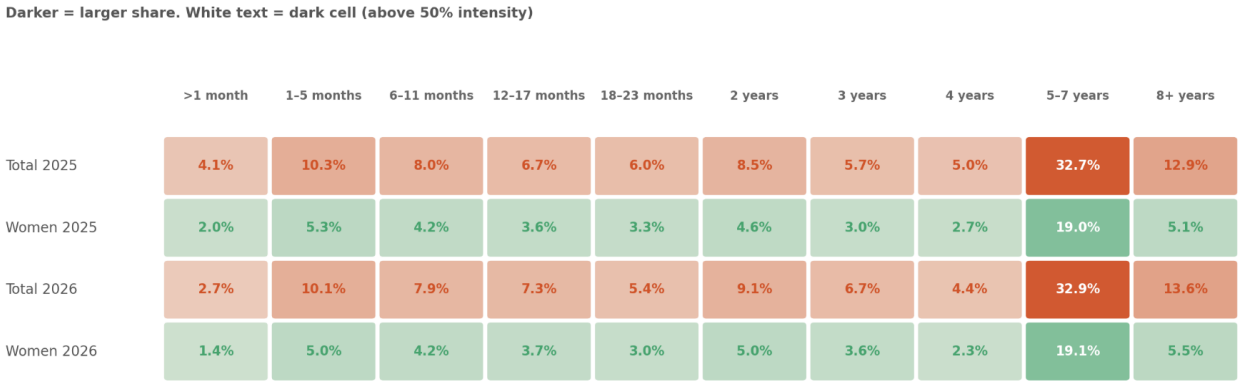
Among Roma women, the largest number of registered unemployed is in the 50–54 age group, with 680 women, followed by the 45–49 and 55–59 age groups, with 677 women each. High numbers are also observed in the 35–39 age group, with 608 women, as well as in the 40–44 age group, with 596 women. This shows that Roma women are strongly represented in almost all middle-aged categories, which indicates long-term economic inactivity or limited opportunities for formal employment. It is particularly significant that among young age groups, Roma women have a high share in the total number of unemployed Roma. In the 20–24 age group, Roma women make up around 59%, while in the 25–29 age group their share is around 61%. This indicates that young Roma women face serious barriers even when entering the labor market. These barriers may be related to interrupted education, family care, lack of qualifications, discrimination, limited mobility and insufficient connection to active employment measures.

9.5 UNEMPLOYMENT BY WAITING TIME

The heat map shows the percentage share of registered unemployed according to the duration of unemployment, compared for 2025 and 2026, with a separate display of women. Darker areas indicate a higher share, i.e. categories where a larger share of unemployed people is concentrated. The most important finding from the graph is that unemployment is strongly concentrated among people who have been unemployed for a longer period of time. The largest share in both 2025 and 2026 is in the category of 5–7 years of unemployment, with 32.7% in 2025 and 32.9% in 2026. This means that almost one third of registered unemployed people are in a state of long-term unemployment of five to seven years.
Additionally, the category of 8 and more years of unemployment increases from 12.9% in 2025 to 13.6% in 2026. This is particularly worrying, as it shows that some people not only remain unemployed, but also enter even longer periods of exclusion from the labor market. If we look at all categories with a duration of two years and more, their share is around 64.8% in 2025, while in 2026 it increases to around 66.7%. This shows that almost two-thirds of registered unemployed people are long-term unemployed. In other words, the problem is not just temporary unemployment, but deep and prolonged exclusion from the formal labor market. At the same time, the share of people with a shorter duration of unemployment, up to one year, decreases from around 22.4% in 2025 to around 20.7% in 2026. This may indicate that there is a smaller influx of newly

registered unemployed people, but also that the biggest challenge remains with people who have been registered for a long time and have difficulty exiting the system towards real employment.

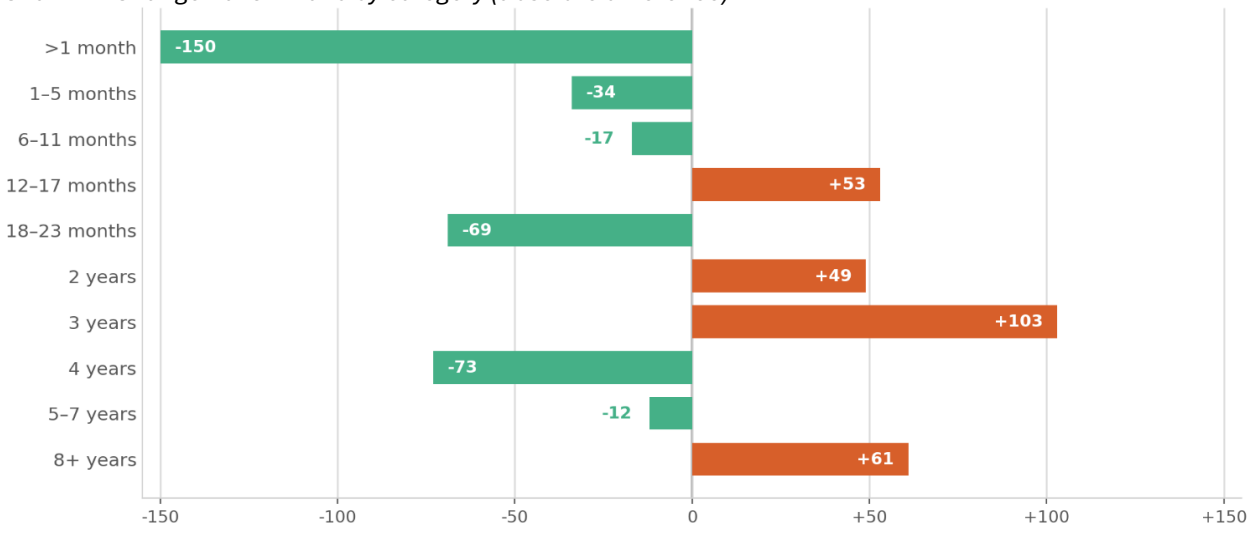
Chart 26: Heat Map of Percentage Shares by Category and Year



Source: BIJK, Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

A similar structure is observed among women. The largest share is again in the 5–7 years unemployment category, with 19.0% in 2025 and 19.1% in 2026. This shows that women have a significant share in the most risky category of long-term unemployment. Also, the share of women in the 8 and more years category increases from 5.1% to 5.5%, which indicates a further deepening of long-term exclusion among a part of the female population. The change in the 3 years unemployment category is also important, where the total share grows from 5.7% in 2025 to 6.7% in 2026, while for women it grows from 3.0% to 3.6%. This can be interpreted as a signal that some of the people who were unemployed for a shorter period of time have failed to integrate into the labor market and are gradually transitioning into long-term unemployment. The key interpretation is that the structure of unemployment in 2026 does not show a substantial improvement compared to 2025. On the contrary, there is a slight shift towards longer periods of unemployment, especially in the categories of two years, three years, five to seven years and eight and more years. This indicates that the existing measures are not sufficient to activate people who have been out of the labor market for a long time.

Chart 27: Change 2025 → 2026 by category (absolute difference)



Source: BIJK and authors' calculations

From a public policy perspective, these data show that it is not enough to monitor only the number of registered unemployed persons. It is also necessary to monitor the duration of unemployment, since persons who have been unemployed for several years have a greater need for combined support: individual counseling, retraining, psychosocial and motivational support, mediation with employers, subsidized employment and post-employment monitoring. Therefore, the heat map shows that long-term unemployment represents one of the most serious structural barriers. Of particular concern is the fact that the highest concentration is among persons unemployed for 5–7 years, and the share of persons unemployed for 8 and more years is further increasing in 2026. This indicates that without targeted measures for long-term unemployed persons, they will remain formally registered, but practically excluded from real employment opportunities.

The graph shows the absolute change in the number of registered unemployed persons by duration of unemployment, compared between 2025 and 2026. Green bars indicate a decrease, while orange bars indicate an increase in a certain category. The data show that there is an overall decrease in several categories of shorter-term unemployment, but at the same time an increase is observed in some of the categories of longer-term unemployment. This indicates that, although the number of registered unemployed persons may be formally decreasing, the structure of unemployment remains worrying, as some persons remain or move into longer periods of unemployment.

The largest decrease was observed in the category up to 1 month, where there was a decrease of 150 persons. There was also a decrease in the categories 1–5 months with -34 persons, 6–11 months with -17 persons, as well as 18–23 months with -69 persons. This may indicate a lower inflow of newly registered unemployed persons or a faster exit from the records among persons with a shorter duration of unemployment. However, the growth in the longer categories is particularly important for analysis. The largest increase is in the category of 3 years of unemployment, where the number increases by 103 persons. There is also an increase in the category of 8 years and more, with +61 persons, in 12–17 months with +53 persons, as well as in 2 years of unemployment with +49 persons.

These data indicate a risk of deepening long-term unemployment. Although some of the short-term categories are decreasing, the increase in the categories of two, three and eight years and more shows that some of the unemployed remain outside the labor market for a longer period. This means that the system is not managing to activate persons who have been registered for a longer period of time efficiently enough. The category of 8 years and more is of particular concern, as this group represents the deepest form of exclusion from the labor market. People who have been unemployed for such a long period often need more complex support, which cannot be reduced to job placement alone. Additional training, motivational support, individual counseling, social services, work with employers, and post-employment monitoring are needed.

The key interpretation is that a decrease in the number of registered unemployed does not necessarily automatically mean a real improvement. If the decrease occurs mainly among the short-term unemployed, while at the same time a part of the long-term categories increases, then the problem shifts towards deeper and more difficult-to-solve unemployment.

