



Ministry of Justice, Human  
and Minority Rights

# Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025

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Montenegro  
Ministry of Justice,  
Human and Minority Rights



**ROMA INTEGRATION**  
Regional Cooperation Council

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## Introduction

Roma and Egyptians represent a significant part of the population of Montenegro, however, as in many countries they live, they face problems of very low level of education and employment, i.e., they are a part of the population facing the problem of social marginalization. According to the existing data from the last Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Montenegro of 2011, 6,251 people declared that they belong to the Roma nationality, accounting for 1.01% of the total population, and the largest number of Roma people lives in Podgorica (3,988), then in Berane (531), Nikšić (483), namely in separate settlements in 77% of cases. The Egyptian population numbers 2,054 people, or 0.33% of the total population.<sup>1</sup> The Council of Europe estimates that about 25 thousand Roma and Egyptians live in Montenegro.<sup>2</sup>

There are various forms of marginalization faced by Roma and Egyptians, ranging from economic and political ones, all the way through educational and cultural forms. The specific causes result in the Roma and Egyptian communities being one of the minority communities in the most difficult position in many countries, which has also been recognized by the Council of Europe and the European Union. In the last few decades, these organizations have been implementing various activities at the level of development of legislative and strategic frameworks for improving the position of Roma and Egyptians, whereby the primary emphasis is placed on the systematic solving the problems of the Roma and Egyptian communities, both at the level of EU member states and at the level of candidate countries, including Montenegro. Particular importance is given to the need to address the problems faced by women and children, an evident gap in terms of education, health and social care, a high unemployment rate compared to the majority population, to provide adequate housing conditions, to address the prevalent problem of not having personal documents, and primarily to fight against anti-gypsyism and all forms of national, racial, religious or gender discrimination and segregation of Roma and Egyptians.

Montenegro is a country in the process of democratic transition, which is why it is faced with the need for significant reforms in all spheres of society, whereby the economic and social difficulties it encounters especially affect the most vulnerable communities in society. In the period behind us, which was marked by ethnically inspired conflicts in the Western Balkan region, Montenegro managed to preserve its internal peace and multiethnic coexistence. In those days, Montenegro opened its doors wide and became a refuge for thousands of refugees and displaced people, as evidenced by the fact that at one time, the refugees and displaced people in Montenegro numbered approximately one quarter of the total population. The conflicts in Kosovo have caused an arrival in Montenegro of a large number of displaced people of the Roma and Egyptian populations, which has resulted in a deterioration of the overall socio-economic situation of this population.

In order to improve the current status and position of the Roma and Egyptian communities in Montenegro, as well as to enable them to exercise their rights guaranteed by the Constitution and other legal acts, and in order to fight all forms of discrimination and segregation, The Government of Montenegro has prepared the **Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians for the period 2021-2025**. The adoption of this document was preceded by other strategic documents, primarily

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<sup>1</sup> Statistical Office of Montenegro - MONSTAT, Census of population, households and dwellings in 2011, <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=322&pageid=322>

<sup>2</sup> Council of Europe, Roma Population Estimates. Taken on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2017 from: <http://www.coe.int/de/web/portal/roma/>

National Action Plan for implementation of the „**Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015**“, adopted in 2005 with the aim to break the vicious circle of poverty and exclusion of Roma in the social life of Montenegro through projects in the field of education, employment, housing and health care. Given the limited scope of the Action Plan in four priority fields, at the end of 2007, the Government of Montenegro adopted the **Strategy for Improving the Position of the RAE Population in Montenegro 2008-2012**, after the expiration of which was prepared a strategic document entitled the **Strategy for Improving the Position of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro 2012-2016**. The strategic document that preceded the new strategy was called the **Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro 2016-2020**.

Reform activities in the previous five-year period were focused primarily on the development and implementation of a public policy, which emphasized:

- Solving the housing problems of members of the Roma and Egyptian population;
- Regulating the legal status of Roma and Egyptians;
- Providing adequate health care, especially for the most vulnerable members of the Roma and Egyptian populations;
- Increasing the presence of the Roma and Egyptian populations in state administration bodies;
- It is especially important to point out the progress made in terms of increasing the number of Roma and Egyptians taking primary and secondary education;

The vision of the new strategic document is reflected in the need for a complete affirmation of the Roma and Egyptian communities into the social, economic, cultural and political life of Montenegro. In this respect, a strategic goal has been defined at the level of the entire public policy, which reads:

### **Strategic objective**

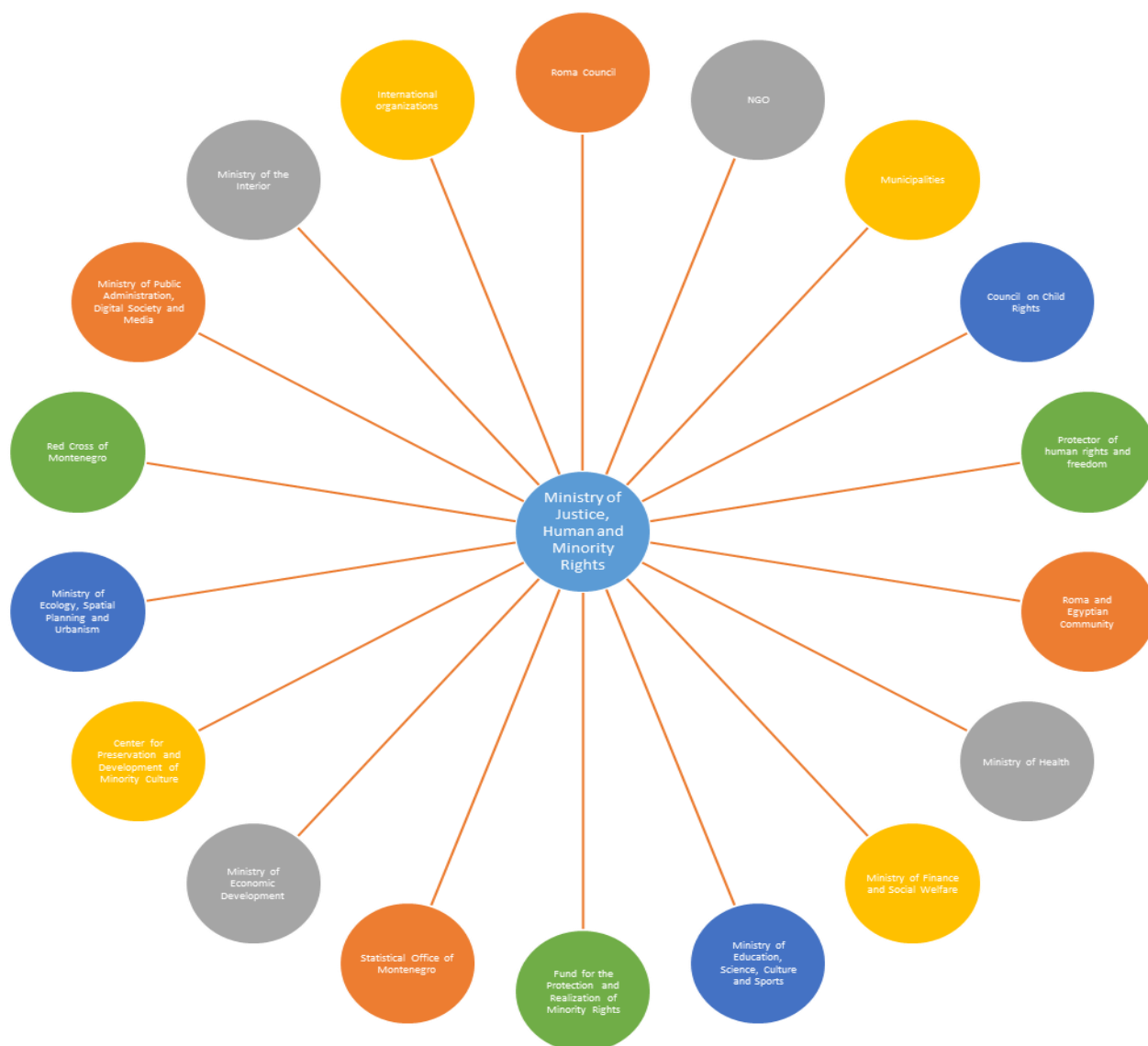
*Improving the socio-economic and legal position of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro, through the development of an inclusive and open society dedicated to the fight and the elimination of all forms of discrimination, anti-gypsyism and poverty.*

In order to realize the defined strategic objective, it is necessary to establish an adequate systemic solutions at all levels of society, which will enable a more efficient approach in the fields at which members of the Roma and Egyptian communities are in the greatest risk. The strategic document is based on seven basic principles, the meaning of which is reflected in the defining a public policy that covers all the segments important for enabling equal rights and status to Roma and Egyptians in the Montenegrin society. The said principles are as follows:



A particularly important principle is the principle of participation and involvement of all interested parties in the process of implementing the public policy in question, with special emphasis on the participation of representatives of Roma and Egyptian civil society. The graph shows all the subjects that take part in the process of implementing the public policy.

### 1.1 Graphic presentation of interested parties for implementing the subject public policy



The structure of the new strategic document is designed as to encompass the connection of the strategy with the umbrella and sectoral strategic documents and international obligations, presentation of the legal and institutional framework in Montenegro, analysis of all issues relevant to this field, review of public policy results to date, review of future activities through the realization of strategic and operational goals and accompanying indicators, together with the guidelines for establishing an effective system for strategy implementation. The accompanying action plans, which will be adopted annually and biennially, will define the strategic objectives, measures and activities necessary for their implementation, and they will also precisely assign competencies to all the bodies which will implement the planned activities.

The next chapter shows an overview of compliance with the national strategic framework of Montenegro.

### [Compliance with the National Strategic Framework](#)

The strategic document is harmonized with all the national umbrella and sectoral strategies, that is, with the planning documents that address the issues of importance for the specific public policy; Starting with strategic documents, such as:

#### **The Work Program of the Government of Montenegro for 2021**

The Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025 was adopted in accordance with the priorities of the Government of Montenegro defined within the Government Work Program for 2021, primarily the Priority 1 “Rule of Law and Equal Opportunities”, which attaches special importance to improving the position of members of minorities and ensuring equal rights for all citizens. This priority also emphasizes the need to define clear measures of social protection and the protection of vulnerable categories of the population in order to reduce huge social disparities in society by improving the social security of the population, whereby the Roma and Egyptian communities are one of the most jeopardized categories concerned.

#### **The Minority Policy Strategy 2019-2023**

The Minority Policy Strategy is an umbrella sectoral strategic document in the field of protection of minorities, fight against discrimination and strengthening the social inclusion of minority people. Having in mind that the Roma and Egyptians are the minorities in the most jeopardized position, in drafting this strategic document, special attention was attached to achieving harmonization with the basic goals and priorities defined in the strategic document. The primary focus is put on the alignment with strategic and operational objectives in the areas of: Education; Employment; Minority Culture and Identity; Political Participation of Minorities; as well as Raising awareness of minorities and the general public about the status, rights and obligations of minorities;

These objectives are also represented in the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025, primarily by addressing the specific problems the Roma and Egyptian population are facing in specific fields and proposing adequate responses to identified problems. It is especially important to emphasize the harmonization in the fields of strengthening the level of political participation, in changes to the electoral legislation and representation in the Parliament of Montenegro, all in order to increase the level of authentic political representation of the Roma and Egyptian communities. The Minority Policy Strategy defines that by 2023, the number of members of minority nations and other minority national communities instructed on the importance of political participation will be increased. A significant attention is given to the implementation of training of

young members of the Roma and Egyptian populations for their participation in political life, with special emphasis on women.

### **Plan of activities for achieving gender equality (PAPRR)**

The plan of activities for achieving gender equality clearly emphasizes the unequal position of Roma and Egyptian women in Montenegrin society, primarily their marginalized position in the areas of education, health care, housing and employment. It is especially important to address the difficult situation of Roma and Egyptian women, whereby PAPRR envisages a series of activities related to the provision of primary health care. The strategic document states that, at the primary level of health care of the population, the planned processes of education of women and youth in the field of healthy lifestyles, reproductive health, preparation of women for motherhood are not adequate compared to the actual needs and are especially inaccessible to women from rural areas and to women from certain marginalized groups (Roma women, Egyptian women). Educational and informative programs on preserving the health of women in menopause are also not sufficiently represented. In addition, PAPRR envisages initiating and encouraging activities that contribute to participatory democracy and involve women from minorities and vulnerable groups.

### **National Strategy of Sustainable Development until 2030**

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development until 2030, which is the implementation document of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 in Montenegro, indicates the insufficient level of integration into the Montenegrin society as the most important from the series of problems faced by members of the Roma population (primarily the problems in the area of the necessity of adequate regulation of the legal status, education, employment, health and housing). Emphasis is also placed on the problems regarding the social exclusion of members of minorities and the need for their greater presence in the public and political life. In this regard, the following strategic objectives and accompanying measures from the NSSD are of special importance for the implementation of the Roma policy:

Strategic objective 1.3 to provide inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Measure 1.3.1 - Ensure comprehensive, inclusive and quality preschool education SDG 4 (4.2 and 4.a) - target outcomes:

- Build and upgrade educational facilities that are adapted to children and people with disabilities, that are gender sensitive and which provide a safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environment for all, SDG 4 (4.a).

Strategic objective 2.1 To stimulate the active attitude of key subjects towards sustainability of development

Measure 2.1.3 - Eliminate national and religious discrimination – the target outcomes by 2030 are as follows:

- Ensured equal opportunities and reduced disparity of outcomes by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and by promoting appropriate laws, policies and measures.
- Increased number of Roma and Egyptian children completing primary education



- Reduced level of ethnic distance in Montenegro
- Adequate regulation of their legal status.

### **Directions of development of Montenegro 2018-2021**

In 2017, the Government of Montenegro adopted the Development Directions of Montenegro 2018-2021, which are one of the umbrella strategic documents with which the public policy needs to be harmonized. In the context of ensuring the rights to minority nations and other minority national communities, it is important to note that the subject document emphasizes the need to improve the quality of education, the need to produce competitive workforce and to train workers to meet the needs of the labor market as well as to develop an inclusive education system. In this regard, the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2020-2025 develops an approach that contributes to the realization of the priorities of the DDMN, especially in the fields of education and housing, that is, in the part concerning the increase in a number of three years olds to school age children taking pre-school education and in the part of solving the housing issues of displaced and internally displaced persons through the implementation of the Regional Housing Program (RHP).

### **Montenegro Economic Reform Programme (PER) 2021-2023**

The strategic document is also in line with the measures contained in the Montenegro Economic Reform Programme (PER) 2021-2023 in terms of employment and labor market, namely the priority measures concerned with the increase in participation, especially of vulnerable groups of unemployed individuals, in the labor market. In this sense, Roma and Egyptians are recognized as a vulnerable category in employment, whereby the PER envisages the need to identify unemployed persons who are at risk in the labor market, to define measures and programs of active employment policy, as well as those aimed at providing training, skills and experience required in the labor market.

When it comes to social inclusion, poverty reduction and equal opportunities, the PER places an emphasis on the development of services in the field of social protection and child protection which will remove the obstacle towards an easier access to services for vulnerable categories of people.

### **Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking 2019-2024**

The strategic document envisages a series of activities related to the implementation of campaigns of raising awareness among the general population about human trafficking, vulnerable groups, largely consisting of Roma and Egyptians. Through preventive activities by representatives of institutions cooperating with the civil sector, special attention is given to raising the awareness of the Roma and Egyptian populations about the negative consequences of illegal marriages as a manifestation of the criminal offense of human trafficking. The primary activities/measures with which the new strategic document dealing with the position of the RE population is harmonized refer to:

- Improving the knowledge of all professionals and representatives of the non-governmental sector who are in contact/may come into contact with victims of trafficking in terms of the identification, referral and protection of victims and criminal prosecution of perpetrators;
- Reducing the vulnerability of vulnerable groups by supporting the projects for their empowerment;

- Conducting trainings on the topic "Fight against early and arranged marriages, human trafficking and forced begging" intended for professionals employed in the Centers for Social Care;
- Conducting educational and informational campaigns in Roma and Egyptian settlements on the issue of trafficking in human beings/children, child arranged marriages and begging;
- Monitoring and analyzing trends in the Roma and Egyptian community regarding child marriages;
- Empowering of risk groups for inclusion in the compulsory education system, particularly Roma and Egyptian children;

### **Strategy for Protection of Persons with Disabilities from Discrimination and Promotion of Equality 2016-2021**

The general goal of this strategy is to ensure total equality to persons with disabilities in all areas of life in accordance with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Constitution and laws of Montenegro. The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities reviewed Montenegro's initial report (CRPD / C / MON / 1) at the 340<sup>th</sup> and 341<sup>st</sup> meeting (refer to CRPD/C/SR.340 and 341), held on August 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 2017 and adopted the concluding observations at the 353<sup>rd</sup> meeting held on August 28<sup>th</sup> 2017 and defined the implementation recommendations for, inter alia, Roma and Egyptians who are both persons with disabilities and victims of multiple discrimination. There is a primarily a lack of effective protection for persons with disabilities, who may be victims of intersectional discrimination, such as persons with disabilities belonging to various ethnic groups, including Roma and Egyptians, refugees, asylum seekers or internally displaced persons. Emphasis is placed on efforts to prevent and eliminate intersectional discrimination against persons with disabilities, whereby special emphasis is given to children with disabilities, members of minority groups and to ensuring equal access to all the rights under the Convention.

### **Strategy for Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence 2017-2021**

The strategic document is in line with the strategy for prevention and protection of children from violence covering the period 2017-2021, whose main objective is reflected in the need to strengthen the role of the national system in the prevention of violence and protection of physical and mental health of children exposed to violence or at risk of violence, providing care and services for children victims of violence and mitigating health and other negative consequences of violence. Considering that Roma and Egyptian children are one of the most vulnerable categories, especially in the part relating to arranged child marriages and to a high degree of acceptance of gender-based violence, in drafting a new strategic document, special importance was given to harmonization with the subject strategy.

### **Strategy on Migration and Reintegration of Repatriates in Montenegro, for the Period 2021-2025**

Considering that Roma and Egyptians represent one of the most jeopardized categories of the population when it comes to migration and readmission, the strategic document envisages the activities for reintegration of repatriates following their readmission, which are reflected in: providing temporary accommodation when necessary, distribution of humanitarian aid, providing psycho-social support to repatriates upon readmission for the purpose of reintegration, as well as

providing assistance in establishing family ties, providing health insurance and education, providing support for employment and self-employment in accordance with existing programs, keeping appropriate records, cooperation between state bodies, public institutions of local government bodies and NGOs.

Regarding displaced and internally displaced persons, as well as persons at risk of statelessness, among whom a significant part are Roma and Egyptians, the permanent solution to their issues is strategically set as: local integration and voluntary sustainable return to the country of origin.

Particularly important activities for RE policy are the ones relating to:

- solving personal documents issues,
- further addressing the housing needs of displaced persons in accordance with the Regional Housing Program (RHP),
- raising awareness and affirming the right to a voluntary return,
- providing conditions for exercising the right to education, health care, social care, etc.
- creating conditions for sustainable existence through employment and self-employment,
- strengthening the cooperation of all subjects involved in the process of reintegration of repatriates. Exchange of information relevant for the process of reintegration of repatriates between the subjects involved in the reintegration process,
- continuous organization of trainings in order to increase administrative capacity.

### **Strategy for the Realization of Child Rights 2019-2024**

The strategic document emphasizes the improvement of the position of Roma and Egyptian children in various fields, starting with solving the problem of birth registration of Roma and Egyptian children. Also, special importance is given to solving the issue of access to health care and fighting all forms of violence and exploitation faced by Roma and Egyptian children. In terms of improving the position of Roma and Egyptian children, education is an area where the most significant progress was achieved in the previous period, however, the strategic document states the need to take further steps in order to realize the set goals regarding the level of education of Roma and Egyptian children itself.

### **The Inclusive Education Strategy 2019-2025**

In the field of inclusive education treated by the relevant strategic document, matters of special importance for the public policy of Roma and Egyptians refer to: Ensuring accessibility and equity of education for all children together with their peers through a necessary cross-sectoral support; Ensuring equality and continuity of inclusive education through successful cooperation within and between the sectors and through the transition from one level of education to the next and Improving quality inclusive education through strengthening school policies, culture and practice.

### **Youth Strategy 2017-2021**

The Youth Strategy is an important document in terms of improving the position of Roma and Egyptian youth, primarily by emphasizing:

- The need for young people to achieve economic and social security through easier access to the labor market and employment
- Access of young people to quality education.

- That young people are active citizens, involved, motivated, proactive and participate in decision-making processes, in community development, policy making and its implementation.
- That young people are in good health, safe, they have access to an adequate system for support for transition into adulthood and self-realization, they are self-aware, innovative, they show initiative and accept diversity.
- That young people have access to quality cultural content as creators and consumers.

## Compliance with obligations from the process of negotiations between Montenegro and the European Union

### The EC report for 2020

The 2020 EC report highlights the most significant results achieved in the previous period of public policy implementation, with the primary emphasis on defining the strategic framework for policy implementation through the adoption of the Action Plan for 2020. It was indicated that marginalized groups, including Roma and Egyptians, continue to face multiple forms of discrimination and difficulties in administrative and judicial proceedings for exercising their rights. The report also points that in July 2019, in Poznan, Montenegro signed the Declaration of the Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration, which contains quantified commitments in key priority areas. In this regard, it is especially important to point to the Roadmap for achieving the objectives of Roma integration 2019-2021<sup>3</sup>, prepared by the Regional Cooperation Council. Efforts towards meeting these obligations need to be reinforced. It was pointed that the conclusions from the seminar on Roma people from June 2018 have yet to be implemented. In addition to the above, the EC Report places special emphasis on the need for further:

- Increases in budget allocations for the needs and priorities of Roma people. It was noted that the budget of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights for financing inclusion projects was increased by 60% in 2019 (from 131,000 euros to 215,000 euros in 2018<sup>4</sup>)
- Ensuring better and more systematic access to justice, the grievance system and free legal aid for victims of human rights violations and vulnerable groups, including Roma and Egyptians.

### Education

- Increases in the number of Roma children due to be enrolled in the education system, especially into the compulsory primary education. The report notes the progress that Montenegro has achieved through increasing the enrollment rate of Roma students in primary schools, which is slightly higher in 2019/2020 compared to 2018/2019.
- Although dropout rates are moderately declining, overall schooling completion rates are still dramatically low, which is one of the issues that will receive significant attention in the coming period of the public policy implementation.

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<sup>3</sup>Regional Cooperation Council, "Roadmap for Achieving Roma Integration Objectives 2019-2021", <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/docs/102/roma-integration-roadmap-montenegro-2019-2021>

<sup>4</sup> Taking into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 the budget was 136,000 euros

## Employment

- The number of Roma and Egyptians registered with the Employment Agency has further decreased from 802 in 2018 to 747 in 2019, and they still make up by far the least represented group of national minorities in the civil service.<sup>5</sup> Certain target measures, such as active employment measures of the Employment Agency, have been implemented in the previous period (129 Roma were temporarily employed in 2019), but their sustainability and efficiency have yet to be ensured. In the field of health, three Roma health mediators were hired in Podgorica, and two in Nikšić and Berane. Their numbers need to increase further in order to facilitate access to health services, especially for displaced and internally displaced (D/ID) Roma and Egyptians who face particular difficulties in exercising their right to health care.

## Housing

The report has noted that Roma and Egyptians, who are for the most part internally displaced persons, are beneficiaries of housing solutions under the regional housing program, which is progressing well in Montenegro. The emphasis is on the challenges related to:

- The housing challenges of the domicile Roma and Egyptians are still present. The cumbersome and expensive procedure related to this issue has created difficulties for many Roma and Egyptian families. Many of them are unable to apply for legalization, hence the situation could result in future evictions, especially in the coastal area.