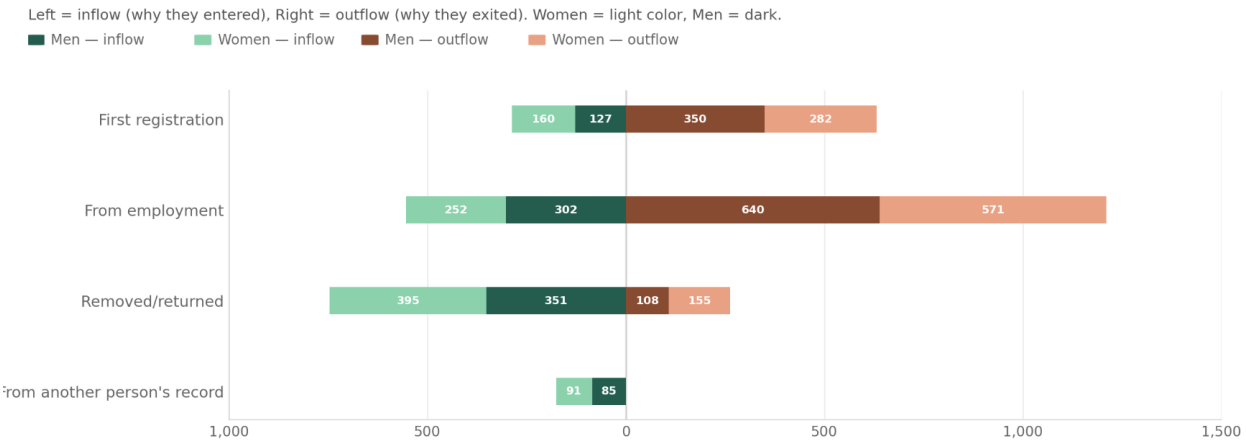
From a public policy perspective, the graph shows that active employment measures should specifically target the long-term unemployed. Institutions need to report not only on the total number of unemployed, but also on how many people have been unemployed for more than two, five, or eight years, how many of them are included in active measures, and how many actually transition to formal and sustainable employment.

Therefore, the comparison between 2025 and 2026 shows that there is limited improvement in some short-term categories, but also a serious risk of continued structural and long-term unemployment.

9.6 INFLOWS AND OUTFLOWS OF PERSONS WITH STATUS JANUARY – DECEMBER 2025

The graphs show the dynamics of entry and exit from the records of unemployed persons, with a special focus on the gender structure and the reasons why people leave the records. The data is particularly important because it shows that the reduction in the number of registered unemployed does not always mean real employment. On the contrary, a significant part of the exit from the records is administrative. The first graph shows that the inflow into the records comes from several categories: first registration, persons coming from employment, persons who were removed from the records and returned to the records, as well as persons transferred from the records to another person. In the inflow, it is noted that women have higher numbers in some categories, especially among "removed/returned", which may indicate greater instability in their status in the records.

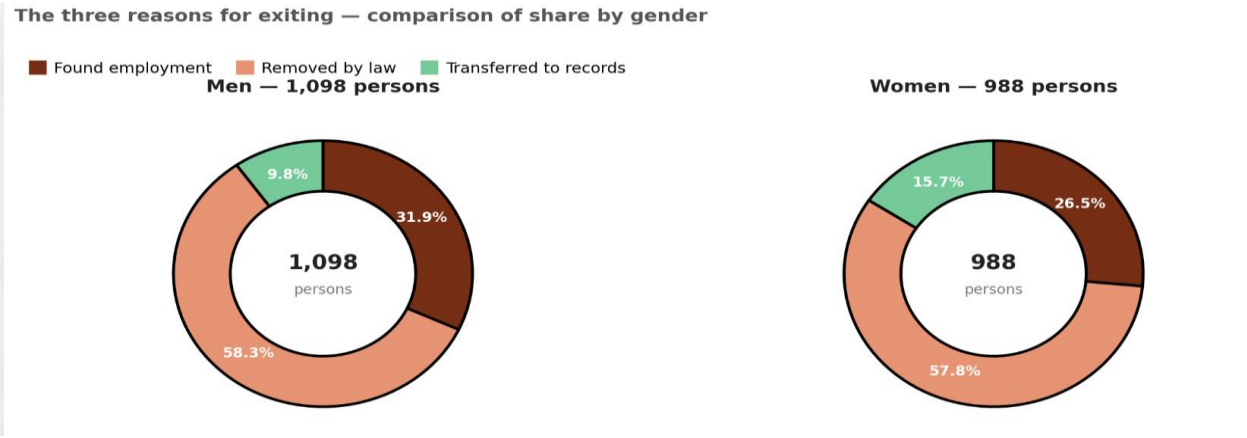
Chart 28: Inflow and outflow of unemployed Roma, Jan-Dec 2025



Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

On the other hand, the outflow from the records shows that the majority of people do not leave the records due to establishing an employment relationship, but for administrative reasons. In total, 1,098 people left the records for men, while 988 people for women. However, the structure of the reasons shows significant differences. For men, 31.9% of the exits are due to establishing an employment relationship, while for women this share is lower and amounts to 26.5%. This means that men more often leave the records due to real employment. In absolute numbers, 350 men and around 262 women established a job. This data indicates that women, and especially Roma women, have a weaker transition from registration to formal employment. The majority of exits for both sexes are the result of the category "removed by law". For men, this reason accounts for 58.3%, and for women for 57.8%. In absolute numbers, this means that 640 men and 571 women were removed from the records. This data is key for interpretation: most of the decrease in registered unemployment is not a result of employment, but of administrative exit from the system. The third reason for exit is transferring to another person's records. This category is significantly more prevalent among women. For men, it is 9.8%, while for women it is 15.7%. In absolute numbers, there are 108 men and 155 women in this category. This may indicate greater administrative and economic dependence among women, but also greater vulnerability in terms of their status in the records system.

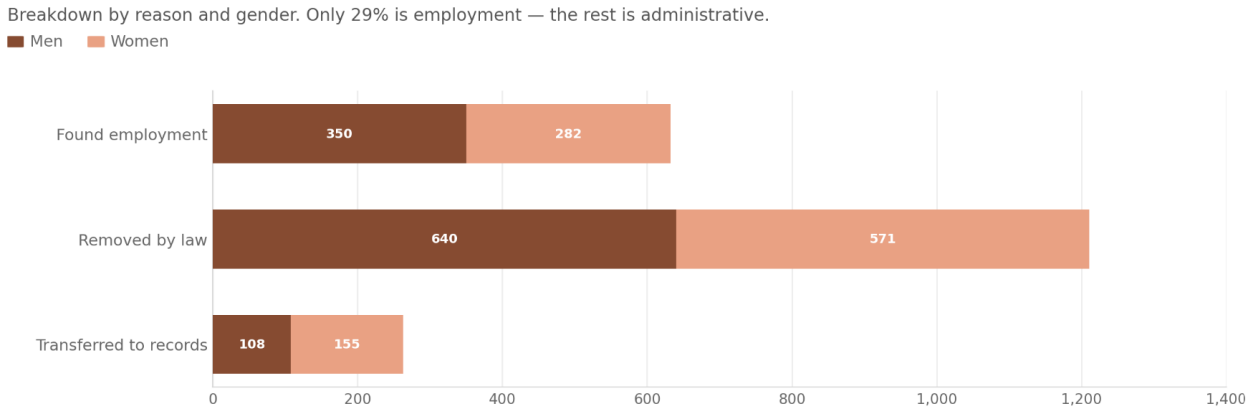
Chart 29: Structure of the men's and women's division, Jan-Dec 2025



Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

The graph with the breakdown by reason and gender further confirms this situation. Of the total outflow, only about 29% is due to the establishment of an employment relationship, while the rest is administrative — through removal by law or transfer to another record. This means that the reduction in the number of registered unemployed persons cannot automatically be interpreted as an improvement in employment. It is particularly important that women are less represented in the exit through employment, but more represented in the transfer to another person's record.

Chart 30: Structure of the outflow of unemployed Roma, Jan-Dec 2026

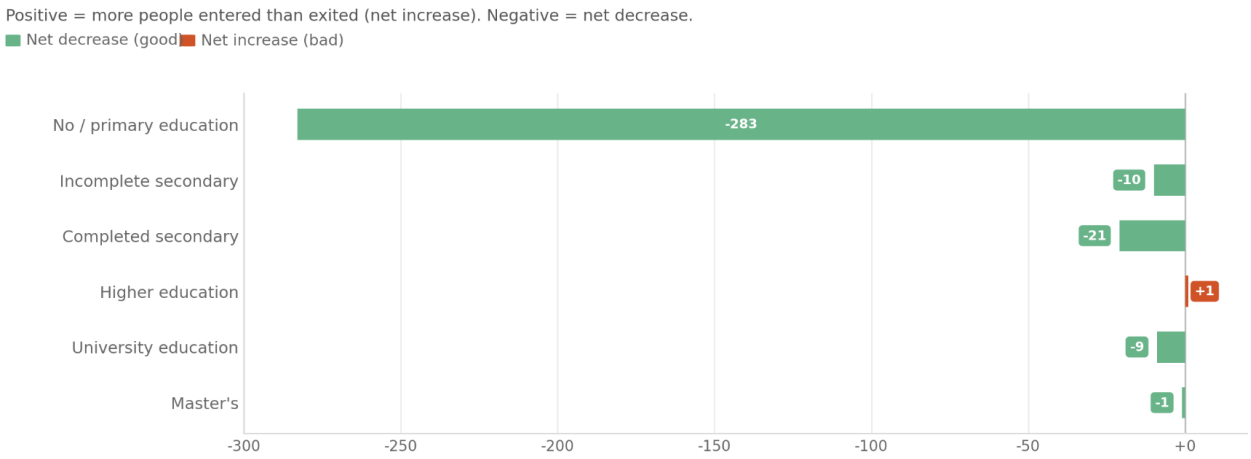


Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

This suggests that women have a weaker direct connection to the formal labor market and more often remain in administrative categories rather than transitioning to real employment. In the context of the Roma community, this is particularly significant as Roma women already face multiple barriers: low education, discrimination, childcare and family care, limited mobility and less access to active employment measures.
The last graph, which shows the net change by educational level, shows that the largest net decrease is among people with no education and with primary education, with -283 people. There is also a decrease among people with completed secondary education with -21 people, with incomplete secondary education with -10 people, as well as among people with higher education with -9 people. This shows that the number of registered unemployed is decreasing the most among the lowest educated group. However, considering that most of the outflow is administrative, this decrease should not automatically be read as evidence that people with the lowest education are finding employment more easily. On the contrary, it is possible that a significant

part of them are leaving the records due to administrative deletion, failure to fulfill obligations to the AVRSM, transfer to another record or other non-functional reasons. Therefore, the data on net decrease must be interpreted together with the reasons for outflow.

Chart 31: Structure of the outflow of unemployed Roma, Jan-Dec 2026



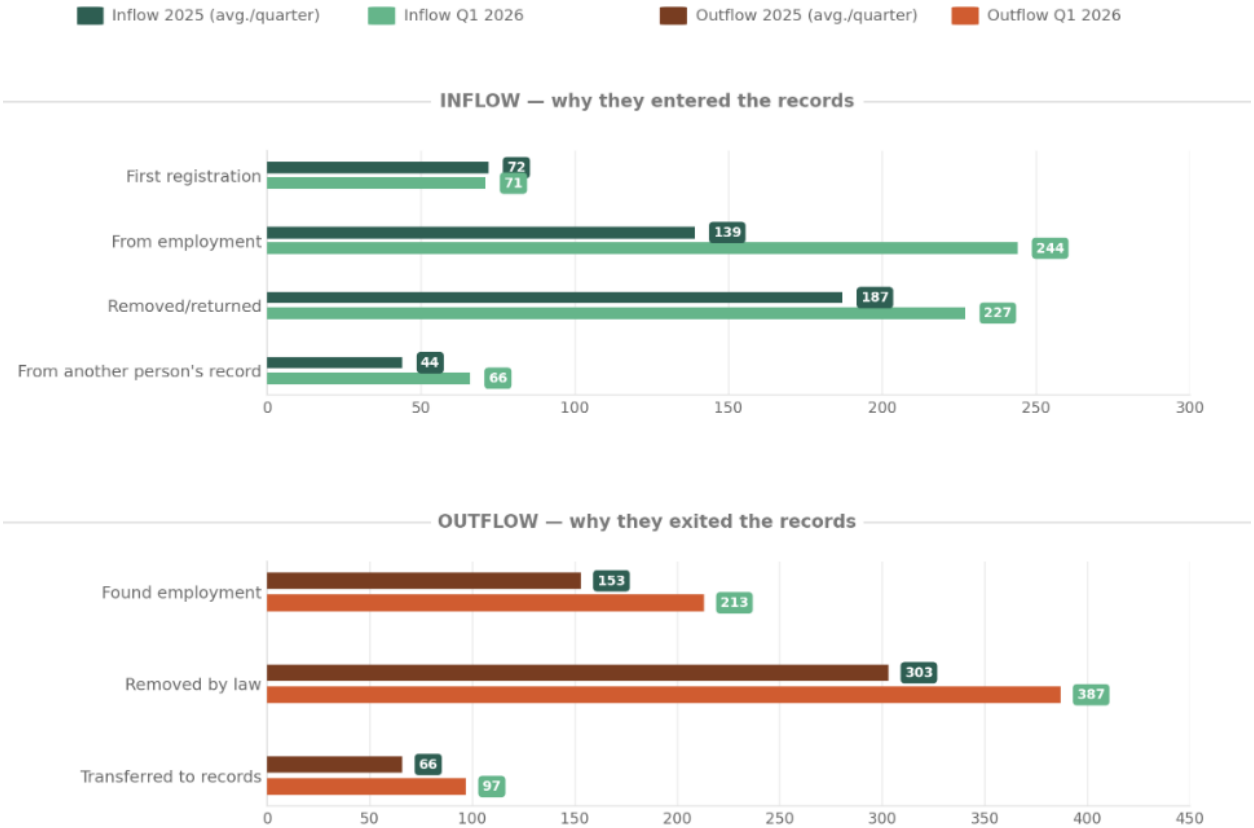
Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

The key conclusion is that the system is recording a decrease in the number of registered unemployed, but this decrease is largely administrative, and not the result of real employment. Only about a third of men and about a quarter of women are leaving the register due to employment. This suggests that active employment measures have a limited effect, especially among Roma women. From a public policy perspective, it is necessary for institutions to make a clear distinction between the reduction of registered unemployment due to employment and the reduction due to administrative reasons. Otherwise, there is a risk that official statistics will create the impression of improvement, while real access to formal and sustainable employment remains limited. Therefore, future reporting should include specific indicators on the number of people who have actually found employment, the type and duration of employment, gender, ethnicity, educational level and reasons for administrative deregistration. Only in this way can it be assessed whether the reduction in unemployment represents real progress or just a statistical decrease without a substantial change for the Roma community.

9.7 INFLOW AND OUTFLOW OF PEOPLE JANUARY – MARCH 2026

Data for the first quarter of 2026 show increased dynamics in the registration of unemployed Roma compared to the average per quarter in 2025. In the period January–March 2026, 608 people entered the registration, while 697 people left the registration. This results in a net decrease of 89 people, i.e. more people left the registration than entered it. At first glance, this can be interpreted as a positive trend, since the number of registered unemployed is decreasing. However, a deeper analysis of the reasons for the outflow shows that the decrease is not entirely the result of real employment. Out of a total of 697 people who left the registration in the first quarter of 2026, only 213 people established an employment relationship, which represents 30.6% of the outflow. The remaining part of the exits is due to administrative reasons — removal by law or transfer to another registration.

Chart 32: Comparison Q1 2026 vs. average per quarter 2025



Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

This data is key for interpreting registered unemployment. A decrease in the number of registered unemployed persons should not automatically be presented as an improvement in employment, if most of the outflow is not related to a real employment relationship. Compared to the normalized quarterly average for 2025, in the first quarter of 2026 there is both a higher inflow and a higher outflow. The inflow in Q1 2026 is 608 people, compared to approximately 441 people per quarter in 2025. This means that in the first quarter of 2026 there is a significantly higher number of people who entered the records. At the same time, the outflow in Q1 2026 is 697 people, compared to approximately 522 people per quarter in 2025. This shows that the system is recording a greater movement of people in and out of the records. However, the increased dynamics do not necessarily mean an improvement in employment, since a significant part of the outflow is administrative.

The largest part of the inflow comes from people who have been deregistered and reregistered, and from people coming from employment. This indicates that some people have an unstable relationship with the labor market or the registration system — they enter, exit, and return to the status of registered unemployed.
In terms of outflow, the largest category is “legally dismissed”, with 387 people, which represents more than half of the total outflow. This is significantly higher than the number of people who established an employment relationship. Hence, administrative deletion remains the dominant reason for leaving the records. The waterfall graph shows the entire dynamics of movement in the records. The initial inflow is 608 people, followed by different categories of entry: first registration, persons from employment, dismissed/returned and persons from the records of another person. Then the outflow categories are shown: establishing an employment relationship, dismissed by law and transferred to another record.

The largest positive inflow is among persons from employment, with 244 people, as well as in the dismissed/returned category with 227 people. This shows that a significant part of the people entering the records are not newly unemployed, but people who already had some previous connection with the labor market or with the record system. On the other hand, the largest outflow is in the category of those dismissed by law, with 387 people, while 213 people left due to establishing an employment relationship. In addition, 97 people transferred to another record. The total net effect is -89 people, i.e. the number of registered unemployed has decreased, but this decrease is the result of a combination of employment and administrative exits.

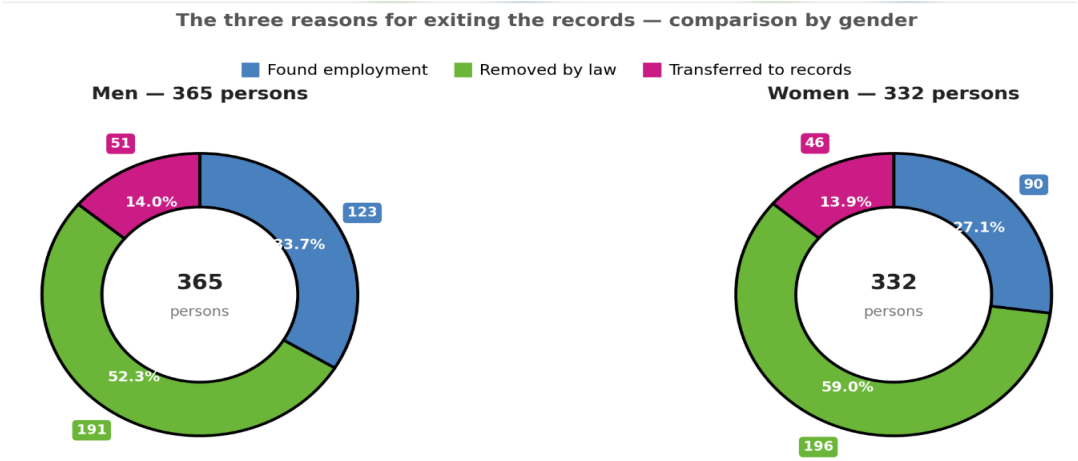
Chart 33: Net Movement First Quarter 2026 by Reasons



Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

The gender structure of the outflow shows that in Q1 2026, 365 men and 332 women left the registry. Among men, 33.7% of the outflow is due to establishing an employment relationship, while among women this share is lower and amounts to 27.1%. This shows that men more often leave the registry through real employment.

Chart 34: Outflow Structure Q1 2026 — Men vs Women



Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

Among women, the largest share of the outflow is due to legal deregistration, with 59.0%, while among men this category is 52.3%. This means that women more often leave the register on administrative grounds, and less often through the establishment of an employment relationship. This data is particularly important in the context of Roma women, as it shows a weaker transition from registration to formal employment. The category

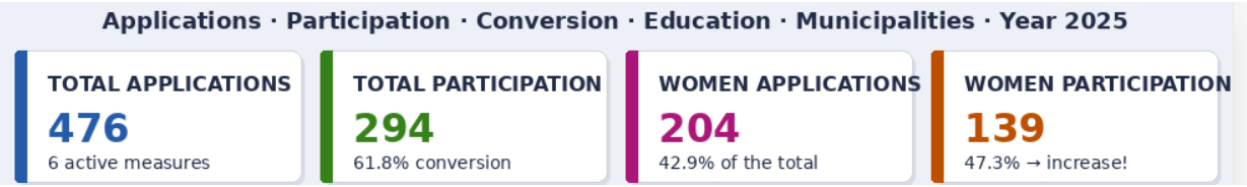
of having moved to another register is almost equally represented in both sexes — 14.0% among men and 13.9% among women. However, the fact that women have a lower share of exit through employment and a higher share of administrative deregistration indicates gender inequality in the actual outcomes of the register. Data for January–March 2026 show that the registration of unemployed Roma has a greater dynamic compared to the average of 2025. Both the inflow and outflow have increased, and the net effect is a decrease of 89 people. However, the most important finding is that only 30.6% of the outflow is the result of establishing an employment relationship. This means that the decrease in registered unemployment in Q1 2026 is only partially related to real employment. Most of the outflow arises from administrative reasons, especially from the category “dismissed by law”. Therefore, the official decrease in the number of registered unemployed should not automatically be interpreted as a real improvement in the labor market situation.

From a public policy perspective, institutions need to make a clear distinction between three different outcomes: people who have actually found employment, people who have been administratively removed from the register, and people who have transferred to another register. Only the first category is a direct indicator of improving employment. Additionally, gender analysis shows that women have a weaker exit to employment compared to men. This confirms the need for special measures for the economic activation of Roma women, with a focus on mediation with employers, additional training, support for childcare, individual counseling, and post-employment monitoring.