## **Action Plan for Chapter 23**

The Action Plan for Chapter 23, adopted in 2015, focused on resolving the legal status, as well as on the areas of education, employment, housing, health care of Roma and Egyptians. In this regard, the competent authorities are taking continuous steps to implement the activities of the AP.

## **Provisional Benchmarks for Chapter 23**

The position of members of the Roma and Egyptian communities is an integral part of the provisional benchmarks for Chapter 23, where the primary emphasis is on:

- The prevention of discrimination and addressing the cases of discrimination through administrative and judicial action.
- Defining a strategic framework that improves the position of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro, facilitates their access to identity documents and registration as well as their access to education, employment, health care and social housing, including the allocation of sufficient resources. Montenegro also promotes integration in the fields of culture, education, local self-government, media and socio-economic rights and takes concrete steps to reduce school dropout rates in children from the Roma population.
- Given that Roma and Egyptians make up a significant proportion of displaced persons, Montenegro needs to improve the quality of living conditions for displaced persons,

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<sup>5</sup> The impact of the COVID-19 crisis has caused an increase in the number of unemployed Roma and Egyptians, whereby, as of December 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, there were 996 unemployed persons from the Roma and Egyptian communities in the records of the Employment Agency of MNE (527 women or 52.91%), which makes a share of 2.09% in the total number of unemployed persons on the same day.

including the simplification of their registration as well as to facilitate access to education, health, employment and social housing.

- Particular emphasis is placed on prevention, fight and development of a strategic framework for suppression of domestic violence, including raising awareness on the prevention of domestic violence and providing the necessary protection to victims.

It is also important to note that the Prime Ministers of the Western Balkans signed the "**Declaration of the Western Balkans Partners on Roma and EU Enlargement**" in Poznan on July 5<sup>th</sup> 2019, committing the Governments to continue and intensify their efforts to achieve complete equality of Roma and their integration, especially through the implementation and monitoring the joint conclusions from the *Seminar on Roma Inclusion*<sup>6</sup> through the commitment towards realizing the following objectives:

- Employment: increasing Roma employment in the public sector to a rate proportional to the share of Roma and Egyptians in the total population; Increase the employment rate of Roma and Egyptians to a minimum of 25 percent;
- Housing: wherever possible, legalizing all informal settlements inhabited by Roma and Egyptians; or providing permanent, decent, affordable and desegregated housing for Roma and Egyptians currently living in informal settlements that cannot be legalized for the justified reasons;
- Education: increasing the primary education enrollment and completion rate thereof of Roma and Egyptians to 90 percent and the secondary education completion rate of Roma and Egyptians to 50 percent;
- Health: providing 95 percent health insurance coverage to Roma and Egyptians at all levels of health care;
- Civil registries: ensuring that all Roma and Egyptians are registered therein;
- Non-discrimination: strengthening the government structures for protection against discrimination and establishing special sub-sectors for non-discrimination of Roma and Egyptians within formal non-discrimination bodies tasked with processing Roma and Egyptian complaints, providing legal support to alleged victims, and identifying patterns of discrimination, including institutional and covert discrimination.

### **The European Union's strategic framework for Roma and Egyptians**

The strategic document was prepared in accordance with **the EU Roma strategic framework for the period 2021-2030**<sup>7</sup> promoting equality and socio-economic inclusion of the Roma population at EU level. The Strategic Framework is a continuation of the previous document for the period 2011-2020, which was accepted by Montenegro and in respect to which all the previous strategic documents have been prepared. The new framework is based on the conducted evaluation of the previous strategic framework, the annual analysis of the implementation of national strategic documents and

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<sup>6</sup> Recommendations from the seminar "Inclusive Society: Improving the Socio-Economic Position of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro" which was held in June 2018 in Podgorica and the recommendations from the seminar "From words to deeds towards Roma integration" held on July 5<sup>th</sup> 2016. The seminars were organized by the EU Delegation to Montenegro, the Directorate for Enlargement of the European Commission and the Government of Montenegro.

<sup>7</sup>EU Roma strategic framework for the period 2021-2030,  
[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_1813](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1813)

analysis of the reasons for the limited effectiveness of the previously implemented measures. The results of the implemented evaluation and analysis show that not all Roma are socially excluded, though it is important to point out that all face some form of discrimination. In order to address these issues, the European Commission (EC) has defined seven objectives at EU level that need to be realized by 2030. The three objectives represent horizontal goals in the field of equality, inclusion and participation in social flows. The remaining four objectives are of a sectoral nature, in the areas of education, employment, housing and health care. In order to effectively implement these objectives, they need to be accompanied by relevant indicators on the basis of which the achieved progress in realization of the objectives will be measured.

**Council Directive 2000/43/EC - or the Racial Equality Directive<sup>8</sup>** – the subject act prohibits all forms of discrimination based on racial and ethnic affiliation. The emphasis is in the fields of:

- Employment
- Professional training
- Membership in economic and labor organizations
- Social care, including health care
- Education
- Access to goods and services available to the public, including housing

Under this Directive, all Member States must set up specialized bodies for promoting equal status on the grounds of racial or ethnic affiliation.

#### **The EU Council Recommendation on Roma Equality and Inclusion<sup>9</sup>**

The Council's recommendations place special emphasis on the need for EU Member States to adopt a national strategic framework for the Roma community, with the basic aim of defining policies that improve the level of social inclusion and the position of Roma. Particular importance is given to the need to establish effective systems to fight discrimination, anti-gypsyism, the social and economic exclusion. Member States must take measures to reduce the level of poverty, material and social deprivation faced by the Roma community, as well as to ensure the necessary level of political participation and representation of Roma (including women, children, youth and elderly members of the community, people with disability), in order to undertake an effective fight against discrimination of this community. The Roma community needs to be provided with the possibility of attending all levels of education, from early and pre-school education, to tertiary education, including adult education and lifelong learning. In this regard, it is necessary to ensure equal access to quality and sustainable employment, as well as to remove of all the barriers for the use of health and social services. In addition, special emphasis is placed on equal treatment and providing access to adequate and desegregated housing.

**Framework decision of the Council 2008/913/JHA of November 28<sup>th</sup> 2008<sup>10</sup>**, the main aim of which is to establish a common approach in criminal law at the level of the entire EU, in order to ensure that all forms of racism and xenophobia constitute criminal conduct in all EU Member States. Special

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<sup>8</sup>EC Directive on Racial Equality, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32000L0043>

<sup>9</sup>EU Council Recommendation on Roma Equality and Inclusion, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6070-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>10</sup>Framework decision of the Council 2008/913/JHA, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32008F0913>

emphasis is placed on defining effective and proportionate penalties for perpetrators of those forms of crime.

**Victims' Rights Directive** provides access to justice for victims of hate crimes and hate speech. **EU Strategy on the Rights of Victims 2021-2025**, addresses the specific needs of victims of hate crimes, with special being placed emphasis on members of the Roma population.

#### **The EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025<sup>11</sup>**

This action plan sets out a series of measures for reinforcing action, giving the voice to people of minority racial or ethnic origin and for joining together subjects at all levels in a joint effort to effectively fight racism and to make sure that everyone lives their lives without being subject to racism and discrimination.

#### **The IPA Financial Perspective 2021-2027 (IPA III)**

The new IPA Financial Perspective 2021-2027 (IPA III), is based on previously implemented IPA perspectives 2007-2013 and IPA 2014-2020, for ensuring further, uninterrupted realization of the defined objectives and priorities in line with the EU enlargement strategy and the direction of commitment of the Western Balkan countries regarding future membership in the European Union. A significant novelty in IPA III compared to the practice from previous perspectives IPA I and IPA II, is that there are no pre-defined amounts of financial support by country, rather, there is a single, common budget for all the IPA beneficiary countries. When it comes to programming support, although from the beneficiaries' perspective there will be no major changes to the process itself, through IPA III, the European Commission will seek to ensure a performance-based approach, supporting countries and institutions committed to greater reform. The key criteria for obtaining financial support will be the relevance (strategic importance) and seriousness of the proposed projects, in accordance with the rules applicable in EU Member States when using the European Structural and Investment Funds.

#### **Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans<sup>12</sup>**

The main objective of the plan prepared by the EU is to improve the long-term economic recovery of the region, support green and digital transition, regional integration and convergence with the European Union. The economic-investment plan amounts to a major investment package that will mobilize up to 9 billion euros of financial resources for the region. It will support sustainable connectivity, human resources, competitiveness and inclusive growth, as well as the dual green and digital transition. The plan has defined ten investment priorities that will support the main road and rail connections in the region, renewable energy and the transition from coal to other energy sources, renovation of public and private facilities in order to increase energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, waste and wastewater management infrastructure, and the introduction of a broadband infrastructure. Other investment priorities include greater investment in the private sector to boost competitiveness and innovation, especially of SMEs and the Youth Guarantees.

#### **Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans**

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<sup>11</sup>EU action plan for fight against racism 2020-2025, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/union-equality-eu-action-plan-against-racism-2020-2025\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/union-equality-eu-action-plan-against-racism-2020-2025_en)

<sup>12</sup> Ekonomik-investment Plan for Western Balkans,



The goal of this agenda is the support to the region's transition to a digital economy and realization of the benefits of digital transformation, such as faster economic growth, more employees and better services. This support is primarily reflected in three basic priorities:

- Increasing cyber security, trust and digitalization of the industry
- Strengthening the digital economy and society. The Digital Agenda will support the introduction of tools in the area of eAdministration, eLogistics and eHealth as well as in the development of digital skills of citizens.
- Encouraging research and innovation, through the establishment of national research capacities and the development of state-of-the-art e-infrastructure in the Western Balkans

### Other international commitments of Montenegro

In addition to the obligations arising from the EU framework, especially important in the Roma and Egyptians inclusion process are the obligations that Montenegro has undertaken at the global level, primarily within the United Nations system (UN). One of the first obligations that need to be underlined is:

### Sustainable Development Objectives by 2030

Sustainable development objectives<sup>13</sup>, also known as global objectives, are a universal call to action to eradicate poverty, protect the environment and ensure peace and prosperity for all. The Sustainable Development Objectives came into force in January 2016 and will continue to steer UN policy and resources for the next 15 years. Regarding the RE policy area, the following objectives and accompanying indicators are of particular importance:

#### Goal 1 – A world without poverty

- Implementing appropriate national social protection systems and measures to all, including the most vulnerable, and achieving a sufficient coverage of the relieved poor and vulnerable by the end of 2030.

#### Goal 4 – Quality education

- 4.5: By the end of 2030 providing equal access to all levels of education and professional training for persons with disabilities; 4.a: Building and improving educational facilities adapted for people with disabilities;

#### Goal 5 – Gender equality

- 5.1 Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls; 5.2 Eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private sphere, including human trafficking and all forms of sexual and other forms of exploitation; 5.3 Eliminating all forms of child marriages and forced marriages; 5.4

#### Goal 8 – Dignified work and economic work

- 8.5: Achieving full and productive employment and dignified work for people with disabilities;

#### Goal 10 – Reducing inequality

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<sup>13</sup> UN Sustainable Development Goals, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

- 10.2: By the end of 2030 strengthen and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status. 10.3. Provide equal opportunities and reduce inequalities in outcomes, inter alia by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and by promoting appropriate legislation, policies and activities in this respect;

#### Goal 11–Sustainable cities and communities

- 11.1. By the end of 2030 ensure that everyone has access to adequate, safe and cheap accommodation and basic services, and improve conditions in unhygienic settlements. 11.2 and 11.7: By the end of 2030 provide access to safe, cheap, accessible and sustainable transport systems, as well as access to green and public areas for people with disabilities;

#### Goal 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions

- 16.2. End abuse and exploitation of children, end child trafficking and all forms of violence and torture of children; 16.7. Ensure responsible, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels; 16.9. By the end of 2030 provide legal identity for all, including registration at birth. 16.10. Ensure public access to information and protection of basic freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements; 16.b Promote and implement non-discriminatory laws and policies to achieve sustainable development;

At the United Nations level, it is necessary to point out the efforts towards promoting and strengthening the inclusion of the Roma community, manifested through a common position on the role of the UN announced in 2013. These efforts, manifested through the fight for greater social inclusion, social protection, access to all the services crucial for the realization of economic and social rights and, in general, strengthening the individual and common position of Roma in society, especially from the economic aspect, overlap with the topics covered in the subject strategic document. It is also important to point out that the strategy is in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to a National, Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minority, which states that national strategic documents must be planned and implemented in accordance with the interests of persons belonging to one of the above categories.

In addition, it is important to point to:

- **The 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, with the 1967 Protocol to the Convention<sup>14</sup>,**
- **The Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons of 1954<sup>15</sup>, and**
- **The Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness<sup>16</sup>**
- **The Convention on child rights and the recommendations of the Child Rights Committee for Montenegro of 2018<sup>17</sup>**
- **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women<sup>18</sup>**

<sup>14</sup> The Convention may be found at the following link: <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=47135f802>

<sup>15</sup> Link to the Convention: <http://www.un.org.me/Library/Refugees-Asylum-Seekers-and-Statelessness/20%201961%20UN%20Konvencija%20o%20smanjenju%20broja%20lica%20bez%20državljanstva.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Link to the Convention: <http://www.un.org.me/Library/Refugees-Asylum-Seekers-and-Statelessness/20%201961%20UN%20Konvencija%20o%20smanjenju%20broja%20lica%20bez%20državljanstva.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Link to the Convention: <https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/media/9106/file/MNE-media-MNEpublication502.pdf>

- **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**<sup>19</sup>

Through active participation in the UNHCR global campaign “#iBelong”, within which was adopted the global plan for the elimination of statelessness in the period 2014-2024, at the Global Conference on Statelessness, held in Geneva in October 2019, Montenegro has taken on itself 4 commitments<sup>20</sup>, related to: continuation of the implementation of simplified procedures for obtaining identification documents both at the national level and in cooperation with the countries of origin of persons affected by this issue; ensuring birth registration of children abandoned by mothers, or whose mothers do not have identification documents; reinforcing the procedure for determining the status of stateless persons, harmonization of the regulations to ensure unhindered access to rights for stateless persons; and the exchange of experience with other countries in the region in the field of statelessness prevention.

These international conventions and the global campaign are important for the policy in question, given that Roma and Egyptians make the majority of displaced persons on the territory of Montenegro who have not yet regulated their legal status or persons at risk of statelessness.

It is also important to point to the compliance of the strategic document with the recommendations of various UN bodies, whereby special importance is given to:

- The UN recommendations for child rights relating to the fight against discrimination and negative social attitudes towards members of the RE population. Special emphasis is placed on the need for higher budget allocations for the realization of children's rights, raising awareness in the fight against all forms of human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children.
- The Committee's recommendations also address the need make education easier for access to Roma and Egyptian children, providing regular registration of newborns and taking active measures in terms of suppressing child marriages.
- The universal periodic overview defines the following recommendations:
  - fight against human trafficking, child marriages and forced labor.
  - improving accessibility of education, health care and employment

In addition to the above-mentioned UN bodies, it is important to point out the recommendations received from the bodies dealing with all forms of racial discrimination, as well as the bodies fighting against discrimination against women, where the emphasis is on:

- Preventing and punishing all forms of violence against women
- Improving women's health care and access to education.
- Fight against human trafficking, with special emphasis to suppression of exploitation and prostitution of women.

## **Council of Europe**

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<sup>18</sup>Link to the Convention: <https://mmp.gov.me/rubrike/CEDAW/110346/Ovdje-mozete-preuzeti-CEDAW-konvenciju-Ujedinjenih-nacija.html>

<sup>19</sup>Link to the Convention: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cerd.aspx>

<sup>20</sup> Report from the Global meeting on statelessness can be found on the following link: <https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/high-level-segment-on-statelessness-results-and-highlights/>

As already mentioned, together with the European Union, a significant role in the process of development of policies aimed at improving the position of the Roma community belongs to the Council of Europe. In that regard, while drafting the strategic document, special importance was given to its harmonization with the commitments undertaken by Montenegro on the basis of membership in the Council of Europe, manifested in the resolutions and recommendations that address the position of the Roma population in society. In accordance with the principles of these documents, the Council member states are called upon to create inclusive living conditions through strategic policy planning and to eliminate discriminatory factors in areas such as health, education, work and social welfare, etc. The following documents can be considered crucial in this regard:

- The Convention of the Council of Europe on Preventing and Fighting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the recommendations of the GREVIO body for Montenegro, which define violence against women as a form of discrimination against women and a violation of their human rights, has a clear gender dimension permeating their provisions and establishes clear structural links between violence against women and gender inequalities;<sup>21</sup>
- Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers No. 5 (2008) on the Public Policies for Roma and Travellers in Europe;
- Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers No. 4 (2009) on the education of Roma and travellers in Europe;
- Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers No. 10 (2006) on better access to health care for Roma and travellers in Europe;
- Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers No. 17 (2001) on the improvement of economic and employment conditions for Roma and travellers in Europe;
- Parliamentary Assembly Resolution No. 2153 (2017) on promoting the inclusion of Roma and travellers;
- Parliamentary Assembly Resolution No. 1927 (2013) on eliminating discrimination against Roma children;
- Strategic Action Plan of the Council of Europe for the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2020 - 2025)<sup>22</sup>;
- Recommendation CM/Rec (2020)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or travellers in school curricula and teaching materials<sup>23</sup>;
- ECRI<sup>24</sup> report and recommendations for Montenegro;
- Report and recommendations for the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

## Legal framework

Article 8 of the Constitution of Montenegro<sup>25</sup> contains a general prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination "on any grounds", while Article 7 stipulates that "it is prohibited to inflict or incite

<sup>21</sup>Link to the Convention: <https://rm.coe.int/1680464e6e>

<sup>22</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/coe-strategic-action-plan-for-roma-and-traveller-inclusion-en/16809fe0d0>

<sup>23</sup> [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016809ee48c](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016809ee48c)

<sup>24</sup> *Evropska komisija za borbu protiv rasizma i netolerancije* – eng. *European Commission against Racism and Intolerance*

<sup>25</sup> The Constitution of Montenegro, "Official Gazette of MNE", no.1/2007 and 38/2013 - Amendments I-XVI

hatred or intolerance on any grounds”.<sup>26</sup> Article 8 of the Constitution stipulates that the introduction of special regulations and measures aimed at creating conditions for achieving national, gender and overall equality and protection of persons who are in an unequal position on any grounds will not be considered discrimination, thus the affirmative action measures<sup>27</sup> have become a constitutional category, in the function of achieving general equality.

The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination<sup>28</sup> prohibits all forms of discrimination on any grounds, and defines mechanisms for protection against discrimination, which include proceedings on complaints before the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms, as well as judicial protection through proceedings instituted after a claim. According to Article 5 of this Law, regulations and special measures aimed at creating conditions for achieving national, gender and overall equality and protection of persons who are on an unequal position on any basis may be enacted, i.e. introduced and implemented, by state bodies, state administration bodies, bodies of local self-government units, public enterprises and other legal entities exercising public authorities, as well as by other legal and natural persons within their competencies and authorizations.

Within Article 159, the Criminal Code of Montenegro<sup>29</sup> criminalizes any violation of the citizens’ equality based on their affiliation to a national or ethnic group, race or religion or the absence of such affiliation, based on political or other opinion, gender, language, education, social status, social origin or other personal characteristics. The Criminal Code covers the criminal offenses prescribed by Article 444 (Human trafficking), Article 445 (Trafficking in minors for adoption) and Article 446 (Establishing a slavery relationship and transport of persons in a slavery relationship). A specific group of criminal offenses that can be brought into connection with the criminal offense of human trafficking are also the criminal offenses against sexual freedom: Rape, Article 204 CCMNE; Sexual assault of a child, Article 206 CCMNE; Sexual assault by abuse of power, Article 207 CCMNE; Pimping and enabling sexual intercourse, Article 209 CCMNE; Mediation in prostitution, Article 210 CCMNE; Child pornography, Article 211 CCMNE. The following criminal offenses from the group of criminal offenses against marriage and family may be brought in connection with the criminal offense of human trafficking: Extramarital union with a minor, Article 216 CCMNE and Neglect and abuse of a minor person, Article 219 CCMNE.

The Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms<sup>30</sup> prescribes a set of minority rights and mechanisms for the protection of these rights, especially with regard to achieving equality with other communities, preserving the national identity of minorities and effective participation in public life. Pursuant to Article 39, paragraph 2 of the Law, any direct or indirect discrimination on any grounds is prohibited.

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<sup>26</sup>The importance of protection against discrimination is also indicated by Article 25 of the Constitution, which reads: „During a state of war or state of emergency, the exercise of certain human rights and freedoms may be restricted to the necessary extent. Restrictions may not be made based on gender, nationality, race, religion, language, ethnic or social origin, political or other belief, property status or any other personal characteristic. The following prohibitions cannot be lifted: inflicting or inciting hatred or intolerance; discrimination, retrial and conviction for the same crime; violent assimilation.”

<sup>27</sup>Affirmative action is defined as a series of policies and practices that provide certain advantages to groups (especially members of ethnic groups and women) that have faced injustice and which have been excluded from fundamental processes throughout history.

<sup>28</sup> The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 046/10 of 06/08/2010, 040/11 of 08/08/2011, 018/14 of 11/04/2014, 042/17 of 30/06/2017

<sup>29</sup> The Criminal Code of Montenegro, "Official Gazette of MNE",

<sup>30</sup> The Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms, "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 020/11 of 15/04/2011, 020/15 of 24/04/2015

The Law on Montenegrin Citizenship<sup>31</sup> regulates the manner and conditions of acquiring and losing Montenegrin citizenship, as well as keeping the registry of Montenegrin citizens.

The Law on Foreigners<sup>32</sup> prescribes the conditions for entry, exit, movement, stay and work of foreigners in Montenegro. The Law also regulates the procedure for determining the status of a stateless person and issuing a travel document for a stateless person.

The Law on Civil Registries<sup>33</sup> regulates the registration of births, marriages, deaths and other statutory data related to the personal and family status of Montenegrin citizens in Montenegro and abroad, as well as that of citizens of other countries and stateless persons born/residing in Montenegro.

By its 2015 changes and amendments, the Law on Out-of-court Proceeding<sup>34</sup>, introduced court proceedings to determine the time and place of birth of all persons born in Montenegro outside the health care system.

The General Law on Education and Upbringing<sup>35</sup> regulates the organization and conditions for performing educational and pedagogical work in the areas of preschool upbringing and education, primary education and upbringing, secondary general education, vocational education, upbringing and education of persons with special needs and adult education.

The Law on Health Care<sup>36</sup> regulates the organization, implementation and provision of health care, rights and duties of citizens in realization of health care, social care for the health of citizens, rights and obligations of health workers and health associates, quality of health care and other issues relevant to the functioning health care. Article 12 stipulates that a foreigner is entitled to health care in accordance with this law and an international agreement, while Article 13 also recognizes this right to an asylum seeker, a person who has been granted refugee status, a person who has been granted additional protection or temporary protection in Montenegro.

The importance of the Law on Social and Child Protection<sup>37</sup> is reflected in the fact that, for the first time, the right to social services is defined as a special right. The Law prescribes the protection of children, youth, adults and elderly, and inter alia, victims of abuse, neglect, domestic violence and human trafficking or those at risk of becoming victims, as well as persons who, due to special circumstances and social risk, are in need of an appropriate form of social protection (Article 4). One of the key principles on which the provision of social protection and child protection is based is that of non-discrimination, i.e. prohibition of discrimination of users on any grounds.

The Law on Families<sup>38</sup> defines the obligation of the state in terms of protection of a child from neglect, protection from physical, sexual and emotional abuse. An article of the Law on Families prescribes an explicit prohibition of physical punishment or any other cruel, inhumane or humiliating

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<sup>31</sup>The Law on Montenegrin Citizenship, "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 020/14 of 25/04/2014, 054/16 of 15/08/2016

<sup>32</sup> The Law on Foreigners, "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 012/18 of 23/02/2018, 003/19 of 15/01/2019

<sup>33</sup> The Law on Civil Registries, "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 047/08 of 07/08/2008, 041/10 of 23/07/2010, 040/11 of 08/08/2011, 055/16 of 17/08/2016

<sup>34</sup>The Law on Out-of-court Proceeding, "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 27 of 27/04/2006, and "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 20 of 24/04/2015, 75/18, 67/19.

<sup>35</sup> The General Law on Education and Upbringing, "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 047/17 of 19/07/2017.

<sup>36</sup> The Law on Healthcare, "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 044/18 of 06/07/2018

<sup>37</sup>The Law on Social and Child Protection, "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 050/17 of 31/07/2017

<sup>38</sup> The Law on Families, "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 53/2016

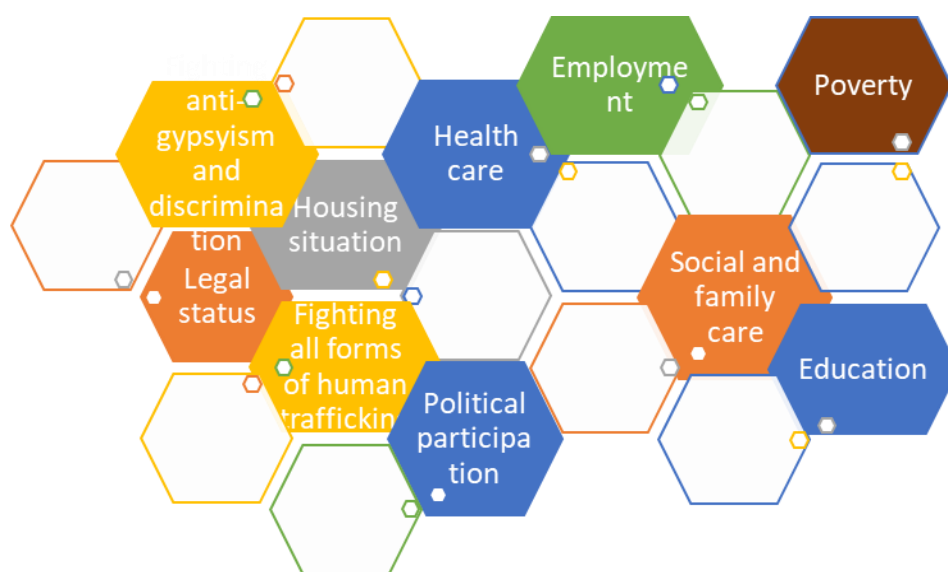
conduct. Likewise, Article 80 of this Law provides for the obligation of closer cooperation between bodies in charge of keeping civil registries and bodies in charge of custody, so as to protect the child's interest in the procedure of entry in birth register, in the event when one or both parents are unknown.

The Law on Labour<sup>39</sup>, prohibits discrimination against employees and job seekers based on gender, birth, language, race, religion, skin color, age, state of pregnancy, health status or disability, citizenship, marital status, family commitments, sexual orientation, political affiliation or political opinion, social descent, property status, as well as membership in political and trade union organizations.

The Law on Social Housing<sup>40</sup> regulates the conditions and manner of acquiring the right to social housing. Article 4 of this Law stipulates that priority in exercising this right is given to members of Roma and Egyptian minorities, displaced persons, internally displaced persons from Kosovo residing in Montenegro, foreigners with permanent residence or temporary residence who had the status of a displaced person or internally displaced person recognized and victims of domestic violence.

## The status analysis

The structure of the analysis of the state of the strategic document is based on the following chapters:



<sup>39</sup> The Law on Labour, "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 004/18 of 26/01/2018

<sup>40</sup> The Law on Social Housing, "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 35/13 of 23/07/2013.

### Implementation of a strategic document previously in effect

The main objective of the strategy for social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro 2016-2020 was to establish the necessary foundations for social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians into the Montenegrin society through the improvement of the socio-economic status of members of this population in Montenegro. In order to realize social inclusion, the strategy had envisaged objectives and activities aimed at the improvement of the social and economic position of Roma and Egyptians in the following areas:

#### **Housing**

In the field of housing, the most significant results were achieved through the implementation of the regional housing program during 2019, whereby the sub-project MNE 4 was performed in its entirety: "Construction of 94 housing units in the municipality of Berane" the construction of which began in 2017, and the moving in of the beneficiaries was completed on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019. Out of a total of 94 housing units, two housing units were given for use to members of the Roma and Egyptian populations. Since 2016, 231 housing units have been provided for members of the Roma and Egyptian populations. In addition to this project, the following units have been built and moved in so far: 62 housing units in Nikšić, 13 of which have been allocated for use to citizens of the Roma and Egyptian communities, 120 housing units at Konik - Podgorica, additional 50 housing units at Konik - Podgorica, and 48 housing units also at Konik - Podgorica. Through the construction of the stated housing units, the largest collective camp in Montenegro, Camp Konik, was closed. However, it is important to point out that the addressing the housing issue of members of the Roma and Egyptian communities is still a considerable challenge for the state. The lack of similar housing programs for the domicile citizens of Roma and Egyptian populations remains one of the greatest challenges. In addition, there are still a large number of unhygienic and illegal settlements and facilities inhabited by the Roma and Egyptian communities, and a large number of these settlements are without electricity, water and without any infrastructure.

#### **Education**

In the field of education, it is important to point out the significant increase in the number of Roma and Egyptian students participating in the education system, as well as the significant support provided to parents and children in order to raise awareness of the importance of education. Campaigns were organized in Roma settlements and schools in order to increase the number of educated members of the Roma and Egyptian communities, so that the results are as follows:

- Increase in the number of children included in pre-school institutions: 191 of children enrolled in the school year 2018/19, 208 children from Roma and Egyptian community enrolled in the school year 2019/20, while 224 children were enrolled in 2020/21. This is a significant improvement, especially considering that, according to the 2017 World Bank and UNDP survey, only 12% of children were attending pre-school education, whereas in 2020, the attendance was 16%;
- 1798 students attended primary school in the school year 2018/19;
- 1834 students attended primary school in the school year 2019/20;
- 1793 students attended primary school in the school year 2020/21;



- 135 students attended secondary school in the school year 2018/19;
- 149 students attended secondary school in the school year 2019/20;
- 174 students attended secondary school in the school year 2020/21;

In the school year 2019/20, the Ministry of Education<sup>41</sup> provided textbooks for 1,621 students from the Roma and Egyptian communities from the 2nd to 9th grade of primary schools, while the municipalities provided textbooks for 196 first-graders. In addition, for the school/academic year 2019/20, the Ministry of Education<sup>42</sup> has awarded scholarships for 121 high school students of the Roma and Egyptian population in the monthly amount of 60.00 euros, while 13 students have been granted monthly scholarships of 150.00 euros.

An important step forward was the employment of 21 associates in the social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in the field of education, namely: 18 of them were hired in the school year 2018/19, three additional associates were hired in 2019, while 22 associates were hired for the school year 2020/2021. In the school year 2019/20, 35 mentors (teachers) were hired for 130 8th grade and 9th grade students of the Roma and Egyptian population in primary schools, while 44 mentors (teachers) were hired for 120 high school students of the Roma and Egyptian population in secondary schools.

Despite the great progress achieved in the field of education, a significant problem that still exists is an underdeveloped awareness of the importance of education among members of the Roma and Egyptian populations due to the poor socio-economic situation they are facing. It is especially important to point out that, during their education, Roma and Egyptian children do not have a sufficient level of knowledge of the official language in use.

### **Health care**

According to the CEDEM survey, in mid-2018 over 95% of the Roma population had health insurance, which, when it comes to the domicile population, means that they have a health card, and over 75% of this population has a regulated status in Montenegro, while having in mind that all other members of this population, regardless of their status, are regularly provided with all the health services financed from the Budget of Montenegro. In order to promote the importance of health care and to facilitate access to health facilities for members of the Roma and Egyptian populations, the following activities have been implemented in 2019, inter alia: within the efforts of social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in the field of health, three associates are permanently employed in the Health Center of Podgorica, while two associates were hired in the Health Center of Berane and Health Center of Nikšić under the project by the international organization "Help Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe".

Challenge: Despite the CEDEM survey saying that 95% of the Roma and Egyptian population have health insurance, there are still specific cases where the individuals from those communities who are not covered by health care, namely Roma women in pregnancy, are then faced with the problem of having to pay the costs of obstetric services when the time for delivery comes.

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<sup>41</sup> From December 4<sup>th</sup> 2020, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports

<sup>42</sup> From December 4<sup>th</sup> 2020, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports

## **Employment**

In the field of employment, it is important to emphasize the activities carried out by the Employment Agency of Montenegro regarding the position of Roma and Egyptians. As of December 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, there were 996 unemployed persons from the Roma and Egyptian communities (527 women or 52.91%) in the records of the Employment Service of Montenegro<sup>43</sup> which is a share of 2.09% in the total number of unemployed persons on the same day; 19 persons or 1.90% - 3rd level of education qualification (3 women or 15.78%); 15 persons or 1.50% - 4th level of education qualification (9 women or 60%), 3 female persons – 7th level of education qualification. In the period from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, 53 members of the Roma and Egyptian population (32 women) were registered with the Employment Agency. Of the total number of newly registered persons, 47 are without vocational training, while four persons have 3rd and two persons have 4th level of education. During 2019, the Agency has briefed 32 persons of the Roma and Egyptian communities who registered for the first time in the register of unemployed persons about the rights and obligations they have while on the register of the Agency, about the demand for certain professions, the structure of available occupations, pointing out the needs of the labor market for certain knowledge, skills and competencies and the importance of their active job search, i.e. participation in the programs of the active employment policies.

It is important to point out the measures of the active employment policy, which included 79 citizens of the Roma and Egyptian communities from the register of unemployed persons (22 women or 27.84%), which is almost 10% of the total number of Roma and Egyptians on the Agency's register on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2018.

Twenty-three members of the Roma and Egyptian population (nine women) are included in an adult education and training programs.

Challenge: During implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro 2016-2020, the self-employment programs did not include citizens of the Roma and Egyptian communities from the register of unemployed persons. This points to the need for an in-depth analysis of the causes that prevent citizens of the Roma and Egyptian communities from using self-employment as a way out of unemployment, as well as the need to adapt the measure to this target group, creating a new measure and introducing other subjects into its implementation.

## **Legal status**

Regarding the issue of the legal status of Roma and Egyptians, first of all, it is necessary to underline the activities for resolving the legal status of internally displaced persons from Kosovo (IDPs). In addition to IDPs, Roma and Egyptians, whether domiciles or family members of IDPs make up the majority of people living in Montenegro at risk of statelessness because they or their parents are unable to register in Montenegro or in their country of origin. By the Changes and Amendments to the Law on Foreigners from 2009, Montenegro introduced the possibility for IDPs from Kosovo (among whom about 30% are Roma and Egyptians) to regulate their status in Montenegro through a privileged approach to the status of a foreigner with permanent residence. In order to obtain this right, IDPs have to submit a number of documents, including birth certificate and an excerpt from the register of citizens and a travel document of the country of origin.

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<sup>43</sup> The Employment Agency of Montenegro

According to the data of the Ministry of the Interior of Montenegro, in the period from November 7<sup>th</sup> 2009 (date of entry into force of the Law on Change and Amendments to the Law on Foreigners) until the end of 2020, displaced persons and internally displaced persons submitted a total of 15,248 applications for permanent residence and temporary residence for up to three years. Out of this number, 15,089 applications have been resolved, while 151 applications are still being processed. Most of these applicants are Roma and Egyptians. In addition to persons whose applications are still being resolved, at the end of 2020, 150 persons were granted temporary residence for up to 3 years as a transitional measure until acquiring a status of a foreigner with permanent residence. Some of these people are Roma and Egyptians. In accordance with the strategic commitment of the Government, each of these persons' situation will be individually reviewed in order to provide assistance for obtaining the status of a foreigner with permanent residence to the persons in need of an assistance.

Furthermore, since May 2014, the combined mobile biometric teams of the Ministry of the Interior of Montenegro and the Ministry of the Interior-Civil Registration Agency of Kosovo have been intensively providing legal and practical assistance to IDPs<sup>44</sup> from Kosovo residing in Montenegro. Twenty-two visits of the mobile team of the Kosovo Ministry of Interior to Montenegro were organized with the support of UNHCR and OSCE. Through these activities 1,221 persons have acquired their personal documents, while a solution is still being sought for 39 persons whose cases are considered the most complicated ones.

In practice, the still present problem of insufficiently developed system of registration in the birth register, especially when it comes to persons born outside the health system, or persons whose one or both parents do not have identification documents, has resulted in the cases where people are at risk of becoming stateless. Although, in theory, these persons had the right to citizenship of Montenegro or another state they are associated with, they could not be granted registration in the civil registry of births in Montenegro or in that of their country of origin, which prevented them from further pursuing registration in the registry of citizens and acquiring other identification papers.

### **Social status and family protection**

In the field of fighting domestic violence, it is important to point out that the previous period saw the introduction of an electronic database for recording cases of domestic violence. The database enabled the automatic exchange of data between the Ministry of the Interior (Police Directorate) and the Centers for Social Work. In this way, a unique, standardized manner of recording cases of domestic violence had been established.

It is also important to point out that, from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 as of December 31<sup>st</sup> 2019, 1622 cases of domestic violence were reported in the Centers for Social Work, of which 754 victims of violence were women. In the same time-period, when it comes to Art. 216: "Extramarital union with a minor", of the Criminal Code of Montenegro (CC MNE), The Ministry of Interior registered that 13 minors were victims of this criminal offense. In the same time-period were registered 281 criminal offenses referred to in Art. 220 of the CC MNE "Violence in the family or in the family union", out of which 31 offenses have been perpetrated against minors. These data refer only to the general population, that is, there is a lack of data on the number of cases of domestic violence that relate exclusively to the Roma and Egyptian communities.

For the entire period of implementation of the strategic document, in the field of concern, activities have been continuously implemented in terms of:

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<sup>44</sup> Internally displaced persons

- Training on the problem of arranged marriages, domestic violence and human trafficking;
- Funding of NGO projects;
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been developed in order to define the manner and procedure for recognizing the status of a victim of human trafficking to a person identified as a potential victim. These procedures are in the form of a National Plan for Formal Identification of Victims adopted by the Government;
- The decision of the Minister of November 15<sup>th</sup> 2019 established a team for a formal identification of victims of human trafficking;

### **Culture, identity and information**

In the previous four-year period, in the field of culture, identity and information, a number of activities were implemented that had set out the following as the primary result:

- Affirmation of investigative reporting in the media on the process of social integration of the Roma and Egyptian populations into the Montenegrin society;
- Co-financing of program content for Roma and Egyptians;
- That key issues of Roma and Egyptian inclusion are presented in the media;
- That Public Media Service regularly broadcasts radio and TV shows about the Roma and Egyptian populations;
- That support is provided to cultural activities and contents;
- Projects have been funded to improve the position of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro.

### **Discrimination and anti-gypsyism**

Montenegro needs to intensify the fight against anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma and Egyptians in order to realize their complete social and economic inclusion. Anti-gypsyism and multiple discrimination are the main reasons for their social exclusion, while the symptoms of their disadvantage are high unemployment, low school enrollment and low school completion rates and poor living conditions of the vast majority of Roma and Egyptians. The results of the latest survey indicate that Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro, but also in the region in general, continue to face difficulties in integrating into society. According to the Balkan Barometer survey for 2019<sup>45</sup>, conducted in the countries of Southeast Europe, Roma and Egyptians continue to be victims of deep-rooted prejudices both in society and in the professional environment, while receiving less support through affirmative action than other vulnerable groups.

Of special importance for the policy for Roma and Egyptians is the notion of racial discrimination which is treated by the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination<sup>46</sup> which represents any discrimination, unequal treatment or bringing a person or group of persons into unequal position under the belief that race, skin color, language, nationality or national or ethnic origin justify belittling a person or group of persons, or justify the idea of superiority of a person or groups of persons over those who

<sup>45</sup> Regional Cooperation Council, Balkan Barometer, 2019, <https://www.rcc.int/pubs/89/report-on-the-preparation-of-post-2020-strategy-in-the-western-balkans>

<sup>46</sup> The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, "Official Gazette of MNE", no. 46/2010, 40/2011 – other law, 18/2014 and 42/2017, Art. 2, para 2. The Law defines discrimination as: „any legal or factual discrimination or unequal treatment, or failure to treat one person or group of persons fairly in relation to other persons, as well as the exclusion, restriction or preference of a person over others based on race, skin color, nationality, social or ethnic background, affiliation with a minority people or a minority national community, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, gender, sex change, gender identity, sexual orientation and/or intersex characteristics, health condition, disability, age, property status, marital or family status, group affiliation or an assumption of a group affiliation, affiliation with a political party or other organization, as well as other personal features“.

are not members of that group. In contrast, anti-gypsyism is “a particular kind of racism, an ideology based on racial superiority, a form of dehumanization and institutional racism fueled by historical discrimination expressed, inter alia, through violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatization and the most blatant forms of discrimination”.<sup>47</sup> It is especially important to point out the basic tenets of anti-gypsyism defined by the Alliance against Anti-Gypsyism<sup>48</sup> and accepted by the European Commission. According to this definition, anti-Gypsyism is based on the following postulates:

- Anti-Gypsyism is not an issue that applies exclusively to minorities. It is a phenomenon that has its roots in the way the majority population treats members of society whom they consider “gypsies”.
- Anti-Gypsyism is not solely the result of the poor living conditions of Roma and Egyptians.
- The effects of discriminatory treatment, such as thematic policies related to poverty, lack of adequate housing, low level of education, are necessary but not key issues that need addressing as the root of anti-gypsyism. It is necessary for anti-gypsyism to be primarily treated as an integral issue within the stated thematic policies.
- Anti-gypsyism is based on a high level of social acceptance of such treatment of Roma and Egyptians. Society treats very mildly all forms of behavior and practices that manifest the characteristics of anti-gypsyism. It is especially important to point out the lack of moral stigma associated with other forms of racism.

In order to truly assess the level of anti-Gypsyism and discrimination faced by Roma and Egyptians, it is necessary to collect appropriate and accurate data. In this regard, it is important to point out the 2020 survey on the level of discrimination faced by Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro, conducted by the Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM).<sup>49</sup>

The general indicator developed within the CEDEM survey, which refers to the perception of citizens as to which social group is faced the most with the problem of discrimination, shows that these groups are the Roma and Egyptians, with 58.6% respondents believing that Roma and Egyptians are the victims of discrimination in the majority of cases. This data shows a significant improvement over previous survey conducted by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, saying that in 2013 discrimination against Roma and Egyptians was 60%, while in 2015 it was 62 %.

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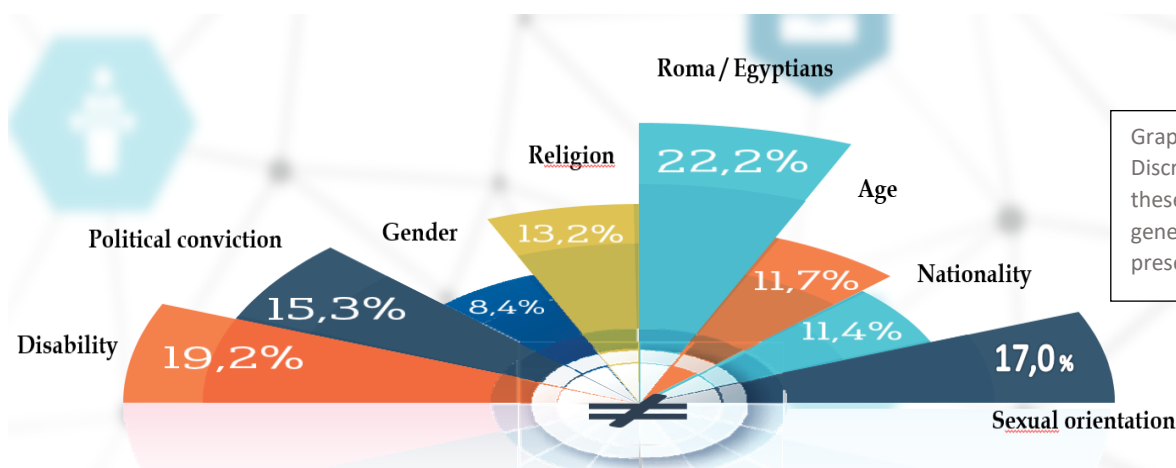
<sup>47</sup>General Policy Recommendation no. 13 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on fighting anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma.

<sup>48</sup> Antigypsyism Alliance, [https://www.antigypsyism.eu/?page\\_id=17](https://www.antigypsyism.eu/?page_id=17)

<sup>49</sup> Patterns and level of discrimination in Montenegro in 2020, Center for Democracy and Human Rights – CEDEM. The survey was conducted by a survey method on a sample of 1,035 respondents and the results clearly showed that Roma and Egyptians represent ethnic groups facing the highest level of discrimination in various social fields. <https://www.cedem.me/publikacije/istrazivanje/ostala-istrazivanje/send/31-ostala-istrazivanje/1980-obraci-i-stepen-diskriminacije-u-crnoj-gori-u-2020-godini>

	Very present	Mostly present	Mostly not present	It is not present at all	I don't know, I can't read
Gender/ Sex	8.4	25.7	34.3	16.5	15.1
Nationality	11.4	31.2	31.4	10.7	15.4
Religions	13.2	30.0	30.0	12.6	14.3
Political belief	15.3	31.3	26.8	11.3	15.2
Age	11.7	32.3	30.7	10.9	14.4
Disability	19.2	35.1	23.5	8.8	13.5
Sexual orientation	17.0	32.3	21.3	8.0	21.5
Roma population	22.2	36.4	20.5	7.4	13.5

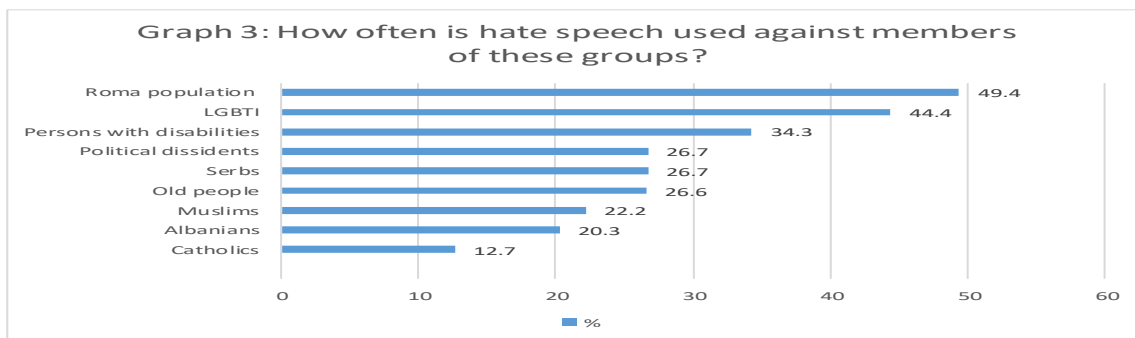
Graph 1: The extent of general discrimination expressed towards these groups



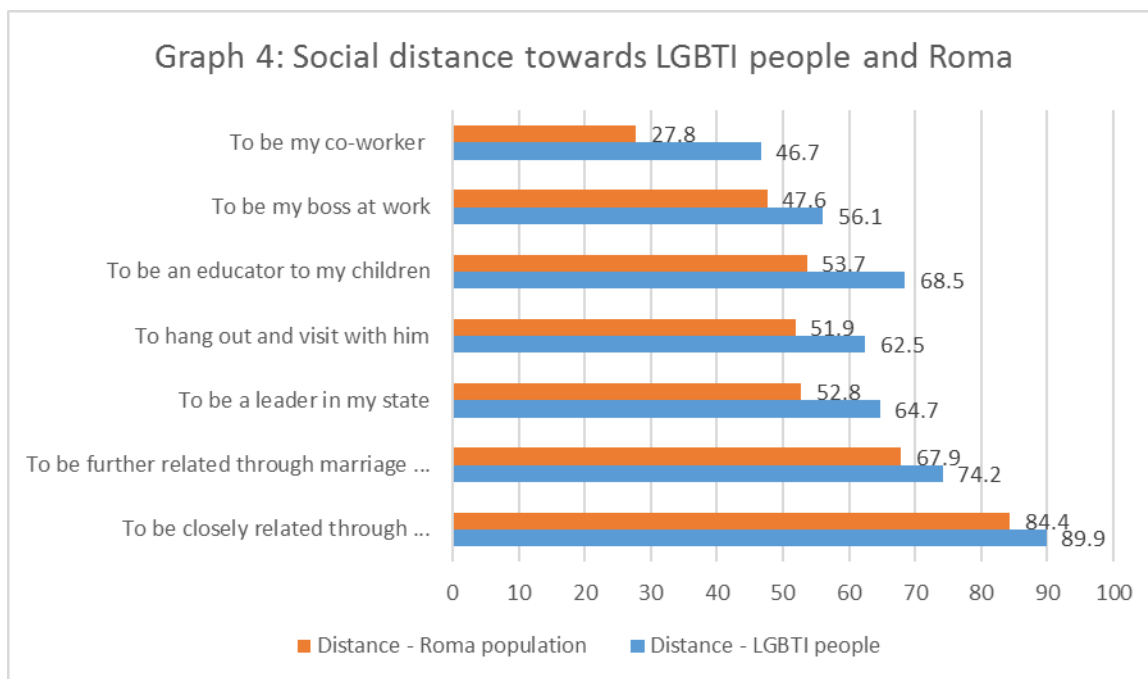
Graph 2:  
Discrimination against these groups is generally and highly present (%)

Regarding the segment of the survey related to hate speech<sup>50</sup> the obtained data show that Roma and Egyptians represent the category of society at highest risk of thereof in everyday life.