The key conclusion is that Q1 2026 shows a statistical decrease in registered unemployment, but not strong enough evidence of a substantial improvement in employment. To truly assess progress, it is necessary to track what proportion of people leave the register due to formal and sustainable employment, and not just how many people are deleted or moved to another register.

9.8 INCLUSION OF ROMA IN ACTIVE EMPLOYMENT MEASURES 2025

The overall indicators show that in 2025, 476 applications were submitted for six active measures, of which 294 resulted in participation. This represents a 61.8% conversion from application to participation. Women submitted 204 applications, representing 42.9% of total applications, while their participation amounted to 139 people, i.e. 47.3% of total participation. This data is positive, as women have a higher share in participation than in applications. In other words, although women make up less than half of the applicants, their participation approaches half of all participants. This may indicate that women who apply have a relatively good transition rate to participation. However, it is important to emphasize that women are still underrepresented at the application stage. Therefore, additional activities are needed to inform, motivate and support Roma women to apply for active measures, especially in measures leading to formal and sustainable employment.

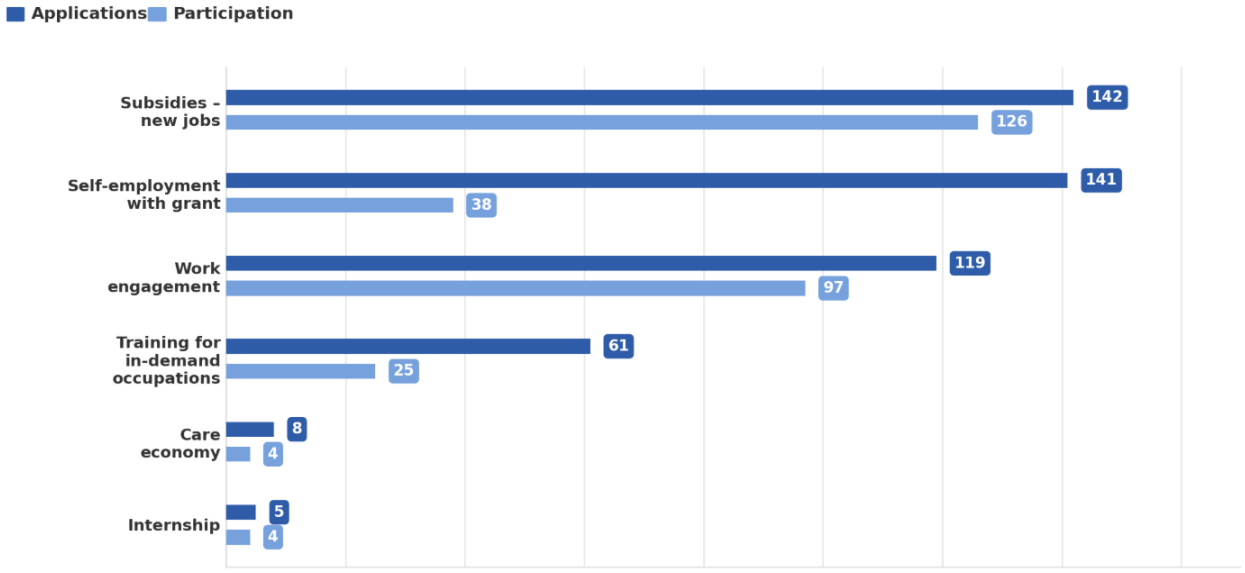


The graph shows that in 2025, a total of 476 applications were submitted, of which 294 resulted in participation, which represents a total conversion rate of 61.8%. The largest number of applications is for the measures “Subsidies – new jobs” with 142 applications and “Self-employment with a grant” with 141

applications. However, these two measures have very different outcomes: 126 people participated in the subsidies, while only 38 people in self-employment.

This shows that the interest in self-employment is high, but the transition from application to actual participation is weak. In contrast, the measure for subsidizing new jobs has both high interest and high participation. Significant participation is also observed in work engagement, where out of 119 applications, 97 people participated. The care economy and internship measures have a very small number of applications and participants, which indicates either a limited offer, or insufficient information and interest among the target group. The key message from the graph is that the number of applications alone is not a sufficient indicator of success. It is necessary to monitor how many applicants actually participate, as for some measures there is a large gap between interest and actual access.

Chart 35: Applications and participation by measure in the Operational Employment Plan, 2025

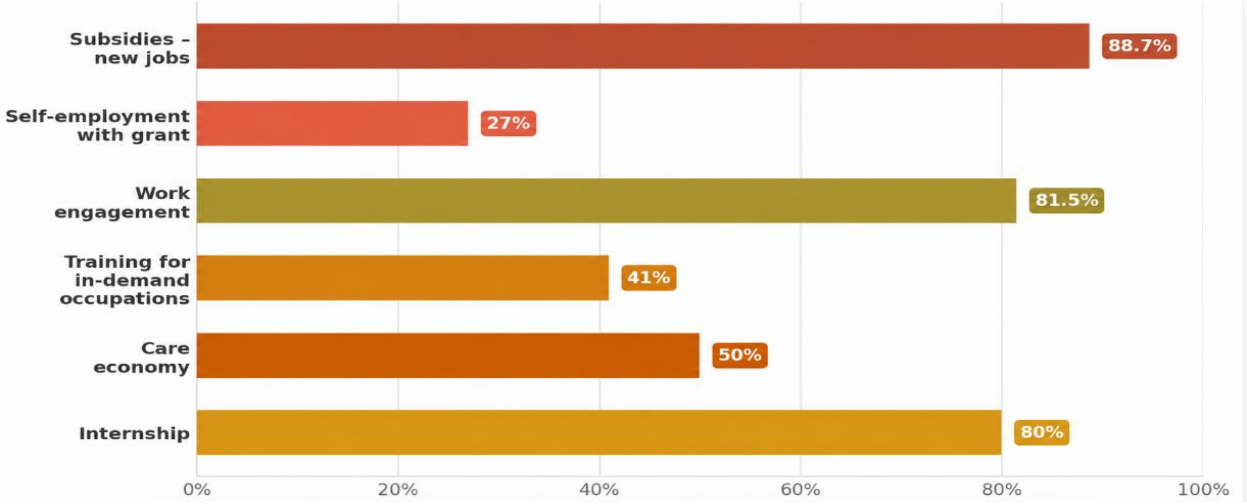


Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

The graph shows the conversion rate from application to participation by measure. The highest conversion rate is for the measure “Subsidies – new jobs”, with 88.7%, indicating that almost nine out of ten applicants switched to participation. High conversion rates are also for work engagement, with 81.5%, as well as internships, with 80%, although internships have a very small absolute number of applicants. The lowest conversion rate is for the measure “Self-employment with a grant”, with only 27%. This is the largest gap between interest and actual participation. Although this measure has almost the same number of applications as subsidies, the number of participants is much smaller. This may indicate stricter criteria, a complex administrative procedure, limited funds, poor quality of business plans or insufficient readiness of applicants for entrepreneurial measures. The measure “Training for in-demand occupations” has a conversion rate of 41%, which is moderately low, while the care economy has 50%. These results show that some measures are more effective in converting interest into real participation, while others require additional support, simplification of procedures, and better targeting of applicants' needs.

The graph shows that women in most measures have a higher share of participation than of applications. In self-employment with a grant, women account for 35.5% of applications, but 42.1% of participation, indicating a positive shift for women in this measure.

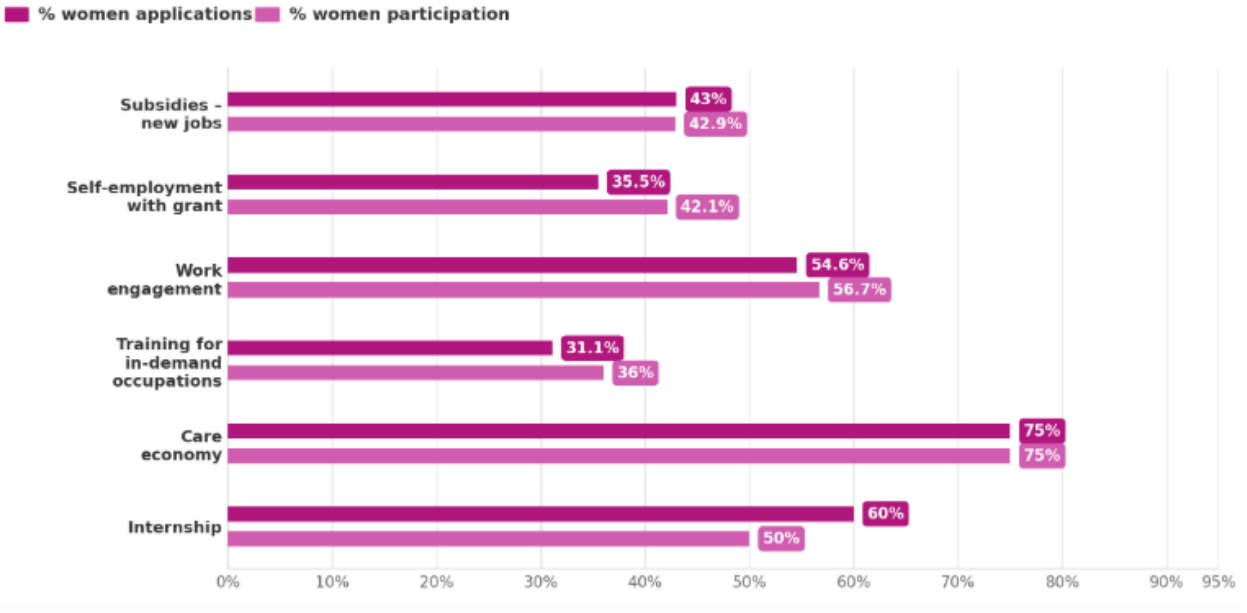
Chart 36: Conversion rates by measure



Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

Similarly, in work engagement, women account for 54.6% of applications, but 56.7% of participants. In in-demand vocational training, women account for 31.1% of applications, but 36% of participation, again showing that women who apply have a relatively good chance of being included. In the care economy, women have an identical share of 75% in both applications and participation, which is expected given the nature of this measure. Only in internships is there a decline: women account for 60% of applications, but 50% of participation. In the case of job creation subsidies, the share is almost identical, i.e. 43% of applications and 42.9% of participation. This graph shows that the main problem is not necessarily the selection of women after application, but their initial encouragement and support to apply. Women have a good conversion in several measures, but their share in applications remains limited in some measures.