<sup>50</sup> Hate speech is any form of expression of ideas, claims, information and opinions that spreads, incites, encourages or justifies discrimination, hatred or violence against a person or group of persons because of their personal properties, xenophobia, racial hatred, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed in the form of nationalism, discrimination and hostility against minorities.

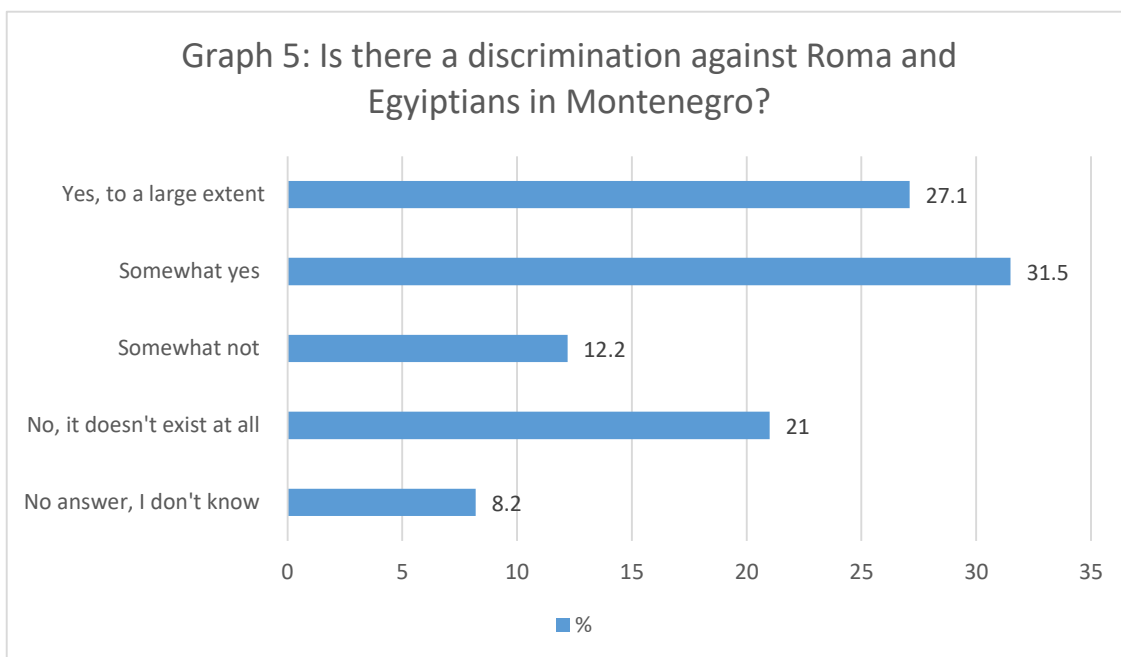


The survey also shows that, as a particularly vulnerable communities, Roma and Egyptians experience considerable social distance. The data indicate that the social distance towards Roma and Egyptians is very pronounced and that the only social category that faces a higher level of distance are members of the LGBTI community. The distance is lower for each individual encounter with Roma and Egyptians, and the degree of animosity is best assessed in observing the coexistence with Roma and Egyptians in the same country.

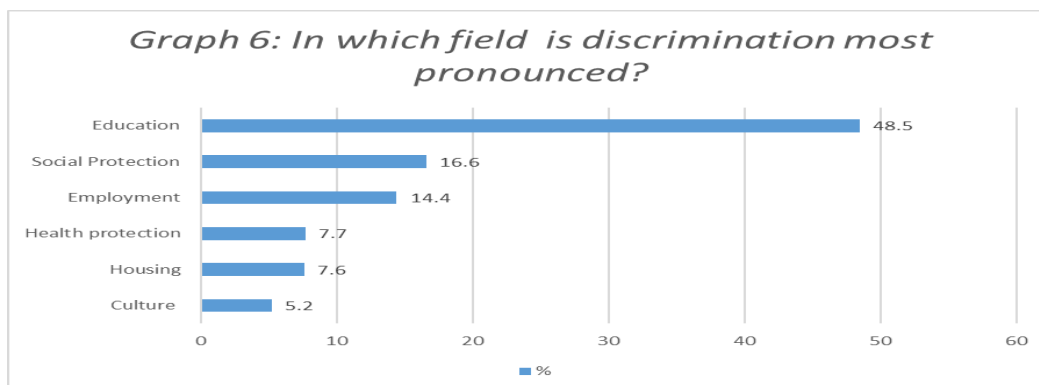


Regarding the perception of the level of discrimination faced by members of the Roma and Egyptian population, a survey conducted by DeFacto for the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights in 2020<sup>51</sup> has shown that most Roma and Egyptians believe that there are various forms of discrimination against members of their community in the Montenegrin society.

<sup>51</sup> DeFacto Consultancy and Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights, "Socio-economic position of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro", 2020, [https://mmp.gov.me/organizacija/OUZ\\_RAE/234675/NOVO-ISTRAZIVANJE-O-SOCIJALNOJ-INTEGRACIJI-ROMA-I-EGIPCANA.html](https://mmp.gov.me/organizacija/OUZ_RAE/234675/NOVO-ISTRAZIVANJE-O-SOCIJALNOJ-INTEGRACIJI-ROMA-I-EGIPCANA.html)



Regarding the issue in which of the areas the discrimination against members of the Roma and Egyptian communities is most pronounced, the survey has shown that it is primarily the area of education, followed by the areas of social protection and employment.



In order to address the problem of anti-gypsyism and general discrimination against Roma and Egyptians, the strategic document placed the primary emphasis on the need for clear recognition of the problem of anti-gypsyism in Montenegrin society. In order to truly suppress the phenomenon of anti-gypsyism, it is necessary to clearly define the institutional, social and historical responsibility for solving the causes and consequences of the problem itself. The emphasis is on raising public awareness of the benefits of creating a diverse and inclusive society, i.e. a society based on intercultural learning and fighting all national, racial or ethnic stereotypes about Roma and Egyptians in every field, starting from education, social and health care, employment and culture. Fight against all forms of racial or ethnic discrimination is the basis for suppressing anti-gypsyism, especially through the elimination of all forms of hate speech and hate crimes against Roma and Egyptians. It is particularly important to emphasize the need for implementing institutional measures for raising awareness and encouraging Roma and Egyptians to report any cases of violence or harassment based on their racial or ethnic origin. In this regard, it is necessary to work towards creating a database of complaints of the Roma and Egyptian communities of the cases of discrimination and anti-gypsyism. Currently, the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms has an updated database



that provides for the division of complaints by grounds and types of discrimination, although, the database does not filter complaints by specific ethnicity.<sup>52</sup> With that in mind, in the coming period it is necessary to work on improving the existing database through straightforward collection of data on the number of initiated and processed cases of discrimination and anti-gypsyism that the Roma and Egyptian community have been subjected to.

Access to justice and the readiness of the judicial system to adequately respond and provide protection to victims of anti-gypsyism and discrimination is one of the most important conditions for a successful fight against these phenomena. In this regard, it is crucial to envisage adequate measures to raise the awareness of Roma and Egyptians about their rights, as well as measures to eliminate all forms of systemic, institutional or structural discrimination against Roma and Egyptians.

### Culture, identity and information

The Roma and Egyptian communities have a whole range of cultural characteristics that form their unique identity. Regardless, the Roma and Egyptian population in Montenegro do not have a sufficiently developed awareness of their own identity, nor are there organized mechanisms for the preserving of that identity. The problem is also due to the fact that the self-identification of members of the Roma and Egyptian populations is most often defined negatively, as an antithesis to that of the majority population. As a result, the level of discrimination and stigmatization of members of the Roma and Egyptian populations is on increase. The data show that the ethnic distance towards members of the Roma population is very pronounced and comparatively at a much higher level compared to members of any other ethnic community.

According to CEDEM survey, "Interethnic relations and ethnic distance in Montenegro"<sup>53</sup>, the majority population in Montenegro displays the highest degree of ethnic distance towards Roma, considerably lower towards Albanians, and even lower towards Croats. Members of this ethnic group display the lowest level of distancing (except when it comes to Serbs) in the relation with Bosniaks, i.e., Muslims.

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<sup>52</sup>Data for the general population for 2019- In the proceedings before the Protector, there were 18 cases due to discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity. In three (3) cases, discrimination or violation of another right was identified and recommendations were given; there were found no discrimination or violation of another right in 2 (two) cases; one (1) case was ended by reprimand, one (1) by referring to other legal remedies, while in one (1) case the proceeding was suspended due to instituting court proceedings following the complaint. In six (6) cases, the Protector could not act, the complaint was not supplemented within the set deadline, nor after its expiry – three cases (3); the complaint was restated, while new evidence have not been presented - one (1) case; non-competence - two (2) cases, while four (4) cases are currently processed. On the grounds of its association with a minority nation or a minority national community there was one (1) case in progress in which a violation of rights was established and a recommendation was addressed.

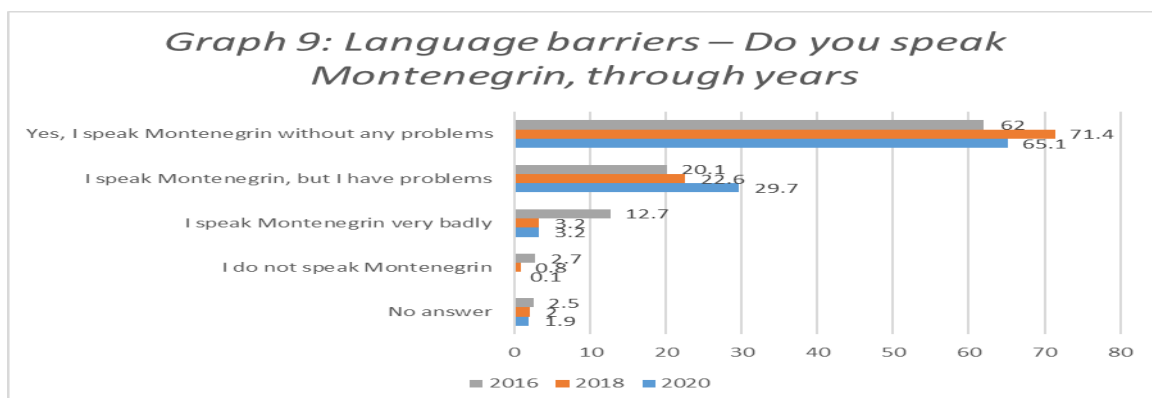
<sup>53</sup> CEDEM, "Interethnic relations and ethnic distance in Montenegro", 2019, <https://www.cedem.me/publikacije/istrazivanje/politicko-javno-mnjenje/send/29-politicko-javno-mnjenje/1961-etnicka-distanca-u-crnoj-gori>



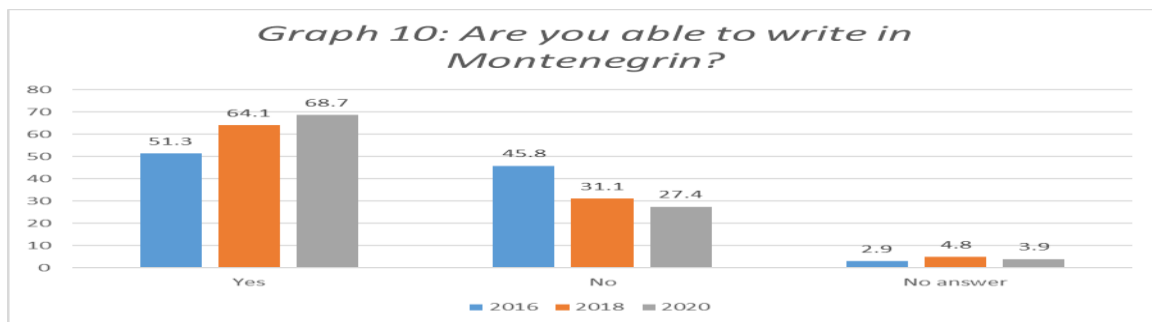
Regarding the existence of language barriers in relation to the majority population, a survey by DeFacto Consultancy showed that Romani is a mother tongue to the majority of members of the Roma and Egyptian communities. Their second most common language is Albanian.



The majority of Roma and Egyptians actively speak Montenegrin, however, it is important to point out that one third report having certain problems using the language.



The percentage of those able to write in Montenegrin is similar – 68.7%. It is important to point out, that in the previous four years, the percentage of Roma and Egyptians who can write in Montenegrin has increased.



In order to achieve a higher level of integration of members of the Roma and Egyptian populations into Montenegrin society and reduce the existing ethnic distance with the majority population, it is necessary to pay special attention to preserving and promoting their culture, traditions and customs. In that regard, special emphasis should be placed on the implementation of projects aimed at improving the position of Roma and Egyptians in the community, primarily through:

- Strengthening and promoting Roma and Egyptian culture and identity through the organization of cultural and traditional events. That way, the preservation and transmission of cultural and identity particularities of this social community would be ensured. In addition, special attention should be directed towards the organization of informative and educational shows on public broadcasters, exhibitions of paintings and other works of art by children of the Roma and Egyptian population, workshops for school-age children, exhibitions of handicrafts and traditional works and items typical of Roma and Egyptian culture.
- Standardization of the Romani language as the most important institute of culture and identity of this community. In this regard, the Roma community is particularly impaired (deprived), given that all previous attempts to standardize the language have not yielded adequate results, as well as the fact that a significant part of the Roma population does not actively speak Montenegrin. In this respect, it is necessary to place special emphasis in the coming period on the production and broadcasting of shows, as well as publishing of literature and magazines in the Romani language.
- Organization of educational programs in the field of Romology for everyone interested in the identity, culture, language and literature of Roma and Egyptians. The program is aimed at people from the Roma and Egyptian communities, as well as all people working in various programs related to Roma and Egyptians. The objective of these programs is to develop and preserve awareness in the Roma and Egyptian communities of their own origin, identity, language, literature and culture. In addition, the goal is to acquaint anyone who works in any way with the Roma community with the aforesaid aspects, but also to fight prejudice and stereotypes towards Roma and Egyptians in the wider community and develop awareness of their identity, language and culture.
- Achieving a higher level of information of Roma and Egyptians through the channels of a national public broadcasting services of Radio and Television of Montenegro, as well as through programs and projects implemented by NGOs in cooperation with both local and national public broadcasters, as well as commercial electronic media where, for the most part, there are special shows already being broadcasted either in Romani (with subtitled translation) or in Montenegrin. In this respect, it is necessary to continue with the implementation of the existing and introduce new information content aimed at the Roma and Egyptian populations.
- Improving conditions and support for the development and affirmation of sports activities, primarily through the financing of projects for the inclusion of Roma and Egyptian children.

## Operational objective and indicators

<b>Operational objective 1:</b>	Improving the institutional and social fight against all forms of discrimination and anti-Gypsyism faced by the Roma and Egyptian communities		
<b>Performance indicator 1:</b> Reduce the percentage of members of the Roma and Egyptian communities who have faced some form of discrimination	2021  58,6%	2023  56%	2025  53%
<b>Performance indicator 2:</b> Reduce the percentage of Roma and Egyptians who have been victims of hate speech	2021  49,5%	2023  47%	2025  45%
<b>Performance indicator 3:</b> Reduce the percentage of ethnic distance towards the citizens of the Roma and Egyptian communities	2021  0.55 (on a scale of 0 to 1)	2023  0.52	2025  0.50

## Poverty

Poverty rate of the Roma and Egyptian communities is several times higher than poverty rate of other (ethnic) groups in Montenegro. The material and financial situation of the Roma and Egyptian populations is far more difficult than the material conditions of the majority population faced with poverty. It is possible to distinguish widespread intergenerational poverty among Roma and Egyptians that goes a long way back. Tradition and cultural customs prevent and hinder the modernization of this community (living in large families, strict division of gender roles, lack of boundaries between public and private life, etc.). There are several causes of RE poverty: discrimination and anti-gypsyism, non-registration of Roma and Egyptians, low level of education and poorly developed professional skills, exclusion from the formal employment system, large number of household members. Activities in the informal economy are important and are very often the only source of income for Roma and Egyptians. Social welfare is one of the sources of income in a significant number of households. Relieving poverty of Roma and Egyptians presupposes taking action in several related fields: improving housing conditions, greater employment opportunities, encouraging schooling of children, eliminating discrimination and anti-gypsyism against Roma and Egyptians.

One of the identified problems in assessing the poverty levels of the Roma and Egyptian populations in Montenegro is the lack of precise data on the level of poverty faced by this community. In this regard, in the next period of implementation of the public policy, it is important to pay special attention to the development of the analysis that will contain a clear assessment of poverty level of Roma and Egyptian communities in relation to the majority population, estimated line of poverty and level of deprivation in all areas of encounter of this community.

One of the useful sources of data on the poverty level of the Roma and Egyptian communities is the analysis "Multidimensional poverty of children in Montenegro", prepared by UNICEF, in order to

collect data for the general population and the population of Roma and Egyptian settlements.<sup>54</sup> This report primarily points to a high exposure of Roma and Egyptian children to stress, e.g. the fact that two thirds (65%) of children age 0–23 months experiences simultaneous overlap of deprivations in terms of nutrition, development in early childhood and housing. Special emphasis is placed on the dimensions of deprivation in early childhood and housing, whereby the data point to the highest levels of poverty in children under five and children of age 5–17, with the exception that in children age 0–23 months the greatest overlap with other dimensions of deprivation occurs in the case of nutrition. In addition, almost two thirds of children under two (65%) faces the simultaneous overlap of deprivation in the domains of nutrition, development in early childhood and housing. The main characteristics that increase the likelihood of multidimensional deprivation of Roma children are living in northern regions and living in a female-headed household. In-depth interviews with families, children and others also confirmed that: poor housing conditions are associated with water and sanitation deprivation and poor health outcomes of Roma children. The segregation of the Roma and Egyptian populations in settlements or housing facilities intended exclusively for them leads to their social exclusion. The common belief that children should start working at early age can jeopardize their right to education and child protection.

Extremely high levels of deprivation and modest living conditions (housing) are a common denominator for all age groups. Deprivation in the domain of development in early childhood (95,8%) and in the domain of nutrition (77%) is very pronounced among children of 0–23 months. Difficulties with access to education and poor school performance, while not at the top of the deprivation list, are widespread. Children living in rural areas are generally at a disadvantage compared to their peers from urban areas. The risk of deprivation in each domain is more likely to be related to the region in which a child lives than to the demographic characteristics of Roma households.

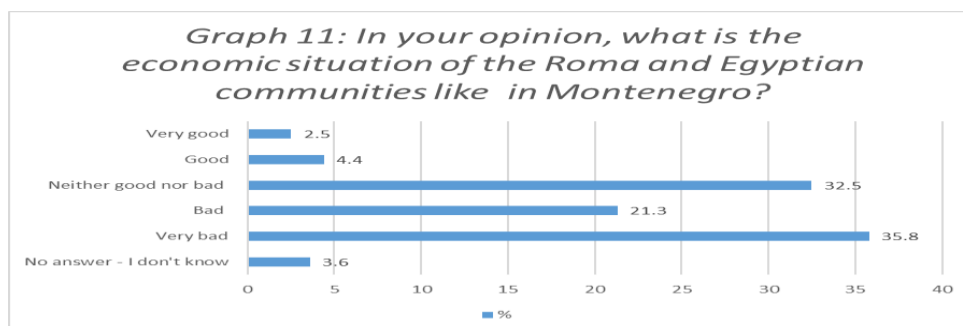
The survey MICS 6 2018<sup>55</sup> has shown that Roma and Egyptian children and newborns face dietary problems, with data showing that two out of five newborns is breastfed within an hour after birth. Women living in suburbs are twice as likely to start breastfeeding early, compared to women living in urban areas. Every seventh 0–5 month old child is exclusively breastfed until its sixth month. Although the timely introduction of solid or semi-solid foods is widespread among 6–8 month-olds, and the minimum frequency of meals is high among 6–23 month old children, just under one-third of children of this age receive a minimally varied diet (five of the eight recommended food groups), and only one-fifth have a minimally acceptable diet. Children of 6–23 months in Roma settlements whose mothers have secondary or higher education are more likely to receive a minimally varied diet than children whose mothers have primary education or lower, or no education at all.

Regarding the economic situation of the Roma and Egyptian population in Montenegro, a survey by the DeFacto Consultancy Agency shows that the majority of Roma and Egyptians considers it very bad or bad.

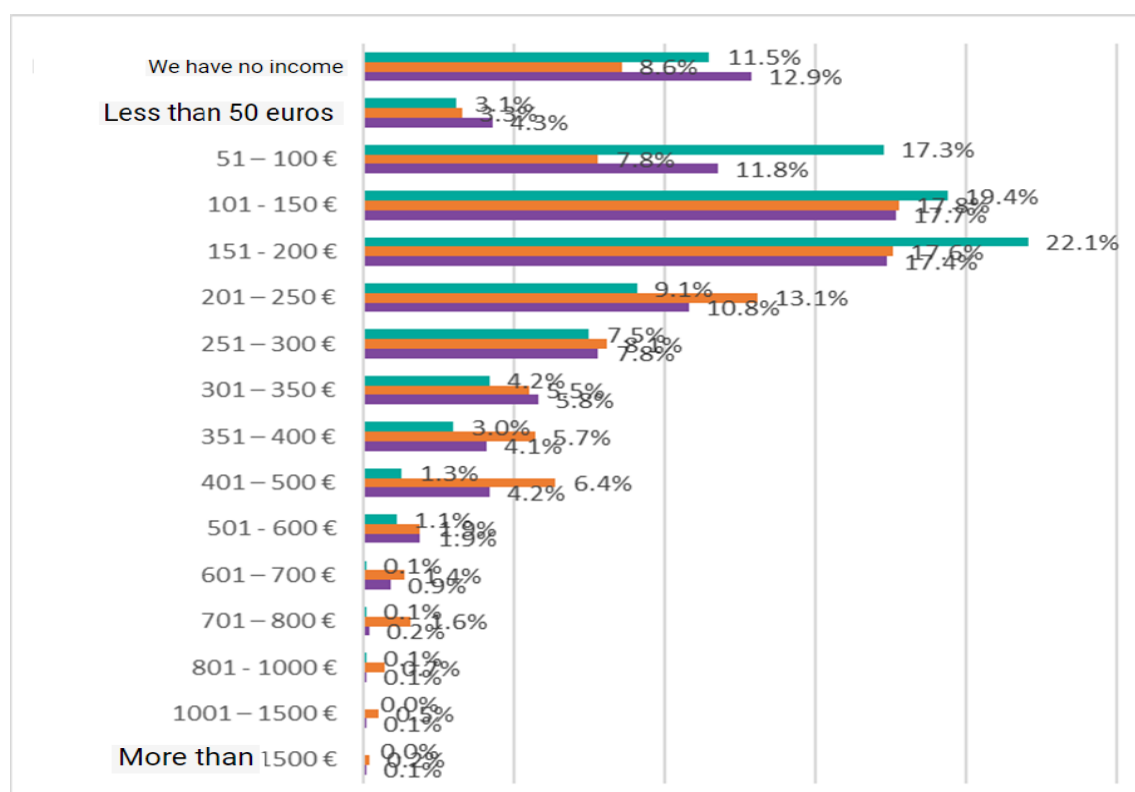
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<sup>54</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/media/17686/file/UNICEF%20-%20MODA%20MNE\\_web.pdf.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/media/17686/file/UNICEF%20-%20MODA%20MNE_web.pdf.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> Link to the survey: [https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/sites/unicef.org.montenegro/files/2019-07/MNE\\_MICS6%20Statisti%C4%8Dki%20pregled%20Ishrana%20novoro%C4%91en%C4%8Dadi%20i%20male%20djece\\_Romaska%20naselja%20u%20Crnoj%20Gori%202018..pdf](https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/sites/unicef.org.montenegro/files/2019-07/MNE_MICS6%20Statisti%C4%8Dki%20pregled%20Ishrana%20novoro%C4%91en%C4%8Dadi%20i%20male%20djece_Romaska%20naselja%20u%20Crnoj%20Gori%202018..pdf)



The income structure of Roma and Egyptian households on a monthly basis indicates a difficult economic situation in which the majority from those communities finds themselves. Namely, the largest number of Roma and Egyptian households have at their disposal a sum of 101 to 200 euros per month. For comparison, the minimal consumer basket<sup>56</sup> in Montenegro for June 2020 was 644,5 euros.<sup>57</sup> In addition, the survey showed an increase in the number of members of the Roma and Egyptian populations who have lower incomes, compared to the incomes recorded in 2016.



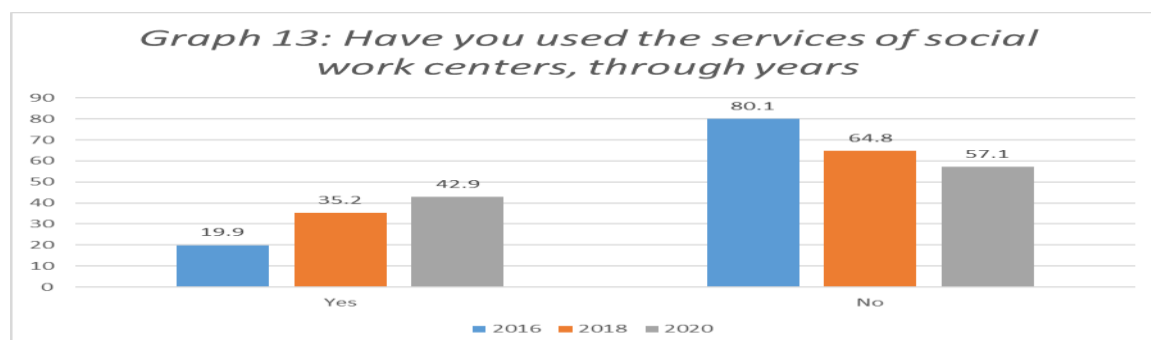
Graph 12: Income

Regarding the level of use of social welfare, the 2020 DeFacto Consultancy survey shows that almost one half of Roma and Egyptians use the services and welfare provided by the Centers for Social

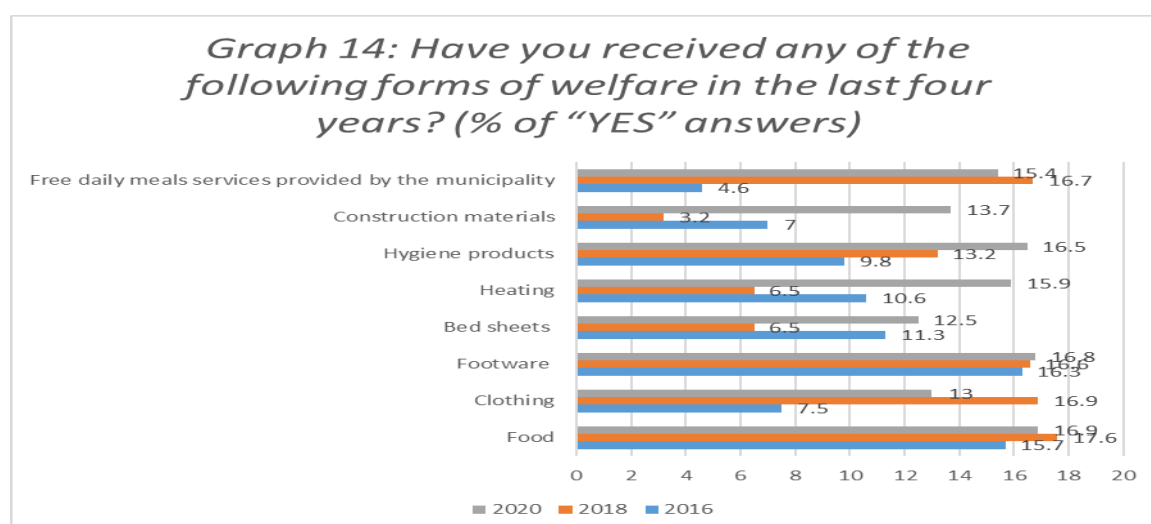
<sup>56</sup>It should be noted that the minimum consumer basket in Montenegro is calculated for a family of four. Given that the average number of household members in the Roma and Egyptian communities is 5.5, the minimum expenses of their household should be at least one fifth higher.

<sup>57</sup>Source: the Statistical Office of Montenegro - Monstat, [https://www.monstat.org/uploads/files/minimalna%20potrosacka%20korpa/saopstenja/2020/6/MPK\\_jun%202020.pdf](https://www.monstat.org/uploads/files/minimalna%20potrosacka%20korpa/saopstenja/2020/6/MPK_jun%202020.pdf)

Work, while one third receive material assistance every month. The survey indicates that the percentage of users of the services of the Centers for Social Work is increasing.



In the previous four-year period, a considerable percentage of members of the Roma and Egyptian populations apply as beneficiaries for various forms of material assistance.<sup>58</sup>



One of the main obstacles that Roma and Egyptians encounter when it comes to applying for social welfare is non-registration. Unregulated legal status is an extreme form of social exclusion and prevents citizens of the Roma and Egyptian communities from having access to social services. When it comes to the Roma and Egyptian communities, general barriers to the use of social services include a lack of information on available services and social benefits, as well as language barriers and multiple forms of discrimination. Poverty is also characterized by gender prejudices, as well as the fact that it particularly affects women and children. The problems faced by Roma and Egyptians in accessing public social services refer to their difficulties in accessing education, health care and social protection, and are correlated with the lack of knowledge and unfamiliarity with the Montenegrin language, discrimination and poverty.

The deeply-rooted poverty of Roma and Egyptians and their social exclusion in Montenegro also have an intergenerational dimension. As in other countries, the Roma and Egyptian populations are significantly younger than the majority population, which clearly points to the need to focus on

<sup>58</sup> Around 1,200 families received one-time financial help from the social work centers to cover basic living expenses, such as food, clothing, school supplies and rent. With the support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway in Belgrade, through the NGO Group 484, more than 24,000 children with disabilities and their families, including Roma and Egyptian families, received hygiene packages via the Red Cross, the Association of Parents of Children with Disabilities and day care centers for these children.

improving the educational abilities of Roma and Egyptians in order to bring them out of the vicious circle of poverty.

#### Operational objective and indicators

<b>Operational objective 2:</b>	Reduce poverty, social exclusion and the present socio-economic gap between the Roma and Egyptian populations and the majority population		
<b>Performance indicator 1:</b> Reduce material deprivation of the Roma and Egyptian populations as well as the difference in exposure to poverty compared to the general population	2021  91% Roma and Egyptians  (56% gap)	2023  88%  52%	2025  85% (Roma and Egyptians)  (47% gap)
<b>Performance indicator 2:</b> (Multidimensional poverty of children)  Reduce the overlap of the three most common deprivations for children 0-2, 0-5, 5-17 years old	2021  65% (0-2 years old)  53% (0-5 years old)  Poverty 35% (5-17 years old) 2021	2023  60%  48%  30%	2025  55% (0-2)  43% (0-5)  25% (5-17)

#### Political and social participation

Prejudice and discrimination are real and serious problems for many Roma and Egyptians, while anti-gypsyism is a complex phenomenon made of numerous social, cultural and economic factors. Assessment of the results realized in the process of integration of ethno-national minorities in Montenegro, shows the lowest results in terms of integration of the Roma and Egyptian communities. Difficulties in the process of integration of this community into Montenegrin society are also the result of legal and institutional shortcomings, especially in the part concerning political participation of Roma and Egyptians. The Constitution of Montenegro<sup>59</sup> does not recognize Roma and Egyptians as national minorities, but treats them as "other minority communities". Likewise, the Law on the Election of Councilors and Deputies<sup>60</sup> does not recognize the institute of affirmative action for members of the Roma and Egyptian communities. Bearing in mind of the provisions of this law, an important issue arising is the one concerning political representation of the Roma and Egyptian communities in Montenegro, especially having regards to ethnic communities of approximately the same size as the Roma and Egyptian communities, regarding the implementation of affirmative action through lowering the electoral threshold of 0.35% for entry into national and local parliaments.

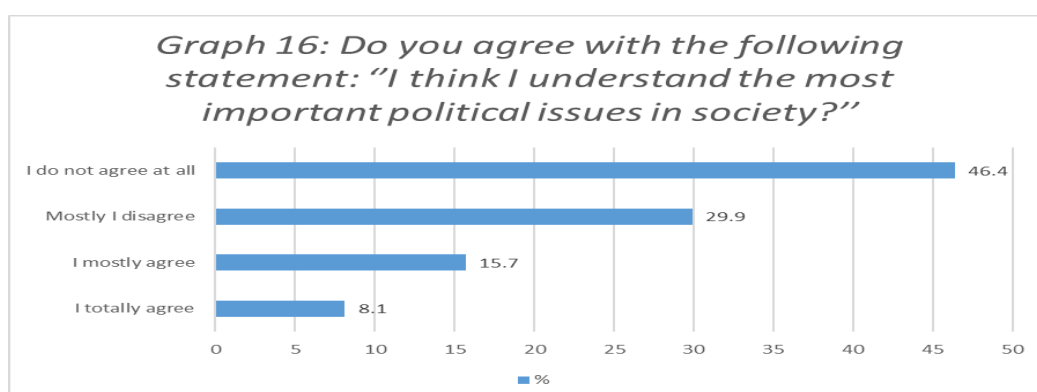
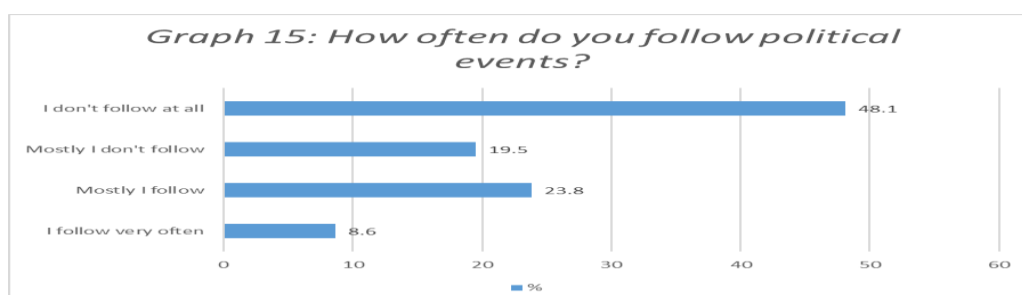
Regarding the level of political involvement, the data show that the Roma and Egyptian communities in Montenegro are largely excluded from the process of participation and political decision-making. Almost two thirds of the Roma and Egyptian populations do not follow political events to some

<sup>59</sup>The preamble of the Constitution of Montenegro recognizes Montenegrins, Serbs, Bosniaks, Albanians, Muslims, Croats as nations and national minorities in Montenegro, whereas Roma and Egyptians are classified as "others".

<sup>60</sup> The Law on the Election of Councilors and Deputies, Official Gazette of Montenegro, no. 16/2000, 10/2018, 109/2020



extent or at all. Seventy-six percent of Roma and Egyptians say they do not understand the most significant political developments in the country.



Increasing the level of participation of the Roma and Egyptian communities in social flows is achieved through training of Roma and Egyptian representatives, especially women and youth, for participation in the decision-making processes and greater involvement in social life. In this regard, in the coming period it is necessary to continue the activities of educating the representatives of the Roma and Egyptian communities through implementation of activities of amending the existing legal framework, in order to ensure equal rights for political participation of Roma and Egyptians. To this end, the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights has continuously organized trainings in order to educate members of the Roma and Egyptian populations to participate in the decision-making processes and in the public life. After the completion of the trainings cycle held in 2019, which was attended by 60 students (12 women, 48 men), the first Roma political party, the Democratic Party of Roma and the Civic Movement of Roma and Egyptians - UMRE (United Movement of Roma and Egyptians) has been formed.

In addition to the above, it is necessary to create opportunities for social empowerment of the Roma and Egyptian communities, especially at the local level, through the development of inclusive and participatory processes by local governments and organizations.

In this regard, most Roma and Egyptian civil society organizations still lack the capacity needed to make a stronger impact in changing the position of the Roma and Egyptian communities. They lack the capacity to monitor the implementation of measures related to strategies and policies aimed at including Roma and Egyptians and improving their status, the skills needed to successfully attract donor funds, financial capacities, the knowledge and skills for creating quality projects, successful implementation and monitoring the performance and quality of implemented activities. In this regard, special emphasis should be placed on:

- Representation and involvement of Roma and Egyptian organizations in defining public policies and conducting public debates.
- Strengthening cooperation between the state bodies and civil organizations dealing with the rights of Roma and Egyptians, especially in the part related to the rights of women, children and youth.
- Strengthening the capacity of civil social organizations for attracting EU donor funds.
- Introduction of the gender dimension in all segments of public policy, especially in the fields of education, employment, health, child care and in suppressing multiple discrimination, including fighting violence against women and arranged child marriages.

#### Operational objective and indicators

<b>Operational objective 3:</b>	Increasing the level of political participation and representation of the Roma and Egyptian communities in the process of drafting, implementing and monitoring public policies		
<b>Performance indicator 1:</b> Increase the participation of Roma and Egyptians in political life at the local and national levels	2021 <i>Representatives of the Roma and Egyptian communities are not represented in local and the national parliament</i>	2023 Changes and amendments to the Law on Election of Councilors and Deputies in order to define the threshold for political representatives by 0.35%	2025 Secured census
<b>Performance indicator 2:</b> Improve and ensure the participation of representatives of the Roma Council and Roma and Egyptian NGOs in the creation of national/local policies aimed at improving the position of members of the Roma and Egyptian communities	2021 <i>Ten NGO representatives included</i>	2023 <i>Fifteen representatives included</i>	2025 <i>Representatives of Roma and Egyptian NGOs are involved in all the policies aimed at improving the position of Roma and Egyptians.</i>

### Housing

Housing is one of the most important existential issues that members of RE population in Montenegro are faced with. Roma and Egyptians most often live within informal and temporary settlements which include a significant number of those built with the application of inadequate construction techniques and materials. In a large number of cases, the same site comprises conditional and completely built houses in addition to extremely poor unconditional facilities located next to them.

United Nations<sup>61</sup> define facilities that do not meet the required minimum housing standards, including at least one of the following criteria:

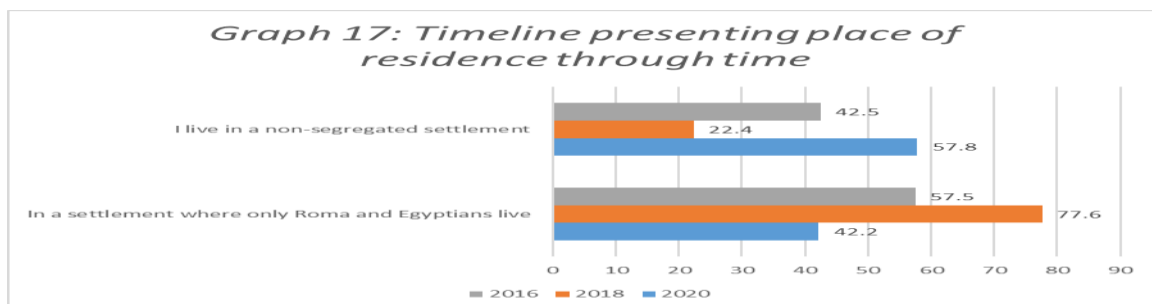
- Inadequate access to drinking water;

<sup>61</sup> OHCHR and UN Habitat, „Right to adequate housing conditions “, [https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/fs21\\_rev\\_1\\_housing\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/fs21_rev_1_housing_en.pdf)

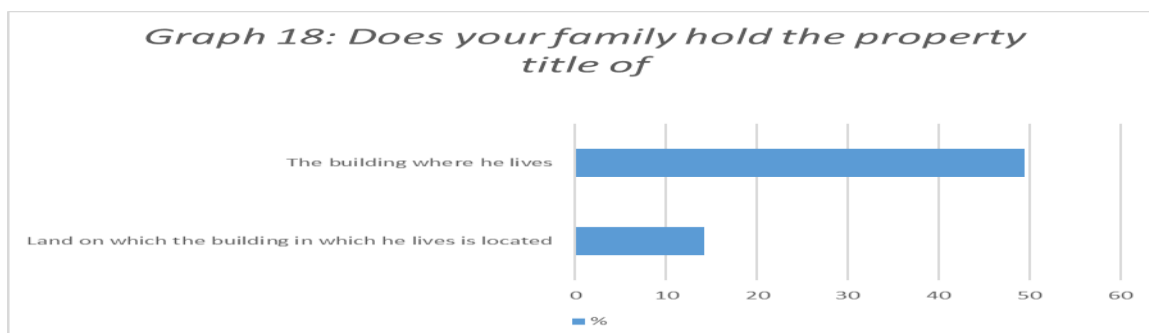
- Inadequate access to utility and other infrastructure (sewerage system, road network, electricity distribution network, etc.);
- Inadequate access to public services (schools, hospitals, public transport, etc.);
- Poor structure quality of housing units (housing units built using inadequate construction techniques and/or using poor-quality materials, housing units dilapidated due to poor maintenance and the like, which represent a potential risk to the safety of inhabitants);
- Overcrowding in terms of average population density per unit area of settlement i.e., in terms of a large number of members per household;
- Uncertain legal status of facilities on the lots (unresolved property and legal relations over facilities and land);

The UNICEF survey has shown that parents of Roma and Egyptian children believe that concentrating the minority ethnic groups in settlements intended exclusively for them is another form of strengthening their social segregation and restricting access to social services, as well as of exposing them to potential risk of discrimination and intolerance by the general population. All of this can lead to negative outcomes in terms of children's education and their future in general.

The DeFakto Consultancy survey (2020) has shown that the majority of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro live in settlements with the majority population, but 42.2% of them still live in settlements where only members of Roma and Egyptian group live, which confirms the existence of a high level of segregation of Roma and Egyptian population in Montenegro. However, it is important to point out that fewer Roma and Egyptians live in segregated communities today than in 2016.



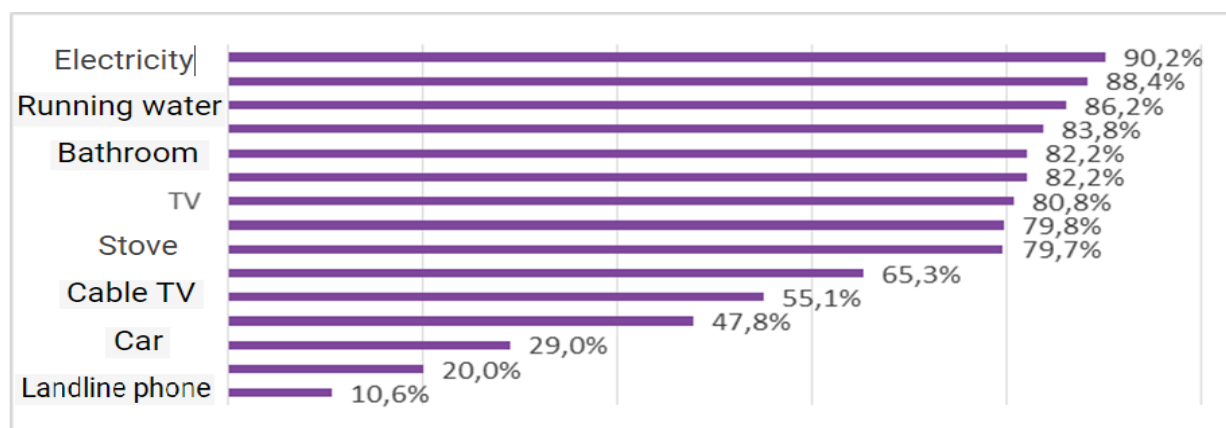
Also, the survey has shown that half of the facilities where the members of Roma and Egyptian population live are in their ownership. However, a serious problem was identified in respect to ownership over the land on which housing facilities have been constructed, where in the predominant number of cases the issue of unresolved property and legal relations in respect to ownership over the land itself was recorded.



Overcrowding in housing facilities is an additional problem, with the survey showing that an average of 5.5 household members live together in a typical Roma or Egyptian community. The largest recorded number of household members registered to live together in one housing unit is 16.

A large percentage of households inhabited by Roma and Egyptians lack the basic conditions for a decent life in the household. Thus, for example, 9.8% of them claim that there is no electricity in their household, and 11.6% have no water (13.8% running water). 17.8% of Roma and Egyptians do not have a bathroom and a refrigerator in their housing facilities, while 20% of them do not have a stove or hot water. 80% of households do not have a computer necessary for distance learning during the coronavirus epidemic.