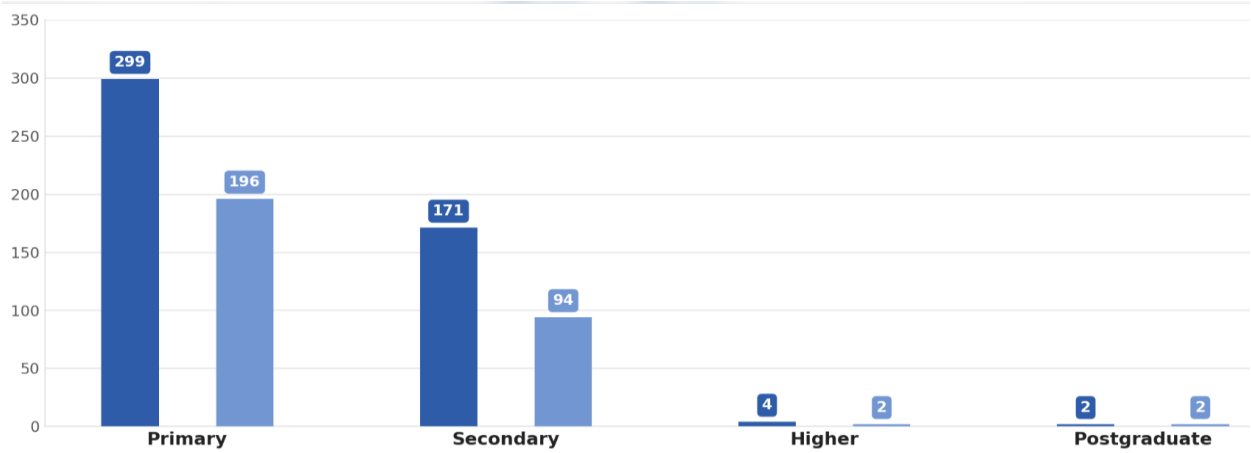
Chart 37: % Women – applications vs. participation by measure



Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

The graph shows that the largest number of applicants and participants are people with primary education. From this group, there are 299 applications and 196 participants, which shows that people with primary education are the dominant group in active measures. People with secondary education have 171 applications and 94 participants. Among people with higher education, there are only 4 applications and 2 participants, while among people with postgraduate education there are 2 applications and 2 participants. These figures show that active measures mostly cover people with primary and secondary education, while people with higher education are almost unrepresented. This is important because it confirms the educational structure of registered unemployed Roma, where people with low educational levels dominate. However, the fact that there is a significant number of people with primary education participating in the measures shows that the programs must be adjusted to their educational level, through practical training, mentoring and simple administrative support.

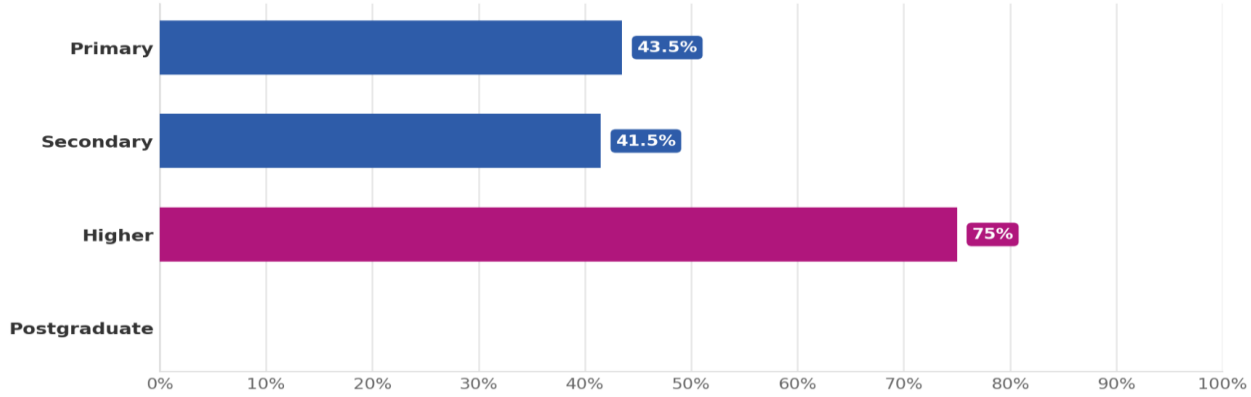
Chart 38: Education — applications versus participation



Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

The graph shows the gender structure of applicants by educational level. Among those with primary education, women make up 43.5% of applications, while among those with secondary education their share is 41.5%. This shows a relatively similar level of female participation in the two largest educational groups. Among those with higher education, women make up 75% of applications, but this should be interpreted with caution as the absolute number is very small. When the number of applications is low, the percentages may appear high, but do not represent a strong trend.

Chart 39: % of women by education – applications

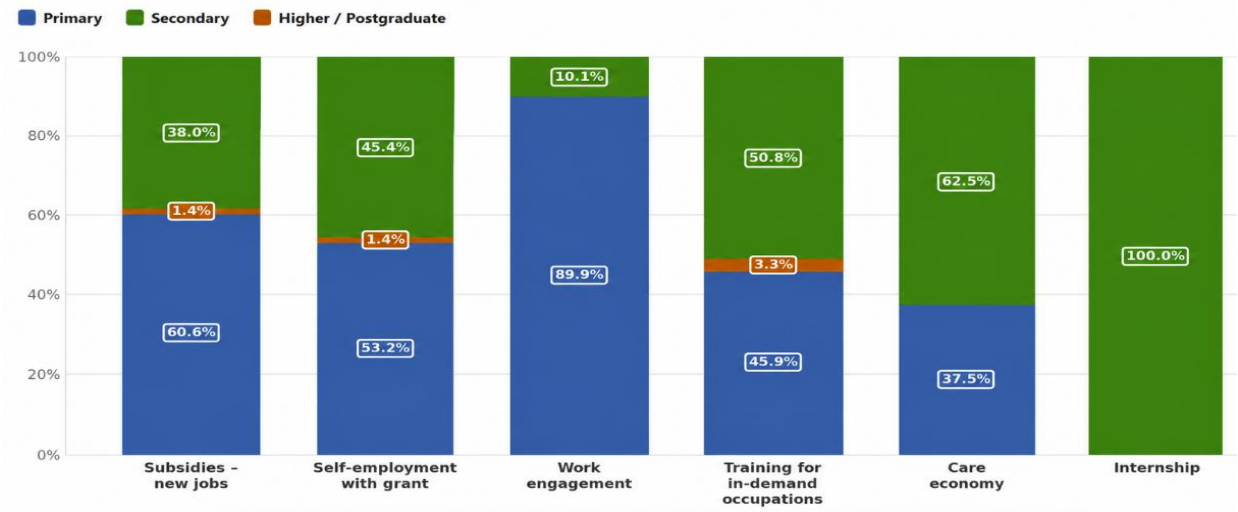


The graph shows that Roma women apply in all educational categories, but their participation in primary and secondary education remains below half. This means that although women have a significant presence, there is still room for increasing their inclusion, especially in measures targeting people with primary and secondary education.

The graph shows that the different measures cover different educational profiles of participants. In the case of work engagement, people with primary education dominate, with 89.9%, while people with secondary education make up only 10.1%. This shows that this measure mostly covers people with the lowest educational level. In the case of subsidies for new jobs, people with primary education are 60.6%, people with secondary education 38%, and people with higher or postgraduate education only 1.4%. In the case of self-employment with a grant, the structure is somewhat more even: 53.2% have primary education, 45.4% have secondary education, and 1.4% have higher or postgraduate education. In training for in-demand occupations, people with secondary education have the largest share with 50.8%, while people with primary education are 45.9%. This shows that trainings attract or select people with a higher educational level more than work engagement. In the care economy, people with secondary education are 62.5%, while in internships all participants have secondary education.

This graph shows that measures should not be designed uniformly. People with primary education are mostly involved in work engagement and subsidies, while people with secondary education are more present in training, care economy and internships. Therefore, each measure should have a different approach, criteria and type of support.

Chart 40: Tailor-made educational structure



Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

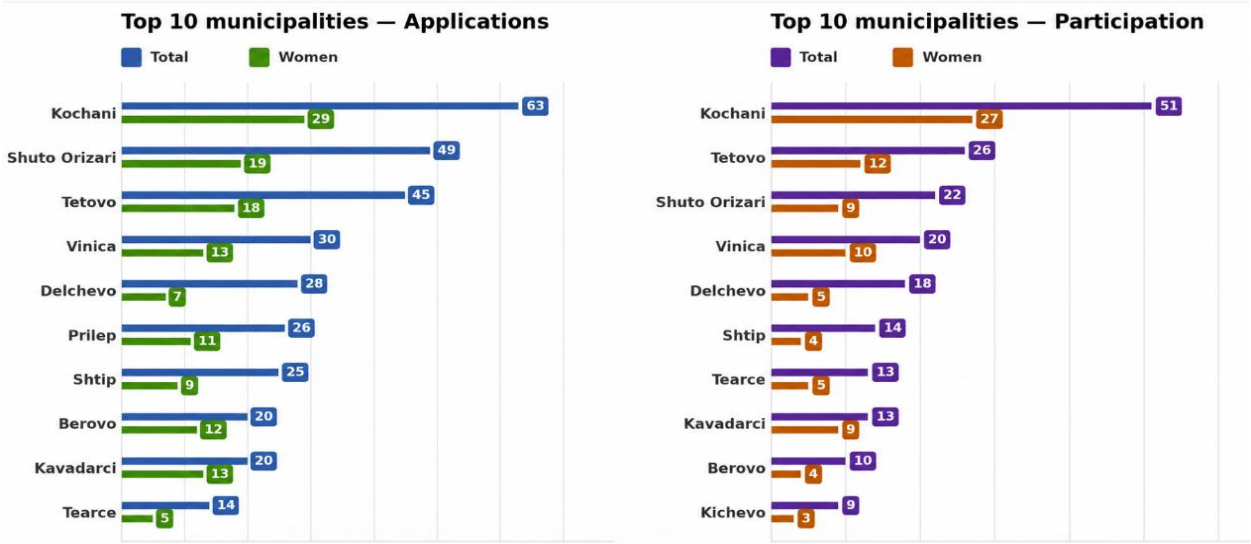
The graph shows that the largest number of applications comes from Kocani, with 63 applications, of which 29 are from women. This is followed by Shuto Orizari with 49 applications, Tetovo with 45, Vinica with 30, Delchevo with 28 and Prilep with 26. This shows that applications are concentrated in a limited number of municipalities.