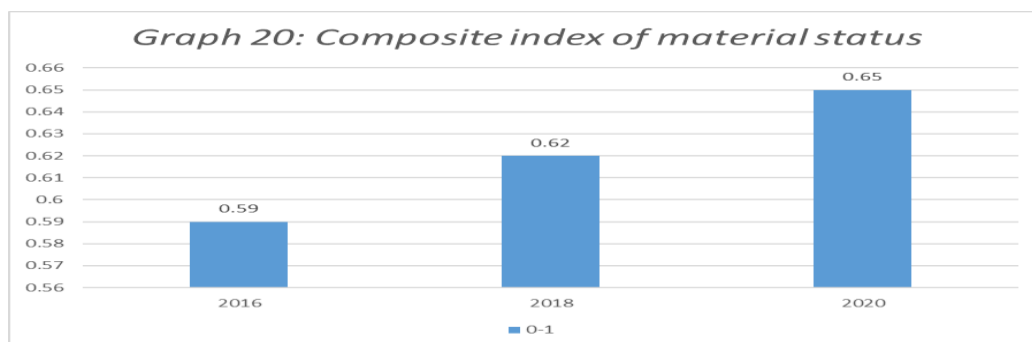
Only 65.5% of households have access to the Internet in some way (via mobile phone, wi-fi router or otherwise), while only 55.1% of respondents use the Internet every day.



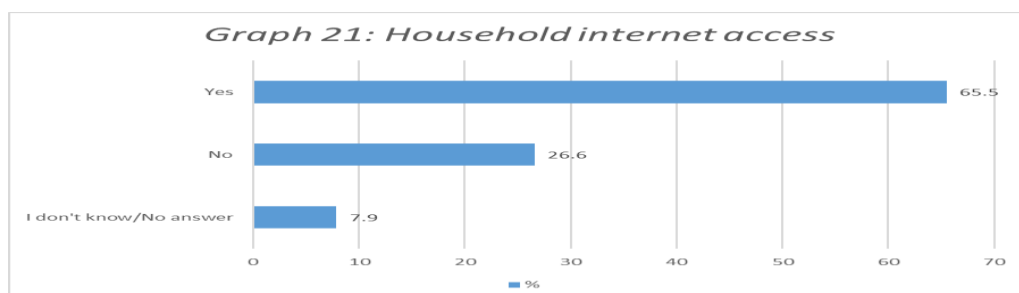
*Graph 19: Does your household possess the following items (% of YES answers)*

On the basis of the data from previous research, the composite index of household equipment was calculated.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the index calculated using the data from 2016 is 0.59, the index using the data from 2018 is 0.62, whereas the index using the data from this survey is 0.65, which indicates a quite slow but positive tendency of improving the level of fit-out of Roma and Egyptian households.

<sup>62</sup>The composite index was calculated by using all variables (available electricity, water supply, etc.) to create a composite score where 0 means that a household does not possess a specific household element, and 1 means that it does.

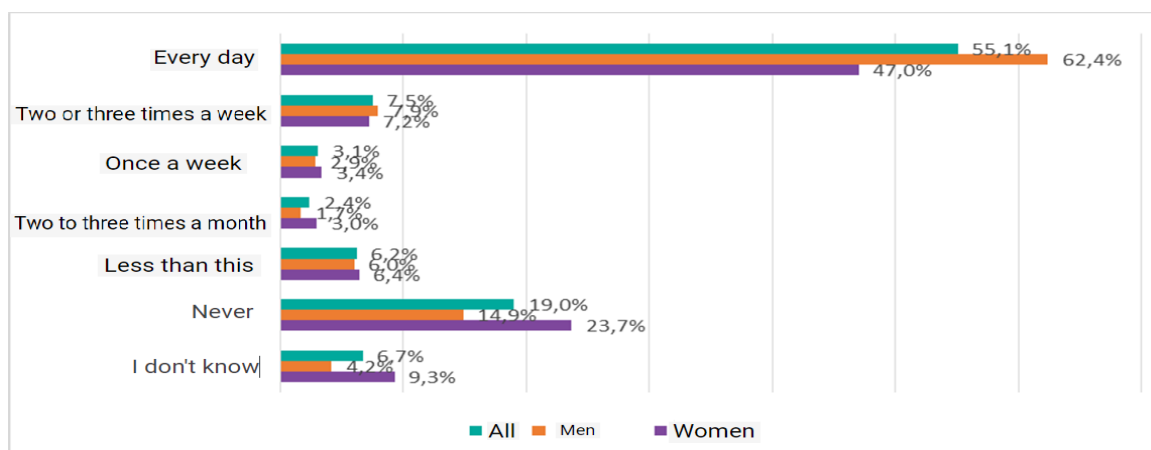


A total of 65.5% of respondents claim that their family has internet access at home. Regarding the general population, according to the Statistical Office, this percentage was 74.3% in 2019.<sup>63</sup>



Although a large number of respondents own a mobile phone (83.8%), relatively few of them use the Internet every day - 55.1%. For the sake of comparison, 87.9% of the majority population use the Internet every day or almost every day out of those who used the Internet at all over the last 3 months.<sup>64</sup> The survey has shown that, in comparison to those who claim they use the Internet in general, 74% of Roma or Egyptians use the Internet every day.

It is important to note that there are statistically significant differences between men and women when it comes to using the Internet, with women using the Internet significantly less than men.



Graph 22

<sup>63</sup> Monstat Statistical Office,  
[https://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/ICT/2019/Uпотреба%20IKT%20u%20domacinstvima%202019\\_Final.pdf](https://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/ICT/2019/Uпотреба%20IKT%20u%20domacinstvima%202019_Final.pdf)

<sup>64</sup> Source Monstat Statistical Office,  
[https://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/ICT/2019/Uпотреба%20IKT%20u%20domacinstvima%202019\\_Final.pdf](https://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/ICT/2019/Uпотреба%20IKT%20u%20domacinstvima%202019_Final.pdf)

Taking the above data into consideration, the primary directions of the strategic document in the field of housing are reflected in:

- **Legalization of existing housing facilities**

In the next five-year period, it is necessary to take steps to resolve the issue of ownership over constructed facilities where Roma and Egyptians live, whereby special attention has to be paid to the issue of drafting a roadmap for legalization of facilities, resolving unresolved property and legal relations regarding the land on which housing facilities have been constructed. Accordingly, it is necessary to legalize these facilities and settlements since this allows for work on improving the infrastructure and resolving all related issues, or if legalization is not possible, then the possibility of relocation to adequate housing facilities that meet the minimum standards required for normal living should be sought. If there is no possibility of legalization of facilities/settlements, then a permanent solution must be offered, and that is the relocation of Roma and Egyptian settlements and finding a sustainable solution that will not further increase the level of segregation of Roma and Egyptian population. With regard to housing facilities that can be legalized, it is necessary to take all necessary actions, both by state-level authorities and local governments responsible for legalization affairs, in order to resolve this issue.

- **Resolving the issue of overcrowding in housing facilities**

Special emphasis must be placed on addressing the issue of overcrowding in Roma and Egyptian housing facilities. It is especially important to point out that, according to the available data on the number of household members in Montenegro, the average household in Montenegro has 3 to 5 members,<sup>65</sup> compared to 5.5 members in Roma and Egyptian communities. Taking into account the inadequacy of housing facilities in which Roma and Egyptians live, there is a need to address the issue of overcrowding in housing facilities in which the said population lives. The primary goal to be achieved in this segment of housing is to reduce the gap identified between the majority population and the Roma and Egyptian population in respect to the average number of household members, by addressing the housing issue of Roma and Egyptians.

- **Providing basic conditions for decent living in housing facilities**

The Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Improving the Living Conditions of Roma and Travelers in Europe<sup>66</sup> calls for a review of laws and regulations, as well as of labour policy and practice regarding housing accommodation, in order to remove administrative practice and any provisions resulting in direct or indirect discrimination against Roma and Egyptians. All public utility services, such as water supply, electricity, garbage collection and maintenance of access roads, as well as other utilities must be provided to Roma and Egyptian settlements. Given that the conducted survey has clearly indicated that there is a significant difference in the levels of availability of utilities and modern household appliances between the majority population and Roma and Egyptians, the strategic document places special emphasis on solving specific problems. In this regard, it is important to devise the necessary answers by state authorities and partner institutions, whereby in addition to resolving the issue of legalization of housing facilities and the problem of overcrowding, the issue of availability of utility services will also be resolved.

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<sup>65</sup> Household structure in Montenegro, Census of population, households and dwellings in Montenegro in 2011, [https://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/popis2011/saopstenje/Saop%20%20struktura%20domacinstava%2004\\_11\\_.pdf](https://www.monstat.org/userfiles/file/popis2011/saopstenje/Saop%20%20struktura%20domacinstava%2004_11_.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Improving the Living Conditions of Roma and Travellers, <https://rm.coe.int/09000016805dad2c>

## - Statistical data

In order to provide the missing statistics and other relevant data, it is necessary to conduct a survey among Roma and Egyptians in cooperation with MONSTAT to determine the number and territorial distribution of Roma and Egyptians covered by local social housing programs and the Regional Housing Program, as well as the number and scope/percentage of the population covered by the Legalization Program. Data should be broken down by age, gender, place of residence, number of family members and other relevant data. It is also important to point out the Regional Methodology for Mapping Roma Housing Roma<sup>67</sup> prepared by the Regional Cooperation Council and focused on the collection of housing data. These data represent the first step in the legalization process, which should be followed by the adoption of urban plans for housing areas inhabited by Roma and Egyptians where legalization is possible, as well as by providing support to Roma in the legalization process and, finally, by performing the legalization of housing units of Roma and Egyptians.

### Operational objective and indicators

<b>Operational objective 4:</b>	To provide permanent, decent, affordable and desegregated housing to members of Roma and Egyptian population		
<b>Performance indicator 1:</b> Reduce the percentage of housing segregation of RE population in relation to the majority population	2021  42.2%	2023  41%	2025  40 %
<b>Performance indicator 2:</b> Reduce the level of overcrowding in housing facilities in which members of RE population live	2021  5.5 household members	2023  5.3	2025  5

## Education

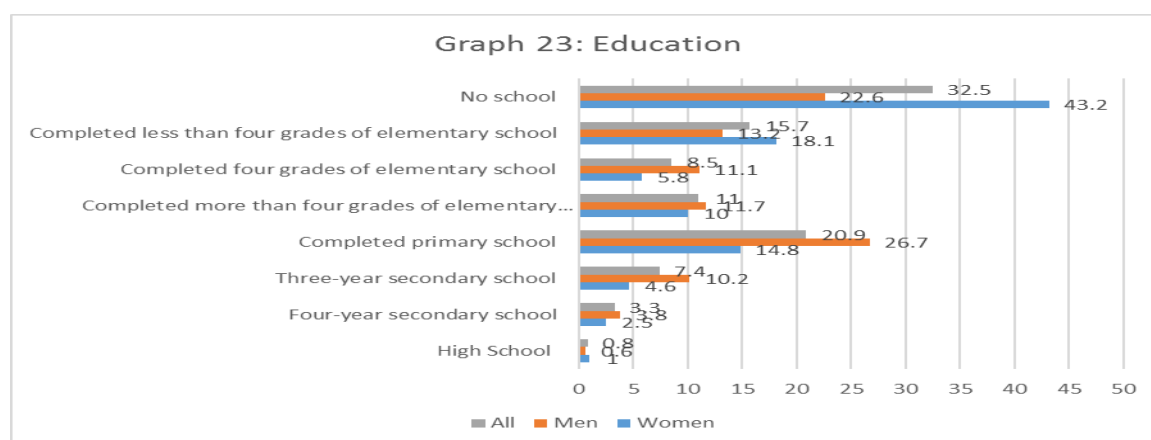
Creating conditions for providing quality education to all citizens of Montenegro is one of the basic development parameters of Montenegrin society, where special emphasis must be placed on advancement in education of minorities whose position is unfavourable, as is the case with Roma and Egyptian population. A quality education system can help to compensate for social disadvantage, improve learning experiences, enable children to realize their potential and, most importantly, prepare them for active integration into society. On the other hand, the low quality of education affects the high drop-out rate of students from Roma and Egyptian population, which is partly due to the inefficiency of school systems to keep them in school. The quality of education is what Roma and Egyptians receive in schools, which is essential for school success and academic achievement, as well as for improving opportunities for successful inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in the labour market and social flows. At the same time, the national education system must be focused on combating all forms of discrimination and segregation of children from Roma and Egyptian communities. It is important to point out that discrimination and segregation of Roma and Egyptians does not end with their entry into schools along with the majority population. Effective

<sup>67</sup>Regional Cooperation Council, "Regional map for Roma housing mapping," 2020, <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/docs/126/regional-methodology-on-mapping-of-roma-housing>

policies and activities to combat discrimination and segregation must be accompanied by effective teaching practices, in order to improve achievement and reduce dropouts. Pursuant to the provisions of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, discrimination in the field of upbringing, education and vocational training pertains to impeding or preventing enrolment in educational and higher education institutions, impeding and preventing selection of educational programs at all levels of education, exclusion from education institutions, impeding or denying classes attendance and participation in other educational or school activities, segregation of children, pupils, and students, abuse or other forms of discrimination or unequal treatment.

Taking into consideration the comparative relation of education levels between the majority population and RE population, the MICS 6 2018 survey has shown that 53% of children from the majority population aged 3-5 attend education programs in their early childhood, while the percentage is much lower in Roma and Egyptian settlements (16%). Among the majority population, the primary completion rate is 96% and the high school graduation rate is 86%. In Roma settlements, the primary completion rate is 56%, while the high school graduation rate is only 3%. In total, 58% of children under the age of five in the general population and only 6% of Roma children of the same age have a minimum of three children's books at home.<sup>68</sup>

In regard to the perception of education levels by Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro, the research conducted by DeFact has shown that 32.5% of respondents of RE population have no type of education. It is especially important to point out the differences in the levels of education recorded between men and women. The percentage of women with no formal schooling or with less than a fourth grade primary education is significantly higher than the percentage of men, whereby even 43.2% of women have no type of education, while the same has been determined in only 22.6% of men.



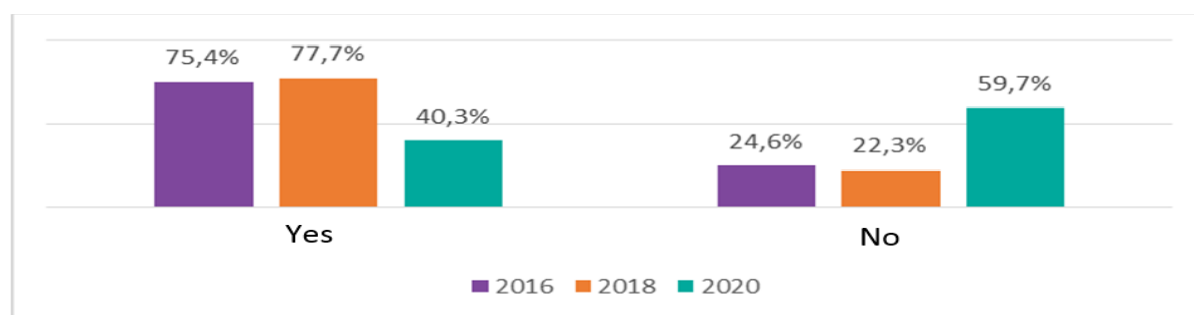
These differences are in decline in the youngest generation (up to 34 years of age), but they still remain statistically significant. Thus, among young people, 20.7% of men and 36.3% of women have no type of education.

Preschool education is of crucial importance to the overall growth, development and formation of a child's personality. Pre-school education is especially significant due to the fact that in a family environment, Roma and Egyptian children are unable to acquire the necessary beginning knowledge

<sup>68</sup> MICS 2018 "Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey" 2018;



and skills that will increase their chances of successful performance in primary education. Regarding the degree of representation of Roma and Egyptians in preschool education, 40.3% of those having children of preschool age answered in the affirmative, which is less than in 2018.<sup>69</sup> However, these data are much closer to the findings of the survey carried out jointly by Monstat and UNICEF in 2018 - *the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey*<sup>70</sup>, according to which 16% of Roma and Egyptian children aged 36 - 59 months were enrolled in early education institutions.<sup>71</sup> Other reasons suggest that poverty often lies behind that Roma and Egyptian children do not go to school and kindergarten, in addition to the general cause related to discrimination.



Graph 24: Does a child from your household attend a kindergarten? (only to be answered by those who have children of this age N=511)

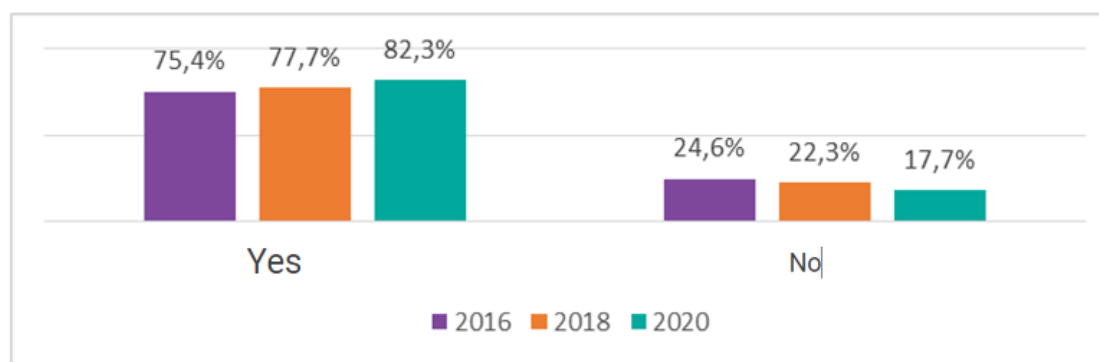
The reasons why such a low percentage of Roma and Egyptian children attend early childhood education institutions range from problems related to cases of discrimination and abuse of Roma and Egyptian children, inadequate financial situation and illiteracy of parents, through lack of personal documents required for enrollment of children in preschool institutions. Also, a significant factor influencing the low percentage of enrollment in preschool institutions includes the traditions and customs of Roma and Egyptians that affect the level of enrollment of Roma and Egyptian children in educational institutions, whereby child marriage and child begging represent a serious problem. In addition, the problems faced by Roma and Egyptian children are reflected in the existence of language barriers, given that education is in a language other than the mother tongue of Roma and Egyptian children. This leads to a significant problem - some students finish school without having previously mastered basic reading or writing skills.

On the other hand, the percentage of children attending primary school has increased in comparison to the findings of previous surveys. Namely, it was 75.4% in 2016 and 77.7% in 2018, while now 82.3% of parents who have children of primary school age claim that their children go to school.

<sup>69</sup>However, it should be taken into account that the survey was conducted during the COVID-19 epidemic which could have affected the way in which parents understood this question. This additionally confirms the fact that a great number of parents stated that children are afraid of the virus as their response to the following question "Why do children attend no kindergarten."

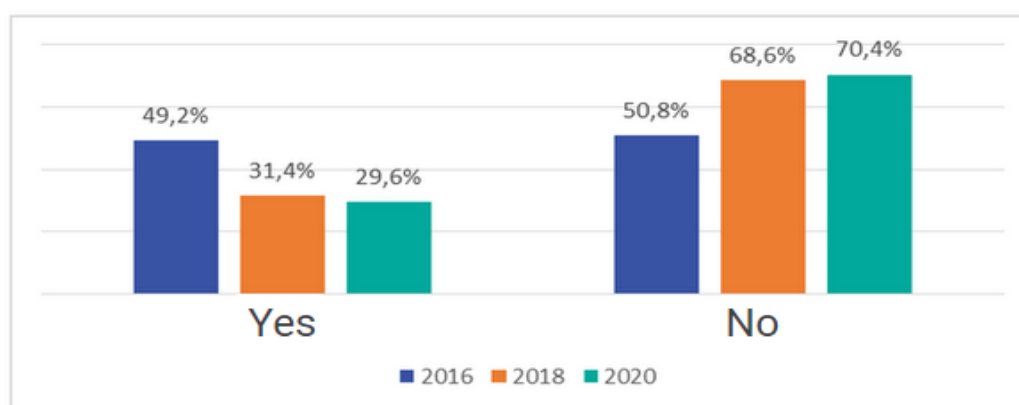
<sup>70</sup> MICS 2018 "Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey," 2018, <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=1028&pageid=15>

<sup>71</sup>Additional information available via the web presentation: [mics.unicef.org/surveys](https://mics.unicef.org/surveys)



Graph 25: Does a child from your household attend primary school? (to be answered only by those who have children of this age N= 627)

The prevalence of absenteeism of Roma and Egyptian children from the education system starts to increase in the final grades of primary school already, but it is most significant in the transition from primary school to secondary education system. This is also visible in percentage terms, where the number of Roma and Egyptian children of secondary school age who attend classes at school is significantly lower than the figures presented in the previous graph. Compared to the previous indicators, there has been a slight decline in the number of children who attend secondary school. The strategic document will put special emphasis on increasing the enrollment rate and reducing the drop-out rate of children from primary and secondary education. In addition, special attention will be paid to the education and vocational training of the older population i.e., those who are not of school age. The data indicate that the educational structure of this population is quite unfavorable, and this disadvantage has a very negative impact on their employment opportunities, as well as on their inability to provide adequate support to their own children who are involved in the process of education.

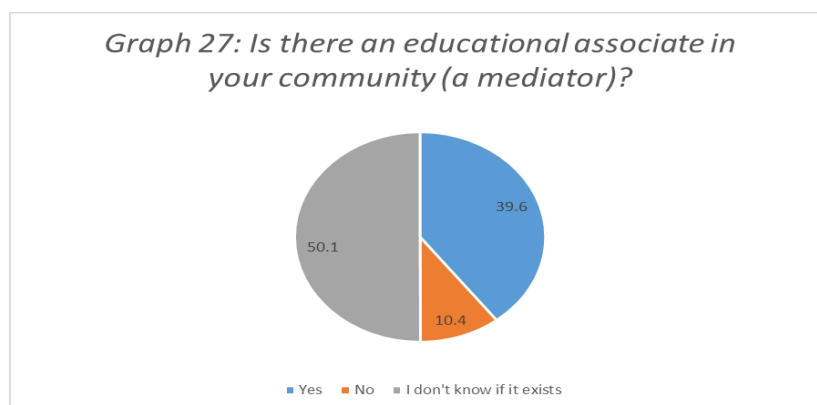


Graph 26: Does a child from your household attend secondary school? (to be answered only by those who have children of this age N=469)

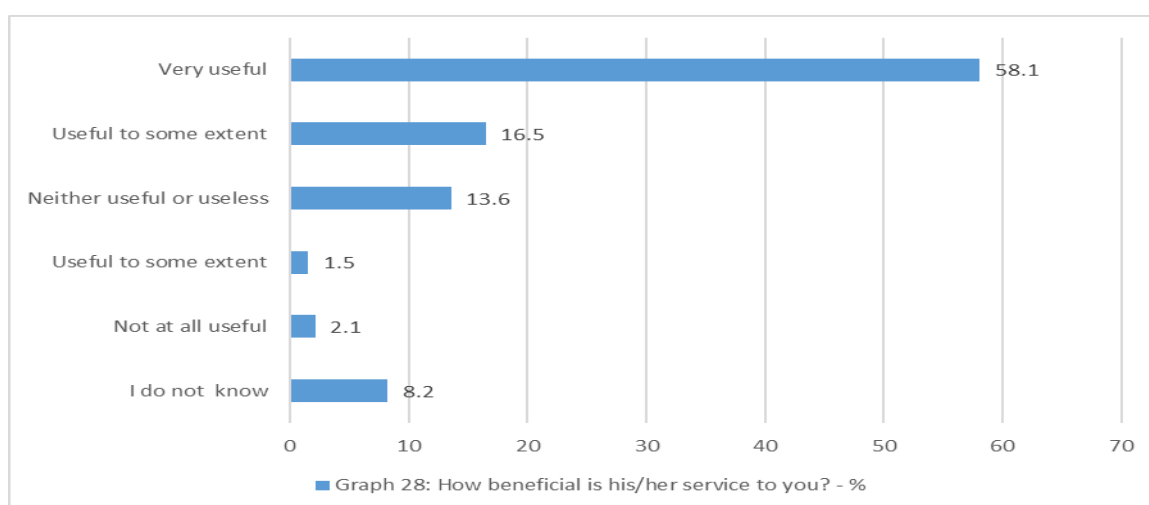
The MICS 6 2018 survey has shown that educational deficiencies stem from the poverty of Roma and Egyptian children. The indicators showed that only 80% of Roma children attended school, and that three out of ten lag behind in respect to academic achievements. Financial constraints have been identified as a key barrier to school attendance, as many households are unable to cover the costs of school supplies and materials, transportation and food, while a number of Roma and Egyptian children face a lack of clothing to wear at school. Financial deprivation can also cause a stigma and psychological aggression at school directed towards children who cannot afford socially acceptable clothing or footwear. Some Roma and Egyptian children who attend secondary school have stated

that they received state scholarships, however, these were not nearly enough to cover their costs of schooling, therefore, many children have been forced to drop out of school.

The largest percentage of surveyed parents of Roma and Egyptian population have no information on whether there is an educational associate in their community. However, those who are familiar with the associate's existence are very satisfied with how useful the services are. Almost half of Roma and Egyptians who are informed about the associate's existence have used his/her services. Most members of the Roma and Egyptian communities find the education assistants<sup>72</sup> useful and support their further participation in the education system intended for their children.



*Graph 27: Is there an educational associate in your community (a mediator)?*

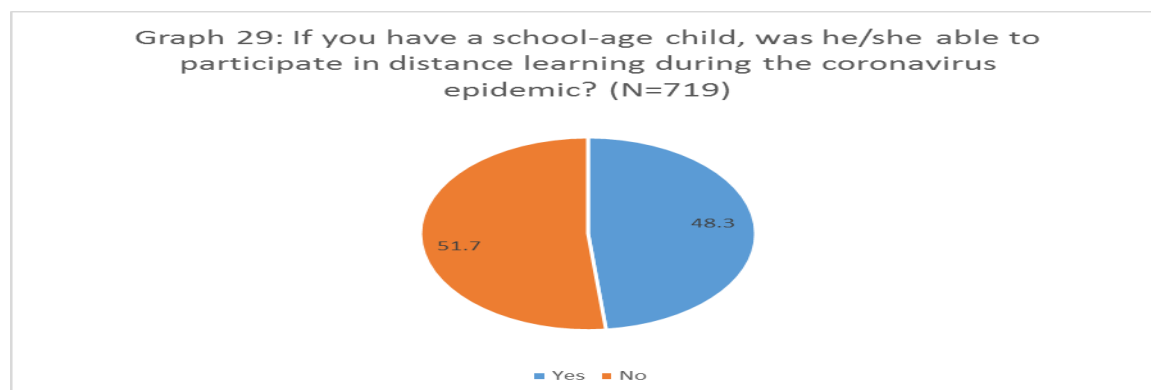


The key task of the Associate in the Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in the field of education is to help, in cooperation with school institutions, in the identification and enrolment of Roma and Egyptian children in the education system. In particular, the task of the Associate is to provide direct support to Roma and Egyptian children in exercising their right to education, encourage children to join the education system, encourage students' consistent attendance in classes and extracurricular activities in both formal and non-formal education, organize student arrivals to educational institutions, mediate in overcoming language barriers between the educational institution and

<sup>72</sup> Assistant in social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in education

students, take specific actions, in intensive communication with parents, in order to prevent dropping out of school.

In addition to the above factors, it is important to point out the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is especially pronounced in the field of education of RE population. The data show that distance learning during the COVID 19 epidemic posed a challenge to the Roma and Egyptian communities. Namely, almost half of Roma and Egyptian children could not participate in distance learning during the epidemic.



Lack of access to the Internet, electricity and telephone are the main reasons for inability to participate in online classes. The lack of education among a considerable number of parents of Roma and Egyptian children has additionally hindered the distance learning process, especially in situations without an education assistant available.

In this regard, in the coming period of the public policy implementation, it is necessary to emphasize the following:

- Development of programs to encourage greater participation of Roma and Egyptian children in preschool education (especially in regular preschool institutions), in order to enable their social inclusion and overcome possible language and cultural barriers to their participation in primary school education.
- The percentage of dropouts of Roma and Egyptian children is highest after primary education<sup>73</sup>, and then after secondary school completion. In this regard, an individual transition plan for Roma students needs to be developed by each school. By careful monitoring of school achievements, teachers and assistants should identify children at risk of dropping out of school, and upon identification, extra support should be provided to both students and their parents. Thus, the purpose of the plan would be to identify the children's skills and capacities according to which the school team can work with the children at a later stage.
- In order to enable the transition from primary to secondary education level, as well as from secondary to university level of education, it is important to ensure additional support to mentoring and tutoring.
- Ensure that transportation and other resources are provided to children so they can participate in extracurricular activities and social events, such as graduation parties. Promote stories of friendship and good peer socializing practices through conventional and social media.
- Additional actions need to be taken in order to include Roma and Egyptians in university-level education. In addition to the existing measures that include extra points, as well as scholarships,

<sup>73</sup> 2.2% drop out of pre-school education, 11% drop out of primary education. Less than a third complete primary school, whereas 7.4% complete secondary education.

provided to Roma for the enrolment in university, it is necessary to provide mentoring support to Roma students

- Organize a campaign for the inclusion of adults in the programme of elementary functional literacy and the adapted primary school programme for adults, as well as in the programmes of vocational training and education. It is necessary that NGOs that support Roma and Egyptians and R&E representatives organize activities aimed at motivating and supporting adults to get involved in the literacy and primary education programmes for adults, as well as in various forms of vocational training and education.

#### Operational objective and indicators

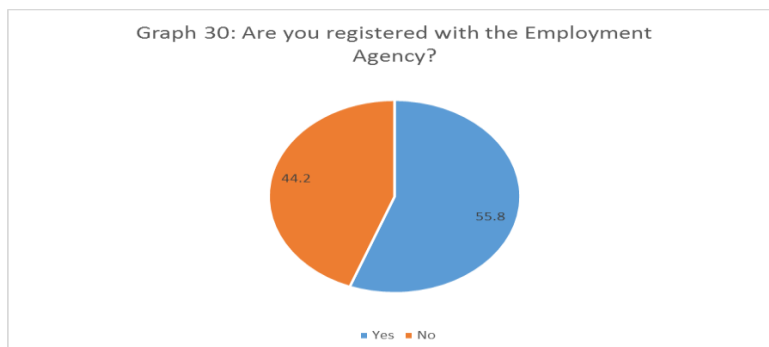
<b>Operational objective 5:</b>	Improve the availability, effectiveness and quality of education for all members of Roma and Egyptian population		
<b>Performance indicator 1:</b> Increase the percentage of Roma and Egyptian children attending early childhood education program	2021  16%	2023  23%	2025  30%
<b>Performance indicator 2:</b> Increase the percentage of members of RE population who have successfully completed primary school education	2021  56%	2023  65%	2025  75%
<b>Performance indicator 3:</b> Increase the percentage of members of RE population who have successfully completed secondary education	2021  3%	2023  10%	2025  20%
<b>Performance indicator 4:</b> Increase the number of members of RE population who enroll in higher education institutions on an annual basis	2021  4  The number of persons who graduated from university last year?	2023  8 annually	2025  15 annually

#### Employment

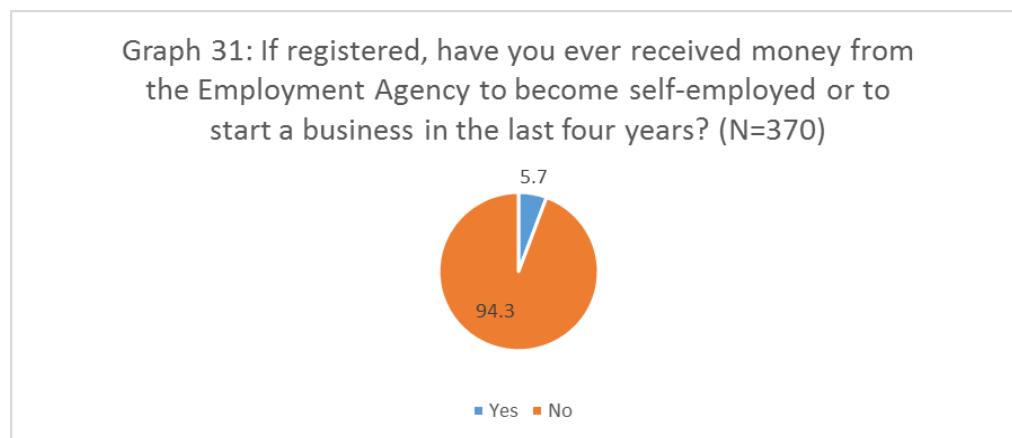
The low employment rate of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro is based on their being unfit to the labour market and its structure which emphasizes skills, knowledge and personal characteristics that most Roma and Egyptians lack. The records of the Employment Agency of Montenegro yearly comprise about 800 people who declare themselves members of Roma and Egyptian population on average. Among them, the number of women is about 55%. The participation of Roma and Egyptian

population in the overall unemployment registered is about 1.85%. Over 90% of the registered members of Roma and Egyptian population are persons with no occupation and education.

The DeFacto Consultancy survey<sup>74</sup> has shown that only half of unemployed Roma and Egyptians are registered in the register of unemployed persons at the Employment Agency. Less than one third of those registered persons were not registered as members of Roma or Egyptian communities.



One of the reasons why almost a third of members of Roma and Egyptian population do not register with the Employment Agency as a member of RE population is the fact that a very small number of Roma and Egyptians claim to have received self-employment assistance intended for this population, in the last four years.



The main reasons for the low employment rate of Roma and Egyptians are primarily reflected in the segregation of these groups, where even in the event of a lack of competitiveness of Roma and Egyptians in the labour market other factors such as anti-Gypsyism and employers' discriminatory practices have a decisive impact on their unemployment. As a result of discriminatory practices, Roma and Egyptians, in most cases, have access exclusively to the informal economy and precarious

<sup>74</sup> DeFacto Consultancy and Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority rights, "Socio-economic position of Roma and Egyptians in Monte Negro", 2020, [https://mmp.gov.me/organizacija/OUZ\\_RAE/234675/NOVO-ISTRAZIVANJE-O-SOCIJALNOJ-INTEGRACIJI-ROMA-I-EGIPcANA.html](https://mmp.gov.me/organizacija/OUZ_RAE/234675/NOVO-ISTRAZIVANJE-O-SOCIJALNOJ-INTEGRACIJI-ROMA-I-EGIPcANA.html)

jobs that are very poorly paid. According to the "UNDP WB Regional Roma Survey"<sup>75</sup> from 2017, it has been determined that 61% of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro are engaged in informal jobs, compared to 33% of the majority population represented in the informal economy. The survey "Interethnic Relations and Ethnic Distance in Montenegro"<sup>76</sup>, conducted by CEDEM in 2019, has shown the highest degree of overall ethnic distance towards Roma (0.61), on a scale from 0 to 1, demonstrating a low level of employers' willingness to provide employment and opportunities to work for members of Roma and Egyptian population.

Despite the existing legal framework prohibiting all forms of discrimination based on race or ethnicity, Roma and Egyptians continue to face inadequate implementation of legislation which should ensure the imposition of positive measures regarding their employment. The Act on Employment and Exercising Rights with respect to Unemployment Insurance provides for active employment policy measures, including subsidized employment.<sup>77</sup> However, the fact is that employers in public and private sectors take no significant actions in order to apply an active policy of equal opportunities for Roma and Egyptians.

Istraživanje CEDEM-a "Zapošljavanje Roma i Egipćana u Crnoj Gori"<sup>78</sup>, ukazuje da je jedan od najvećih problema sa kojima se Romi i Egipćani suočavaju upravo nezaposlenost. Podaci ukazuju da je preko 80 % pripadnika ove zajednice nezaposleno, dok je 7 % zaposleno u javnom sektoru, 7 % u privatnom sektoru, dok je 4,1 % samozaposleno. Takođe, u okviru istraživanja CEDEM-a „Oblici, obrasci i stepen diskriminacije u Crnoj Gori – trendovi i analiza” iz 2018. godine<sup>79</sup>, evidentirano je da najveći stepen diskriminacije Roma i Egipćana zastupljen upravo u oblasti zapošljavanja, dok nakon toga slijede tri oblasti u kojima su razlike veoma male, a to su: kultura, obrazovanje i zdravstvena zaštita. The CEDEM research "Employment of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro" <sup>80</sup> has pointed out that unemployment is one of the major problems faced by Roma and Egyptians. The findings have shown that over 80% of members of these communities are unemployed, while 7% of them are employed in the public sector, 7% in the private sector, whereas 4.1% are self-employed. Also, in the research "Forms, patterns and extent of discrimination in Montenegro - trends and analysis" conducted by CEDEM in 2018 <sup>81</sup>, the highest extent of discrimination against Roma and Egyptians was recorded in the field of employment, followed by the three areas with slight differences observed, as follows: culture, education and health care.

The DeFacto Consultancy survey<sup>80</sup> has shown that the majority of members of the Roma and Egyptian communities surveyed are jobless - even 70.7%. However, it is important to point out a positive trend in relation to the surveys from 2016 and 2018, when the percentage was 84.4% and 81.9% respectively. The differences found between men and women are especially statistically

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<sup>75</sup> „UNDP WB Regional Roma Survey”, 2017, <https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/the-position-of-roma-women-and-men-in-the-labour-markets-of-west.html>

<sup>76</sup>CEDEM, "Interethnic Relations and Ethnic Distancing in Montenegro," 2019,

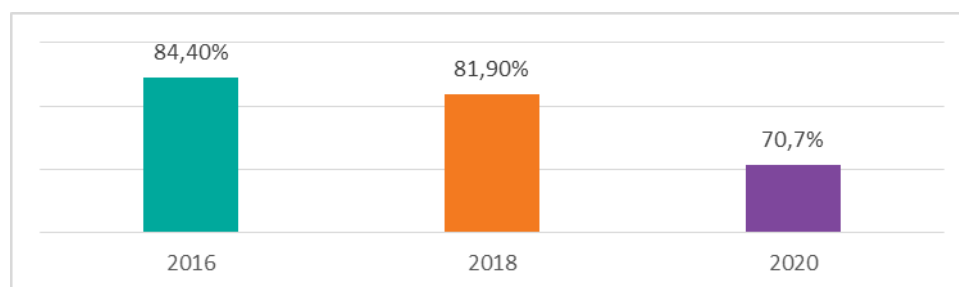
<sup>77</sup> Law on Employment and Exercising Rights with respect to Unemployment Insurance, Official Gazette of Montenegro, no. 14/10, 39/11, 40/11, 45/12, 61/13; 20/15, 52/16.

<sup>78</sup>CEDEM, "Employment of Roma and Egyptians in Monte Negro", 2018,

<sup>79</sup> CEDEM "Forms, patterns and level of discrimination in Monte Negro – trends analysis" from 2018

<sup>80</sup> DeFacto Consultancy and Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority rights, "Socio-economic position of Roma and Egyptians in Monte Negro", 2020 [https://mmp.gov.me/organizacija/OUZ\\_RAE/234675/NOVO-ISTRAZIVANJE-O-SOCIJALNOJ-INTEGRACIJI-ROMA-I-EGIPCANA.html](https://mmp.gov.me/organizacija/OUZ_RAE/234675/NOVO-ISTRAZIVANJE-O-SOCIJALNOJ-INTEGRACIJI-ROMA-I-EGIPCANA.html)

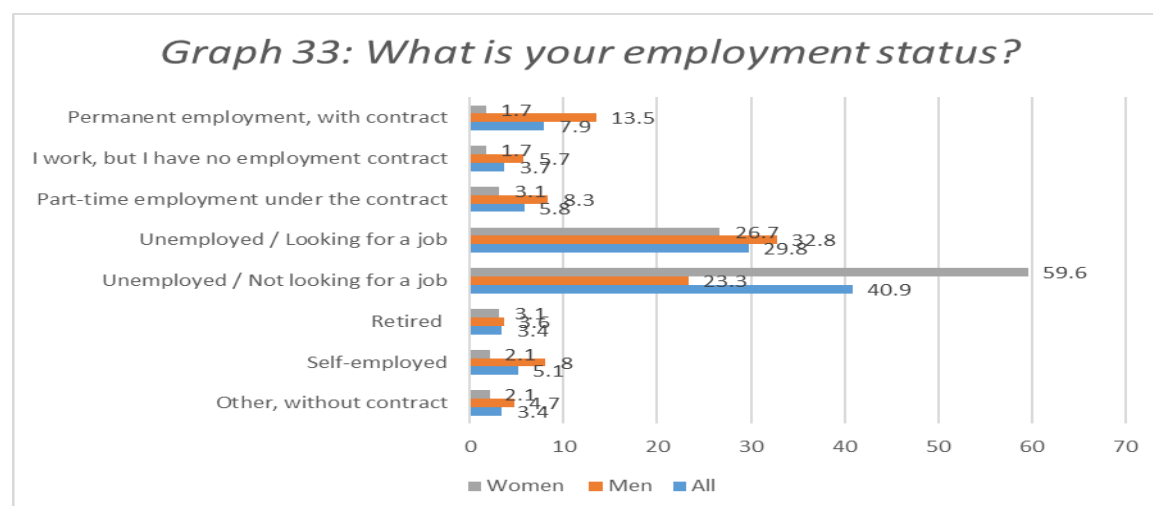
significant. Namely, male employment is significantly higher, and men are also more often included in the active workforce, primarily among job seekers. Those who are unemployed and looking for a job do so for an average of 6-7 years.



Graph 32: Percentage of the unemployed according to the surveys from 2016 to 2020

Although the findings indicate a declining trend in regard to unemployment, the gap between Roma and Egyptians and the majority Montenegrin population still remains large.<sup>81</sup> For the sake of comparison, the data relating to the total population in Montenegro suggest that the unemployment rate was 16.3% in the first quarter of 2020.

Another important indicator in the labour force statistics is the *inactivity rate*<sup>82</sup> which is 43.4% of the total population in Montenegro, and 50.2% among women. The data suggest that the inactivity rate among the Roma and Egyptian population could be equal to (or even lower) than the inactivity rate of the majority population in Montenegro. On the other hand, the inactivity rate among Romani and Egyptian women is significantly higher in comparison to the total female population in Montenegro - 59.6%.



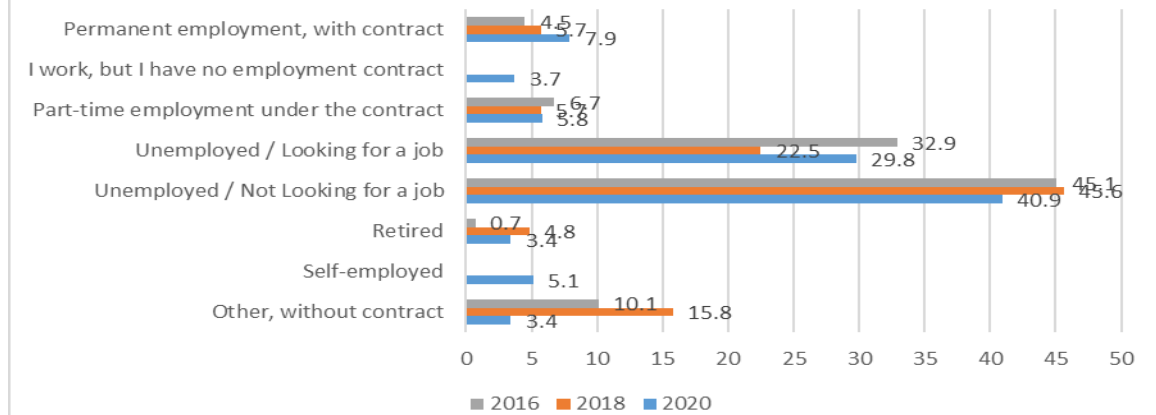
The largest number of employed Roma and Egyptians is represented in the public sector followed by the private sector. In this part, it is important to point out an increase in the percentage of Roma and Egyptian employed in the public sector and an increase in the number of employees who have established permanent employment relationships in the previous four years.

<sup>81</sup> Monstat Statistical Office, <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=1762&pageid=22>. Although, due to different calculation methodology, data are not directly comparable, they can be used as framework indicator of differences between Roma and the majority populations in Montenegro.

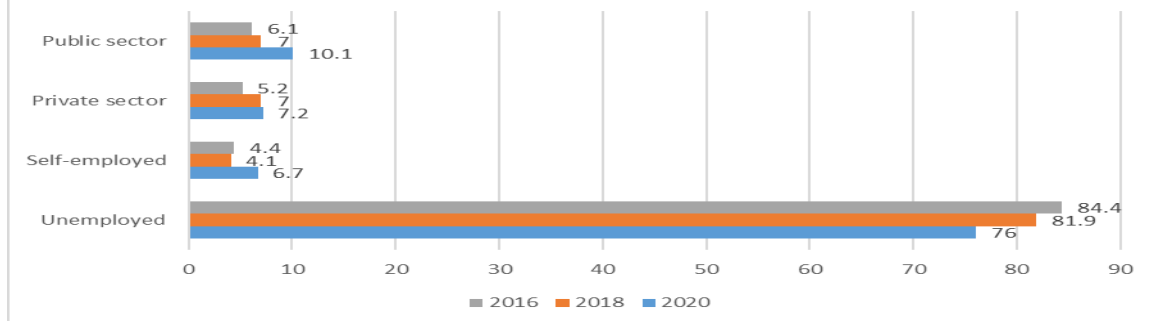
<sup>82</sup> Inactivity rate represents the proportion of population of the age of 15 and older who are unemployed and not looking for a job in the total population of the same age.



**Graph 34: Employment comparison in relation to the 2016, 2018 and 2020 surveys**

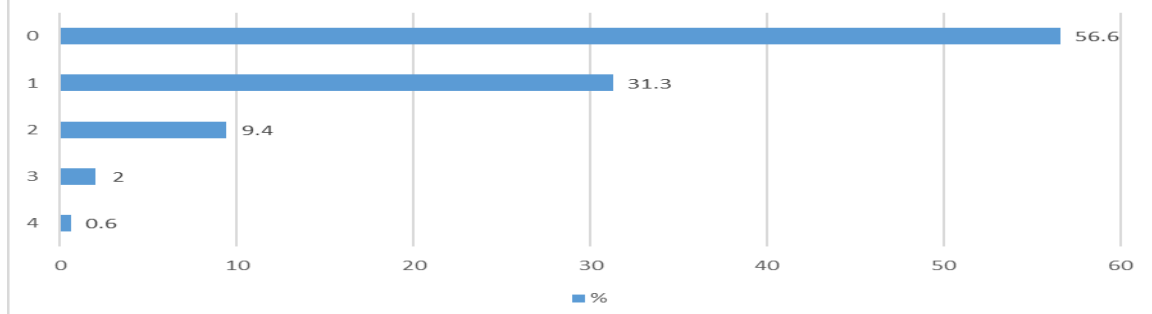


**Graph 35: Sector in which the person is employed**

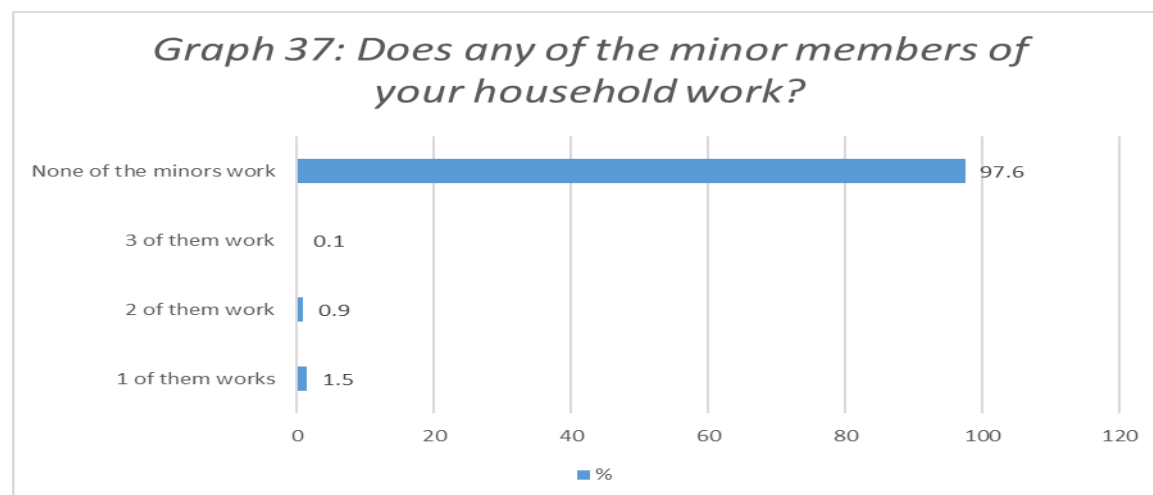


In most households (even 56.6%) none of the household member is employed, while in 31.3% of households only one member works. If we take into account that the average number of household members in the Roma and Egyptian communities is 5.5, it can be stated that there is a high burden placed on one salary.