In terms of participation, Kocani is again the highest, with 51 participants, of which 27 are women. This is followed by Tetovo with 26 participants, Shuto Orizari with 22, Vinica with 20, Delchevo with 18 and Shtip with 14. Interestingly, some municipalities with a high number of applications do not have an equally high number

of participants, which indicates a different conversion rate by municipality. From a gender perspective, in some municipalities women have a significant participation. For example, in Kocani, women account for 29 out of 63 applications and 27 out of 51 participants, which shows good gender representation in both applications and actual participation. In Kavadarci, women make up 13 out of 20 applications and 9 out of 13 participants, indicating a strong female representation.

This graph shows that the local context is very important. Municipalities with higher applications and participation are likely to have better information, stronger outreach, or greater connections to local institutions and employers. Therefore, successful local practices should be analyzed and transferred to municipalities with weaker applications and participation.

Chart 41: Top 10 Municipalities — Applications and Participation



Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

The scatter plot compares the relationship between the number of applications and the number of participants by municipality. The dotted line represents 100% conversion, i.e. a situation in which all applicants would become participants. Municipalities closer to the line have better conversion, while municipalities below the line have a larger gap between applications and participation.

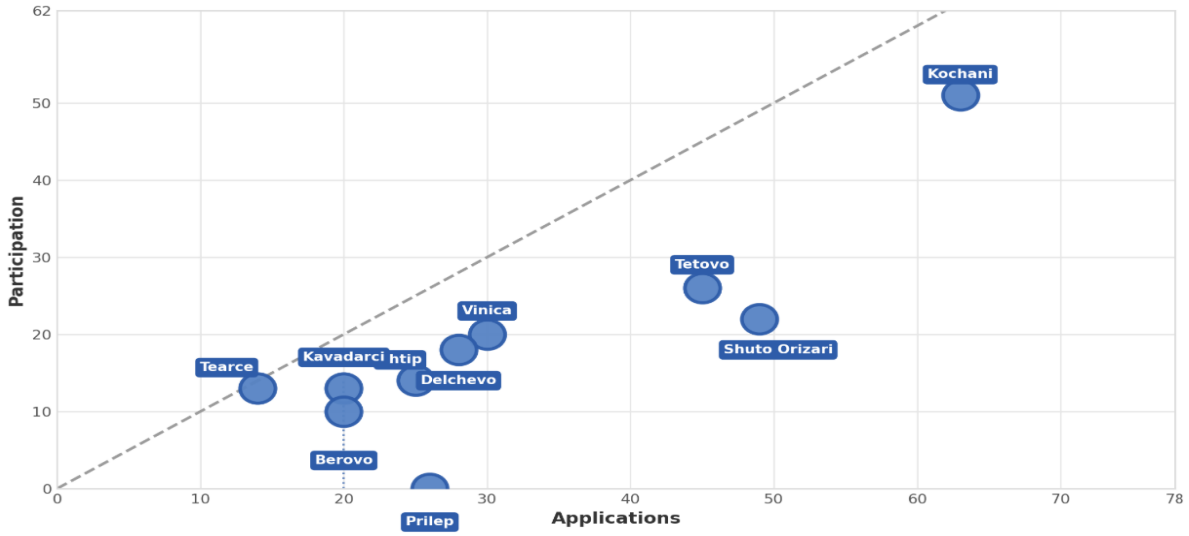
Kocani stands out as the municipality with the largest volume and relatively high conversion: 63 applications and 51 participants. This shows that Kocani has both strong interest and good implementation. Tearce has a smaller number of applications, but a very high conversion, with 14 applications and 13 participants, indicating that almost all applicants have transitioned to participation.

Vinica, Delchevo, Kavadarci and Shtip have a moderate number of applications and relatively solid conversion. In contrast, Shuto Orizari and Tetovo have a high number of applications, but a lower participation in relation to interest. This shows that in these municipalities there is significant demand, but also a larger gap between application and actual participation.

Municipalities with a high number of applications but low conversion rates should be particularly analyzed. There, the problem may not be insufficient interest, but administrative barriers, insufficient support in the

process, inappropriate criteria or a limited number of available places. On the other hand, municipalities with high conversion rates can serve as an example for better local implementation.
The key message from the graph is that the effectiveness of active measures does not depend only on the national design, but also on local implementation. Therefore, it is necessary to monitor conversion by municipality and identify where applications are converted into real participation and where they are lost in the process.

chart 42: Conversion by municipality — scatter plot



Source: BIJK and the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

10.FREE LEGAL AID

During the reporting period, no legislative amendments were introduced to the Law on Free Legal Aid to address the previously identified shortcomings, including the limitations set out in Article 13 regarding the coverage of costs in free legal aid proceedings. Furthermore, disaggregated data on beneficiaries of free legal aid by ethnicity, gender, type of legal issue, and geographic distribution remain unavailable, continuing to limit the monitoring of Roma access to justice.
Nevertheless, a positive trend was observed in 2025 regarding the use of primary free legal aid by Roma. According to data provided by the Ministry of Justice, the number of Roma beneficiaries of primary free legal aid increased from 596 persons in 2024 to 751 persons in 2025, representing an increase of approximately 26%.

An increase was recorded across all providers of primary free legal aid. The number of Roma beneficiaries assisted through the regional offices increased from 223 to 243, while the number assisted by authorized civil society organizations rose from 367 to 418. The most significant increase was recorded by legal clinics, where the number of Roma beneficiaries receiving primary free legal aid increased from 6 in 2024 to 90 in 2025. This trend indicates improved access to primary legal aid and greater utilization of the existing legal support mechanisms.
Despite this positive development, the available data do not allow for an assessment of whether the increased number of beneficiaries reflects improved awareness of the right to free legal aid, expanded access to services, or increased legal needs within the Roma community.

Table 24: Primary Free Legal Aid by Ethnicity, 2024–2025

Category	Year	Total	M	F	Mac,	Alb.	Tur.	Rom.	Serb.	Vla.	Oth.
Regional Offices	**2024**	2670	1466	1204	1720	459	174	223	3	0	25
Regional Offices	**2025**	2940	1602	1338	1903	593	172	243	1	0	28
Authorized Associations	**2024**	2302	1007	1238	822	44	14	367	1	0	6
Authorized Associations	**2025**	1921	762	1062	1046	161	13	418	6	0	61
Legal Clinics	**2024**	58	19	39	26	24	1	6	0	0	0
Legal Clinics	**2025**	210	90	94	92	21	2	90	0	0	3
Total	**2024**	**5030**	**2492**	**2481**	**2568**	**527**	**189**	**596**	**4**	**0**	**31**
Total	**2025**	**5071**	**2454**	**2494**	**3041**	**775**	**188**	**751**	**7**	**0**	**92**

Source: Annual Reports on the Implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid.

In certain regional offices, such as **Kavadarci, Radovish, Debar, and Karposh**, a significant increase in the number of beneficiaries was recorded, while other regional offices experienced a decline or reported no Roma beneficiaries at all. These disparities may indicate unequal availability of services, varying levels of public awareness, or differences in the intensity of outreach activities carried out by the institutions and authorized providers of free legal aid.

Table 25: Primary Free Legal Aid Provided to Roma by Municipality, 2024–2025

Regional office	**2024**	**2025**
Kriva Palanka	16	13
Berovo	30	23
Bitola	18	24
Makedonski Brod	0	0
Vinica	19	10
Valandovo	1	0
Gevgelija	0	0
Gostivar	2	4
Debar	0	11
Delcevo	2	3
Demir Hisar	0	0
Kavadarci	0	32
Kichevo	29	25
Kochani	0	5
Probishtip	0	0
Prilep	0	0
Radovish	8	22
Negotino	6	12
Ohrid	0	0
Resen	5	10
Sveti Nikiole	2	0
Struga	10	10
Strumica	10	1
Tetovo	4	2
Kumanovo	1	2
Shtip	40	0
Karposh	20	26
Kisela Voda	0	1

Gazi Baba	1	3
Skopje	0	4
Total	**223**	**243**

Source: *Annual Reports on the Implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid.*

Compared to 2024, a significant increase was recorded in 2025 in the number of Roma beneficiaries receiving primary free legal aid through legal clinics. The number of beneficiaries increased from 6 to 90, with the highest numbers recorded at the Legal Clinic of Goce Delčev University in Štip (57 beneficiaries) and the Legal Clinic at the Faculty of Law in Bitola (31 beneficiaries). This trend indicates the growing role of legal clinics in providing primary free legal aid to the Roma community. At the same time, it highlights the need to further strengthen their capacities and ensure more equitable access to these services across all regions.

Table 26: Primary Free Legal Aid Provided to Roma through Legal Clinics, 2024–2025

Legal Clinic	2024	2025
Legal Clinic – Faculty of Law, Bitola	3	31
Legal Clinic – Goce Delčev University, Štip	0	57
***Emine Zendeli* Legal Clinic – Faculty of Law, South East European University, Tetovo**	3	2
Legal Clinic – Faculty of Law, University of Tetovo	0	0
Centre for Clinical Legal Education in Criminal Law, Faculty of Law "Iustinianus Primus", Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje	0	-
Total	6	90

Source: *Annual Reports on the Implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid.*

In 2025, an increase was recorded in the number of Roma beneficiaries receiving primary free legal aid through authorized associations, with the number of beneficiaries rising from 367 in 2024 to 418 in 2025. The highest numbers of beneficiaries were recorded by Organization ŽENA – Delchevo (192) and the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) (126), while several authorized associations reported no Roma beneficiaries or did not provide relevant data. The available data indicate the growing role of authorized associations in delivering primary free legal aid to the Roma community. At the same time, they highlight the need to ensure more equitable access to these services and more consistent collection and publication of statistical data.

Table 27: Primary Free Legal Aid Provided to Roma through Authorized Associations, 2024–2025

Authorized Association (NGO)	2024	2025
MKC Bitola	28	19
MZMP	25	126
NRC Kumanovo	0	/
EHO Shtip	0	41
Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of North Macedonia	16	28
Institute for Human Rights	0	0
Association for Fair Trials	0	–
KHAM Delchevo	137	–
Jesuit Refugee Service	–	–
Association "Multikultura" – Tetovo	0	0
Association "Women's Forum" – Tetovo	0	–
Organization ŽENA – Delchevo	148	192
Association "Organization of Women" – Sveti Nikole	13	12

Total	**367**	**418**

Source: *Annual Reports on the Implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid.*

Despite the positive trend in the use of free legal aid, certain legislative barriers affecting Roma access to justice remain unchanged. In particular, the limitation set out in **Article 13 of the Law on Free Legal Aid**, which excludes the coverage of certain costs related to court proceedings, continues to pose a barrier. This may discourage individuals in situations of social vulnerability from initiating court proceedings to protect their rights.

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION FOR THE VICTIMS OF VIOLENT CRIMES

During the reporting period, the implementation of the Law on the Payment of Financial Compensation to Victims of Violent Crimes continued through the Commission for Financial Compensation to Victims of Violent Crimes. The Commission decides on applications for exercising the right to financial compensation for victims of violent crimes, with the aim of providing financial support and preventing secondary victimization.

According to information received from the Ministry of Justice, in 2025 no applications for financial compensation were submitted by Roma victims of domestic violence.[13] Although an institutional mechanism for the payment of financial compensation to victims of violent crimes has been established, the absence of applications submitted by Roma victims of domestic violence indicates the need to further examine the reasons for this situation. It is necessary to analyze whether this reflects insufficient awareness of the existing mechanism, limited access to institutions, lack of trust in the system, or other factors affecting the use of this right.

In this regard, activities aimed at informing and supporting the Roma community should be strengthened, so that victims of violence have equal and effective access to protection and compensation mechanisms.

11.BUDGET

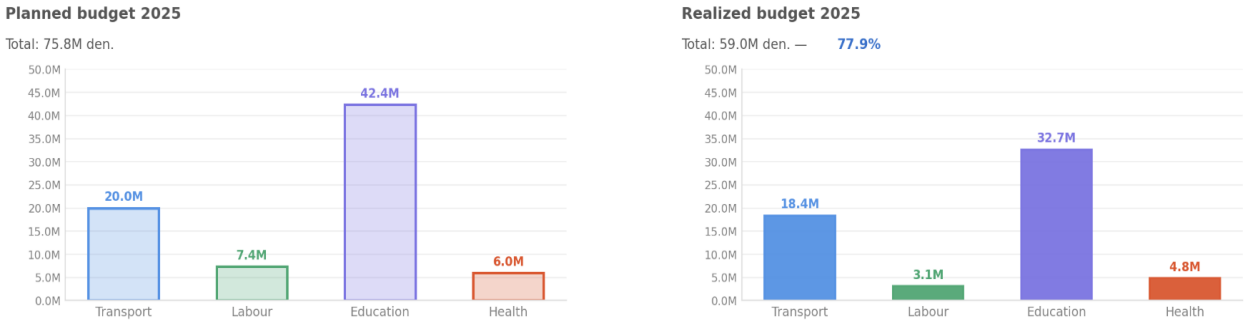
The Budget data for 2025 and 2026 show that the implementation of the National Roma Strategy continues to be largely dependent on a limited number of ministries, with the majority of funds concentrated in education, followed by transport and infrastructure. However, a comparison between the planned and realized budget reveals a significant gap between formal budgeting and the actual institutional capacity for timely and full implementation of funds.

11.1 PLANNED, REALIZED BUDGET AND BUDGET GAP FOR 2025

In 2025, the total planned budget for the four ministries was 75.8 million denars. The largest allocation is foreseen for the Ministry of Education and Science, with 42.4 million denars, which represents more than half of the total planned budget. This shows that education remains the dominant priority area within the implementation of the National Roma Strategy. The Ministry of Transport and Communications has a planned budget of 20 million denars, which confirms the importance of infrastructure interventions in Roma settlements. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy has a planned budget of 7.4 million denars, while the Ministry of Health has 6 million denars.

[13] Information provided by the **Bureau for the Promotion and Improvement of Inter-Community Relations (BPIICR)**, based on information received from the **Ministry of Justice**, 2026

Chart 9: Planned vs. Realized Budget for the Implementation of the National Roma Strategy 2025



Source: Open finance

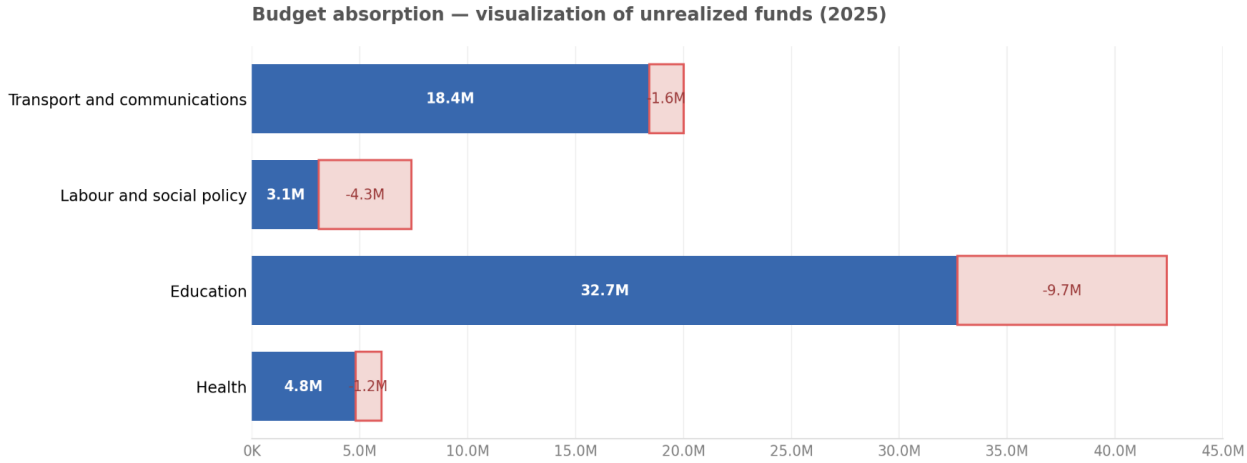
From a public policy perspective, the structure of the 2025 budget shows a clear concentration of funds in education and infrastructure, while employment, social protection and health receive a significantly smaller share of funds. This creates a sectoral imbalance, as Roma inclusion requires simultaneous progress in education, employment, housing, infrastructure, health and social protection.

REALIZED BUDGET FOR 2025

Of the planned 75.8 million denars, 59 million denars were realized in 2025, or 77.9% of the total planned budget. Although this shows that the majority of the funds were used, the realization rate is lower compared to 2024, when the total realization was 91%. This indicates a decrease in the absorption capacity of the institutions. The Ministry of Transport and Communications has the highest realization rate in 2025, which realized 18.4 million denars out of the planned 20 million denars, or 91.9%. This indicates a relatively strong capacity for the implementation of infrastructure measures and projects.

The Ministry of Health realized 4.8 million denars out of the planned 6 million denars, or 80.4%. This represents a solid realization, especially if we take into account the previously identified weaknesses related to the monitoring, selection and institutionalization of Roma health mediators.

Chart 10: Unrealized funds by ministries for 2025



Source: Open finance

The Ministry of Education and Science realized 32.7 million denars out of the planned 42.4 million denars, which represents a realization of 77.1%. Although education remains the largest budget area, it is precisely in this ministry that the largest unused amount in absolute value is noted — approximately 9.7 million denars.

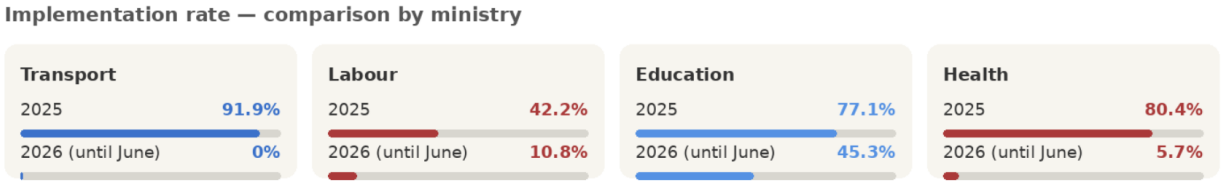
This means that education is both a major area of investment, but also an area where unrealized funds have the greatest financial impact.

The lowest realization is recorded by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, which realized only 3.1 million denars out of the planned 7.4 million denars, or 42.2%. This is particularly worrying, since employment, social protection and activation measures are key to reducing poverty and long-term social exclusion among the Roma community.

BUDGET GAP AND UNSPENT FUNDS IN 2025

The budget gap, defined as the difference between the planned and the executed budget in 2025, amounted to approximately MKD 16.8 million. The largest amount of unspent funds was recorded in the education sector, amounting to MKD 9.7 million, followed by labour and social policy with MKD 4.3 million, transport with MKD 1.6 million, and healthcare with MKD 1.2 million. This demonstrates that the challenge is not only the level of budget allocation but also the capacity of institutions to translate planned financial resources into tangible services, infrastructure investments, programmes, and direct benefits for Roma communities. The key lesson is that budget allocation alone does not guarantee inclusion. A budget line becomes meaningful only when the allocated funds are implemented in a timely manner, effectively monitored, and linked to concrete and measurable outcomes for Roma citizens.

Chart 11: Percentage of realization of funds for the Roma Strategy 2025 and 2026



Source: Open finance

11.2 PLANNED BUDGET 2025 VS BUDGET 2026, AND REALIZATION OF THE 2006 BUDGET

The planned budget for 2026 is 72.6 million denars, while in 2025 it was 75.8 million denars. This represents a decrease of approximately 3.2 million denars, or 4.2%.

Table 21: Comparison of the planned budgets for the Implementation of the Roma Strategy 2025-2026

Ministry	Planned budget 2025	Planned budget 2026	Difference	Ghance
Transport and communication	20,0 million denars	20,0 million denars	0	0%
Social affairs, youth and demography	7,4 million denars	6,1 million denars	-1,3 million denars	-17,6%
Education and science	42,4 million denars	40,5 million denars.	-1,9 million denars	-4,5%
Health	6,0 million denars	6,0 million denars	0	0%
Total	75,8 million denars	72,6 million denars	-3,2 million denars	-4,2%

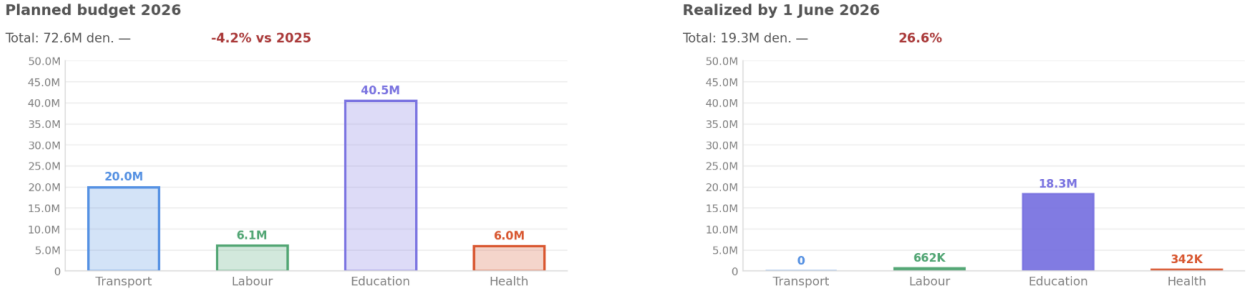
Source: Ministry of finance

The largest decrease in absolute terms is observed at the Ministry of Education and Science, where the budget is reduced from 42.4 million denars to 40.5 million denars. However, education remains the largest budget category in 2026. The second significant decrease is at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, where the budget is reduced from 7.4 million denars to 6.1 million denars. This decrease is particularly problematic because this ministry had the lowest implementation rate in 2025. Instead of reducing funds, strengthening institutional capacity, better planning and timely implementation are needed. The budgets for transport and communications and health remain unchanged in nominal terms. However, if inflation and increased costs for services and materials are taken into account, a nominally unchanged budget in real terms may mean reduced purchasing power.

REALIZATION OF THE BUDGET UNTIL 2026

By June 1, 2026, the total budget implementation amounted to 19.3 million denars, or 26.6% of the total planned annual budget. This indicates a slow start to implementation in the first half of the year. Implementation in 2026 is strongly concentrated in the Ministry of Education and Science, which implemented 18.3 million denars, or 45.3% of its annual planned budget. This means that almost the entire amount implemented by June 2026 comes from education.

Chart 12: Planned vs. Realized Budget for the Implementation of the National Roma Strategy 2026



Source: Open finance

In contrast, the Ministry of Transport and Communications has 0 denars of implementation by June 1, 2026, although it has a planned budget of 20 million denars. This represents a significant implementation risk, as more than a quarter of the total annual budget remains completely inactive in the first part of the year. The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy has implemented only 662 thousand denars, or 10.8% of its annual budget, while the Ministry of Health has implemented only 342 thousand denars, or 5.7%. These low implementation rates indicate that social and health measures are not being implemented at the required pace.
The data for 2026 reveal three different types of budget risk.

- First, there is a risk of zero implementation in transport. The Ministry of Transport and Communications has a significant planned budget, but there has been no implementation by June 1. This may indicate delays in public procurement, administrative obstacles, poor project preparation, or implementation that has been left for the second half of the year. Considering that a government reshuffle has been announced, as well as possible elections during the last quarter of 2026, the implementation of funds is at moderate risk.
- Second, there is a risk of excessive concentration in education. Education accounts for about 56% of the total planned budget for 2026, but by June it represents almost 95% of the total implemented funds. This means that the implementation of the National Roma Strategy in 2026, at least in the first part of the year, is almost entirely driven by the education sector.

- Third, there is a risk of underperformance in social and health services. Labor and social policy, together with health, have planned 12.1 million denars, but only about 1 million denars have been realized by June. These sectors are essential for Roma inclusion, as they directly affect employment, poverty reduction, access to health services and social protection.

The budget analysis shows that the implementation of the National Roma Strategy continues to depend on formal budget commitments, but these commitments do not always translate into timely, even and full implementation. In 2025, 59 million denars were implemented, but the implementation rate of 77.9% indicates that more than 16 million denars remained unused. The planned budget for 2026 has been slightly reduced, from 75.8 million denars in 2025 to 72.6 million denars in 2026. More important than the reduction itself is that only 26.6% of the annual budget has been implemented by June 1, 2026.

This creates a risk that implementation will be delayed, concentrated at the end of the year or partially not implemented. The data also show that education dominates both planning and implementation, while labor, social policy and health remain under-implemented. This is problematic because Roma inclusion cannot be achieved through educational measures alone. Employment, health, infrastructure, housing and social protection must be implemented in parallel.
Therefore, the key recommendation is not only to maintain or increase the budget allocation for Roma inclusion, but to establish a stronger implementation and monitoring system. Ministries should report quarterly on planned and implemented funds, explain delays and link expenditures to concrete results for Roma communities. Without such an approach, the National Strategy risks remaining a formal document, rather than a practical instrument for reducing inequality and exclusion.

12. CONCLUSION

Overall, the reporting period demonstrates that North Macedonia continued to advance the institutional and legal framework for Roma inclusion through strengthened coordination mechanisms, the preparation of new National Action Plans, targeted investments, and several positive sectoral developments. Progress was recorded in education through the introduction of tutoring support, the expansion of Roma educational mediators, the publication of the Grade 6 Roma language textbook and the preparation of the Grade 7 textbook. In health, approximately 77% of Roma are covered by health insurance, 100% of Roma births take place in health institutions, funding for vulnerable women increased by over 2.3 million MKD, and the immunisation programme budget increased by 7.5%. Nevertheless, the Roma infant mortality rate remains high at 8.7‰, compared with the national average of 2.9‰. In housing, 20 million MKD continued to be allocated for communal infrastructure, 54 Roma homes were legalized, while 15 families (89 persons), including 61 children, continued to live in temporary accommodation in Vizbegovo. Significant progress was also achieved in civil registration, with 395 of the initially identified 526 persons (75.1%) obtaining a personal identification number, although 145 persons remain without regulated citizenship.

Implementation of the National Roma Strategy, however, continues to face important structural challenges. Budget realization declined from 91% in 2024 to 77.9% in 2025, while by 1 June 2026 only 26.6% of the annual budget had been implemented. Education accounted for almost all expenditures, whereas implementation reached 0% in transport, 10.8% in social policy and 5.7% in health. The overall planned budget for 2026 was also reduced by 4.2%. Discrimination based on ethnicity remained the most frequently reported ground, accounting for 22% of all discrimination complaints, while Roma represented 5% of complainants. Roma children accounted for 28.5% of all recorded victims of child sexual abuse between 2020 and 2024, demonstrating their disproportionate vulnerability.

Labour market indicators show that Roma continue to benefit less from overall employment improvements. While registered unemployment decreased by 6.7% in 2025, unemployment among Roma declined by only 2.2%, and among Roma women by just 0.8%. During the first quarter of 2026, total unemployment decreased by 1.7%, compared with only 0.6% among Roma and 0.3% among Roma women. Roma consequently represented 11.3% of all registered unemployed persons, while Roma women accounted for approximately 53% of registered unemployed Roma and 11.4% of total female unemployment. Around 93–94% of registered unemployed Roma had only primary education or less, more than 60% were aged 35–59, and approximately two-thirds had been unemployed for more than two years. Furthermore, most exits from the unemployment register resulted from administrative deregistration rather than employment, while active employment measures recorded an overall conversion rate of 61.8%, with considerable differences across measures and municipalities.

Positive developments were also recorded in access to justice and institutional support. The number of Roma beneficiaries of primary free legal aid increased by 26%, from 596 in 2024 to 751 in 2025, including a significant increase in legal clinic beneficiaries from 6 to 90. At the same time, the network of Roma Information Centres expanded from four to six centres, although the number of services declined from 2,869 to 929 and the temporary suspension of all centres at the beginning of 2026 highlighted concerns regarding their sustainability. Despite the existing legal framework, no Roma victims of domestic violence applied for financial compensation during 2025, indicating continuing barriers in access to available protection mechanisms.

Overall, while important progress has been achieved in strengthening institutional frameworks and expanding several inclusion measures, the available evidence demonstrates that structural inequalities affecting Roma persist across education, employment, health, housing, access to justice, and social inclusion. The effective implementation of the National Roma Strategy will therefore depend not only on the adoption of new policy measures but also on consistent implementation, adequate budget execution, reliable monitoring systems, and measurable improvements in the living conditions and equal opportunities of Roma communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adopt the new Action Plans without delay, with clearly defined measures, responsible institutions, deadlines, budgets, and measurable indicators.
- Ensure the continuous implementation of scholarships and introduce targeted measures to reverse declining Roma enrolment and completion rates in primary and secondary education.
- Expand the geographic coverage of Roma educational mediators and publish anonymized annual reports on their activities, results, and impact.
- Implement the legally established tutoring programme without further delay and regularly monitor its coverage and effectiveness.

- Develop targeted adult education programmes for Roma and monitor completion, certification, and employment outcomes.
- Expand preschool fee exemptions and ensure their implementation in all designated municipalities, particularly Šuto Orizari and Kičevo.
- Reinstate and adequately fund the Roma health mediator programme, with priority given to communities experiencing limited healthcare access and high infant and premature mortality.
- Establish a transparent monitoring and reporting framework for health mediators and other targeted health measures, using indicators disaggregated by ethnicity, gender, age, and municipality.
- Expand preventive, postnatal, and vaccination services in Roma settlements through funded fieldwork, door-to-door outreach, and accessible multilingual information.
- Remove documentation and administrative barriers preventing Roma from obtaining health insurance and accessing healthcare services.
- Monitor and publicly report how increased funding for undocumented, uninsured, and vulnerable women is spent and what results it achieves.
- Urgently provide safe and sustainable housing for Roma families living in substandard conditions.
- Issue infrastructure calls early and allow municipalities sufficient time for implementation.
- Accelerate legalization and adopt the Social Housing Law with adequate funding and access to essential services.
- Accelerate resolution of the remaining civil registration and citizenship cases through stronger coordination between responsible institutions.
- Adopt and implement the Protocol for Determining Statelessness and ensure effective protection against statelessness.
- Continue mobile legal-aid services and establish formal cooperation with Kosovo to resolve complex cross-border cases.
- Formally integrate antigypsyism into legislation, policies, and the new Roma Strategy Action Plans, with measurable indicators.
- Implement and monitor school desegregation measures and expand mandatory antigypsyism training across public institutions.
- Strengthen targeted prevention, early reporting, and specialized support services for Roma children and women affected by abuse and violence.
- Require ministries to report quarterly on planned and implemented funds, delays, and measurable results.
- Accelerate implementation, particularly in transport, health, and social policy, to prevent year-end spending and unused funds.
- Ensure a balanced allocation across education, employment, housing, health, and social protection.
- Introduce targeted employment measures for Roma women, including training, childcare, mentoring, transport, and employer incentives.
- Simplify access to self-employment grants and provide applicants with business-development and administrative support.
- Report separately on sustainable employment and administrative deregistration, with data disaggregated by ethnicity, gender, and education.
- Ensure sustainable housing solutions for homeless Roma families and fully implement the Action Plan for persons living in informal settlements.
- Secure continuous funding and uninterrupted operation of Roma Information Centres across all relevant municipalities.

- Remove barriers to free legal aid and financial compensation through legislative amendments, targeted outreach, and disaggregated monitoring.