**Graph 36: How many members of your household work?**



A serious problem faced by Roma and Egyptians is child employment i.e., the existence of child labour and begging.<sup>83</sup> Most parents of Roma and Egyptian children claim that minors in their households do not work. However, a number of respondents admit that there are minors in their household who are employed.

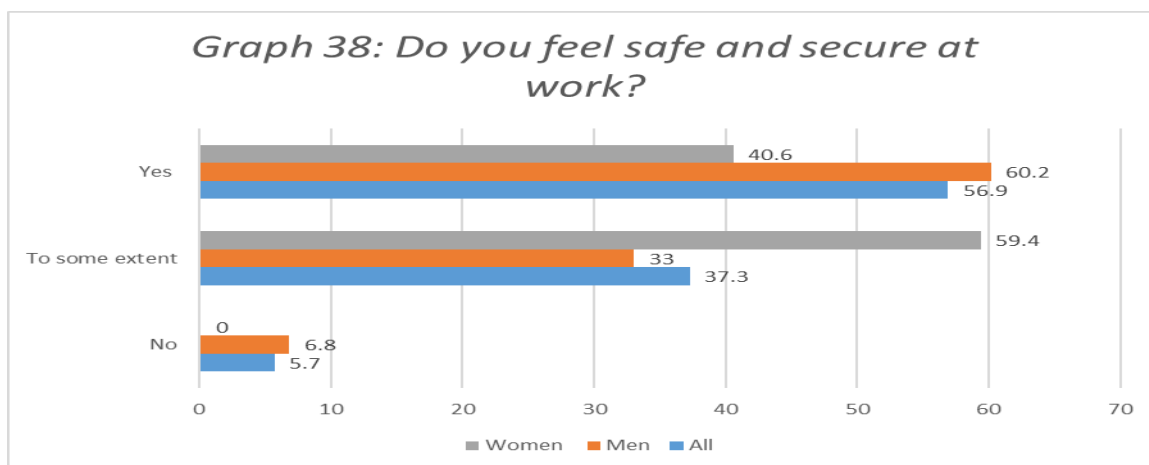


The MICS 6 2018 survey has shown that almost no child in Roma and Egyptian communities is engaged in household chores for the number of hours that would be classified as child labour (1% of children aged 5-11 and no children aged 12-14 work more than 28 hours, while 2% of children aged 15-17 work more than 43 hours). Also, 10% of children in Roma settlements aged 5-17 have been involved in child labour. 7% of children aged 5-7 work in hazardous conditions. Male children in Roma settlements are more involved in child labour than female children (14% i 7%)<sup>84</sup>

Regarding the level of safety and security in the workplace, the DeFact survey has shown that most Roma and Egyptians believe that they are adequately protected by their employers. However, 33.7% of Roma and Egyptians feel safe only to a certain extent, and 5.7% claim they do not feel safe at all.

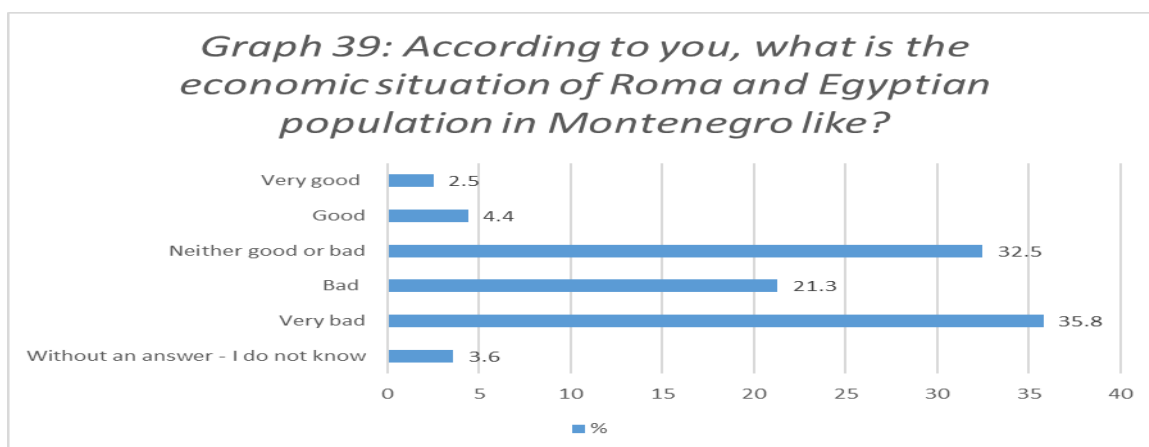
<sup>83</sup>Definition of child labour - Age 5-11 years: a minimum of 1 hour of economic work, 28 hours of unpaid services in a household on a weekly basis or hazardous working conditions. Age 12-14 years: a minimum of 14 hours of economic work, 28 hours of unpaid services in a household on a weekly basis or hazardous working conditions. Age 15-17 years: a minimum of 43 hours of economic work or unpaid services in a household on a weekly basis or hazardous working conditions.

<sup>84</sup> MICS 6 2018, [https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/sites/unicef.org.montenegro/files/2019-07/MNE\\_MICS6%20Statisti%C4%8Dki%20pregled%20Dje%C4%8Dji%20rad\\_Romska%20naselja%20u%20Crnoj%20Gori%202018..pdf](https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/sites/unicef.org.montenegro/files/2019-07/MNE_MICS6%20Statisti%C4%8Dki%20pregled%20Dje%C4%8Dji%20rad_Romska%20naselja%20u%20Crnoj%20Gori%202018..pdf)



The differences found between men and women in this regard are statistically significant. The percentage of women who say they feel safe and secure at work is lower than the percentage of men who claim the same. Roma and Egyptians have listed discrimination and nationalism, bosses who punish them, lack of occupational safety and protection, lack of insurance and unreported employment as the reasons for not feeling protected.

Regarding the assessment of the economic situation of Roma and Egyptian population in Montenegro, the majority of Roma and Egyptians claim that it is bad or even very bad (57.1%).



In the next period of the public policy implementation, the primary emphasis will be placed on the following:

- Strengthening cooperation among all institutions of relevance for the employment of the Roma and Egyptian populations, primarily through the application of existing legal mechanisms for cooperation between centers for social work and employment agencies. Namely, the Center for Social Work is obliged to submit to the Employment Agency a notification on the recognized right to financial support provided to the unemployed able-bodied beneficiary, within eight days from the date of adopting the decision on the recognition of the right. On the other hand, the Agency is obliged to notify the Center for Social Work within eight days from the day of finding out whether the beneficiary of financial support is employed, or refuses the offered employment or professional training, reskilling or upskilling. To this end, the legal framework

also defines the procedure for activating employable persons who receive financial support granted by the Law on Social and Child Protection.

- Ensuring the inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in the labour market through the funding of grant schemes to encourage employment. These schemes motivate employers to organize professional training programs for persons with no qualifications to acquire their first professional qualifications, to develop training and education, and to provide employment.
- Collection and sale of secondary raw materials is one of the main income sources for the Roma and Egyptian populations. The vast majority of collectors have not completed primary education and this type of work poses a continuous risk of injuries and illnesses to them, without any possibility to enjoy the rights provided by positive legislation. It also affects their families who are usually involved in the business and move from one site to another. Children often follow their parents, which leads to dropouts or inconsistent school attendance. This job also involves the accumulation of materials in the place of accommodation and the whole family is constantly exposed to heavy metals and other harmful substances. In the coming period, it is necessary to continue the process of standardization of this profession and the development of comprehensive measures to regulate their working conditions, protection, safety, transport, purchase of materials and storage of potentially harmful ones.

#### Operational objective and indicators

<b>Operational objective 6:</b>	Provide access to quality and sustainable employment for members of RE population		
<b>Performance indicator 1:</b> Reduce the unemployment rate of Roma and Egyptians	2021 70.7%	2023 65%	2025 60.7%
<b>Performance indicator 2:</b> Increase the percentage of Roma and Egyptians employed in the public sector	2021 10.1%	2023 11%	2025 12%
<b>Performance indicator 3:</b> Reduce the percentage of Roma and Egyptians employed in the informal sector	2021 61% <sup>85</sup>	2023 59%	2025 55%
<b>Performance indicator 4:</b> Reduce the inactivity rate of Romani and Egyptian women	2021 59.6%	2023 52%	2025 45%

#### Health

Citizens of the Roma and Egyptian communities encounter numerous obstacles to accessing the health care system, such as lack of information and knowledge, language and financial barriers, unregistered residence and discrimination. The health care system of Montenegro is designed according to the principle of providing free health care to all categories of the population, with the health care system having built-in mechanisms to help and support socially marginalized groups. However, the fact that the health care system is insufficiently used suggests that a considerable number of Roma and Egyptians are excluded from many forms of public services provided by health

<sup>85</sup> Data for 2017

care institutions, and their access to health care services is limited by various system barriers such as inadequate education and lack of information on available health care. With regard to financial barriers, it should be noted that, despite the significant advancement, not all members of the Roma and Egyptian communities have been provided with health insurance yet. As a direct consequence, there is a low-level access to health care system services - the poor face even greater barriers with respect to their access to health services in the environment where various forms of discrimination are prevalent.

It is important to point out that healthcare institutions in Montenegro treat all citizens as "beneficiaries of the health care system". More precisely, the health care system of Montenegro makes no differences by ethnicity, and health care is equally available to all citizens of Montenegro, including members of the Roma and Egyptian populations. Given that statistical data are not disaggregated by ethnicity, it is not possible to follow target policy measures for Roma and Egyptians. For a group of people who are still in the process of obtaining documents to regulate their legal status, institutions resolve cases ad-hoc. Lack of access to ID cards greatly affects the chances of obtaining health insurance by which this group is put in a very difficult position.

In exercising their right to health care, Roma and Egyptians may face direct and indirect discrimination<sup>86</sup>. Direct discrimination is usually demonstrated in situations where a health worker refuses to provide assistance to a person of Roma or Egyptian descent. This type of discrimination is related to both verbal violence and degrading treatment. Indirect discrimination against Roma and Egyptians is reflected in legal barriers due to which some of the most socially endangered Roma and Egyptians do not have access to health care because of lack of personal documents, lack of registration of residence, and lack of entry in the register of births and the register of citizens.

Article 5 of the Law on Health Care<sup>87</sup> clearly stipulates that when exercising the right to health care, all citizens are equal regardless of their nationality, race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, language, religion, education, social origin, property status and other personal characteristics. However, the CEDEM<sup>88</sup> research has shown that the greatest extent of discrimination in health care is against Roma and Egyptians, followed by people with disabilities and the elderly<sup>89</sup>

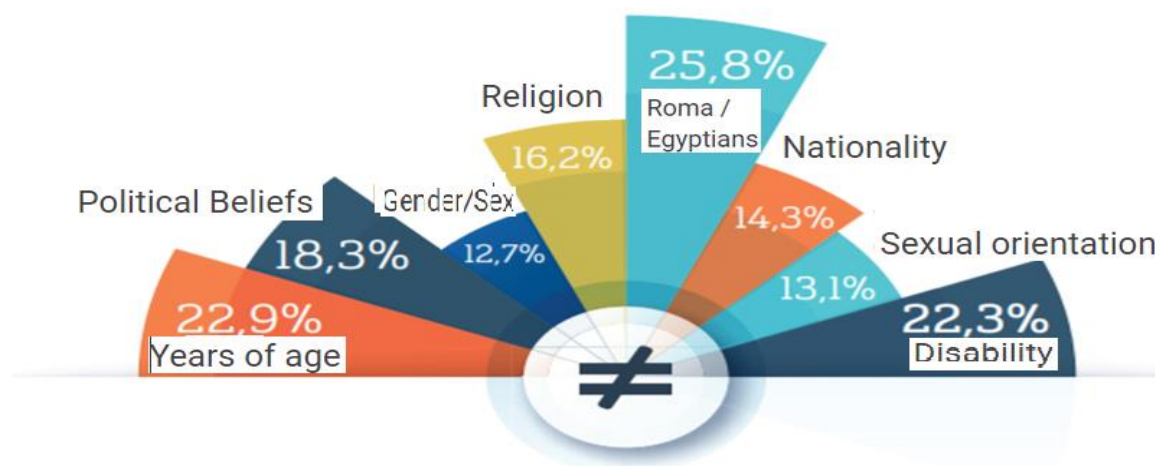
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<sup>86</sup>One of the key principles on which the provision of social and child care is based is the principle of non-discrimination i.e. prohibition of discrimination of beneficiaries according to race, gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, social origin, sexual orientation, religion, political, union or other affiliation, property status, culture, language, disability, affiliation to a social group or other personal characteristic when exercising the right to health care.

<sup>87</sup> Član 5 Zakona o zdravstvenoj zaštiti, Sl. list CG", br. 3/2016, 39/2016, 2/2017, 44/2018, 24/2019 - dr. zakoni i 82/2020

<sup>88</sup> NGO "Center for Democracy and Human Rights"

<sup>89</sup> Patterns and extent of discrimination in Montenegro, CEDEM, <https://www.cedem.me/publikacije/istrazivanja/ostala-istrazivanja/send/31-ostala-istrazivanja/1980-obraci-i-stepen-diskriminacije-u-crnoj-gori-u-2020-godini>



Graph 40

The vulnerability of Roma and Egyptians is also present on several other grounds due to which focus should be placed on prevention and specific healthcare needs of this population, when carrying out medical activities.<sup>90</sup> One of the dimensions of quality of life of each individual is the quality of health, and the imperative of society is the improvement of health care. The basic parameters indicating the worse health status of Roma and Egyptians respective to the majority population are expressed by shortened life expectancy, presence of infectious and other preventable diseases, lack of use or insufficient use of primary health care services, insufficient use of extensive medical examinations and prevention programs. The health status of the Roma and Egyptian populations requires greater care provided by public health services in terms of preventive and systematic measures, which are in some segments completely unnecessary in regard to the majority population. Added to this is essential i.e., primary health care, which is equally needed by everyone, but not physically and economically accessible equally for all, in which case solidarity and appropriate protection measures should also be taken.

The right of Roma and Egyptians to have access to health care<sup>91</sup> is based on the following three basic postulates:

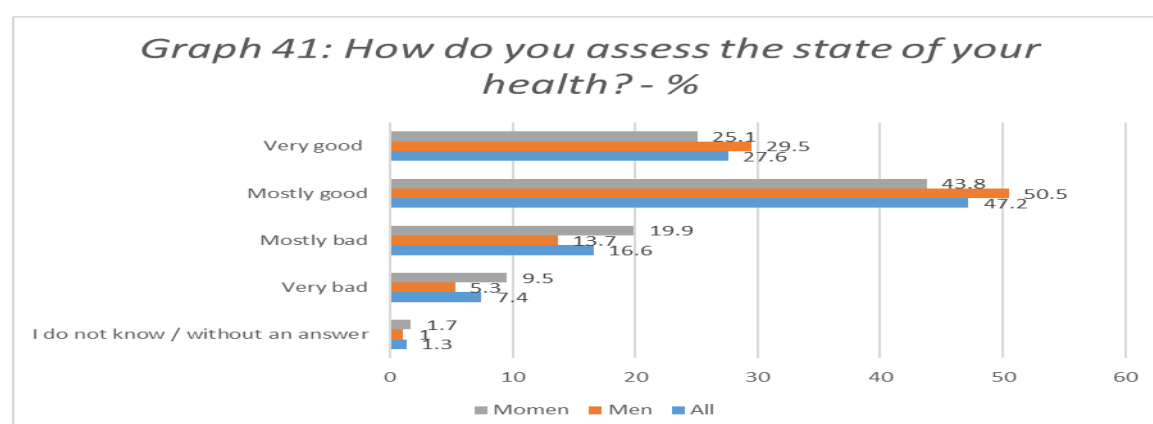
- The state shall provide all the necessary conditions for the enjoyment of the right to health to all members of Roma and Egyptian population.
- The state shall protect Roma and Egyptians from discrimination in the health care provision by third parties.
- Roma and Egyptians have the right to participate in planning as well as in monitoring measures related to their health.

<sup>90</sup> See MICS 6 2018 survey, in regard to the health of mothers and new-borns, [https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/sites/unicef.org.montenegro/files/2019-12/MNE\\_MICS6%20Statistic%CC%8Cki%20pregled%20Zdravlje%20maijke%20i%20novoro%C4%91enc%CC%8Ceta%20MNE\\_Romska%20naselja%20u%20Crnoj%20Gori%202018\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/sites/unicef.org.montenegro/files/2019-12/MNE_MICS6%20Statistic%CC%8Cki%20pregled%20Zdravlje%20maijke%20i%20novoro%C4%91enc%CC%8Ceta%20MNE_Romska%20naselja%20u%20Crnoj%20Gori%202018_FINAL.pdf)

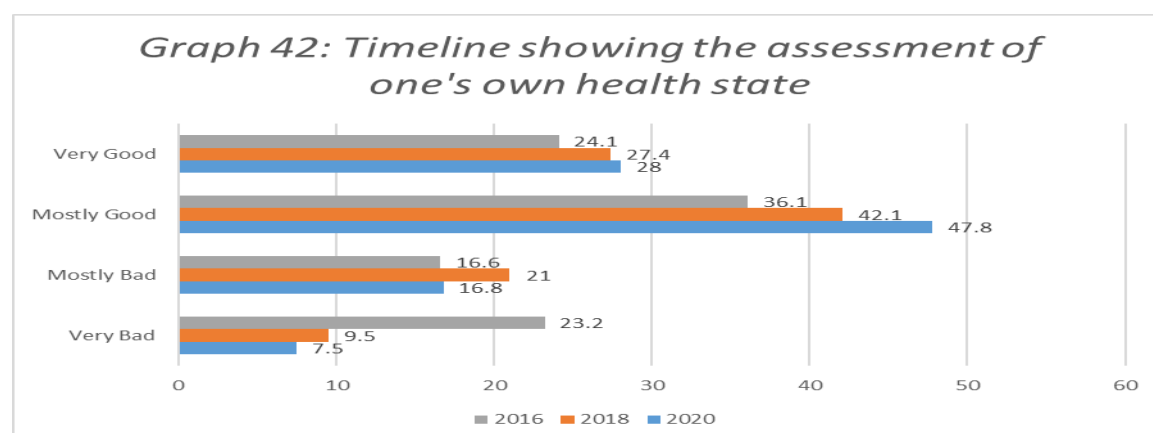
<sup>91</sup> European Charter on Patients' Rights specifies the fourteen patients' rights that should be protected. within the second right - right to access - it is noted, inter alia, that "healthcare services must guarantee equal access to everyone, without discrimination based on financial resources, residence, type of disease or time of accessing the service." Financial need cannot justify the denial of patients' rights or compromising them. For this reason, international acts and national laws as well, incorporate the provisions emphasizing the need for distribution of healthcare resources and technology that ensure accessibility to overall population.

[https://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_overview/co\\_operation/mobility/docs/health\\_services\\_co108\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/co_operation/mobility/docs/health_services_co108_en.pdf)

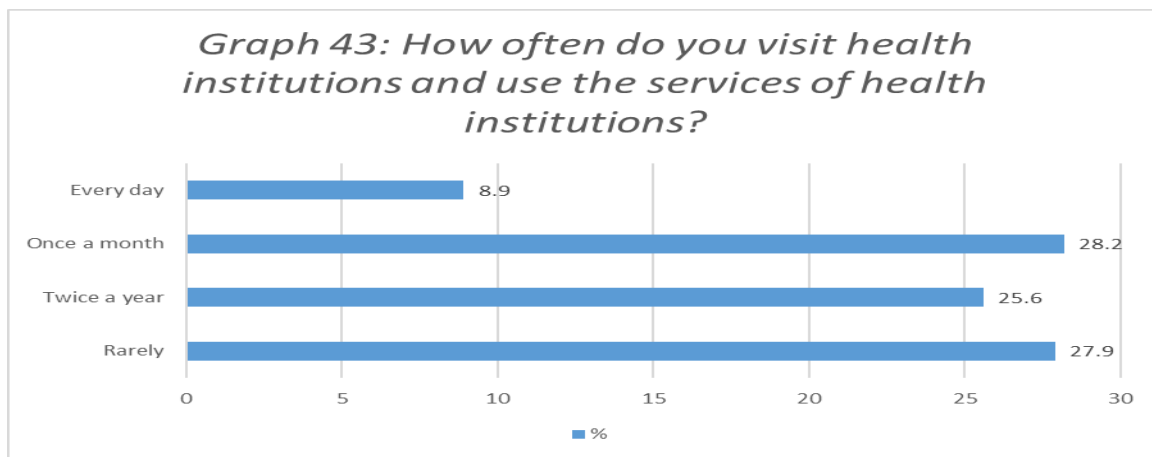
Regarding the general assessment of the health status of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro, the survey conducted by the DeFacto Consultancy Agency has shown that the majority of Roma and Egyptians believe that it is very or mostly good. However, the differences between men and women are found to be more significant i.e., women's assessment of their own health status is on average more negative than men's evaluation.



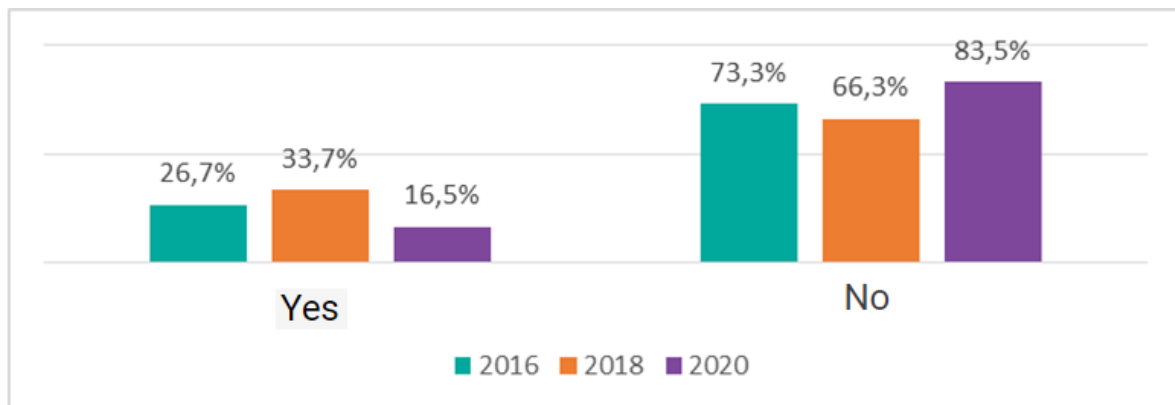
It is especially important to point out a gradual increase in the percentage of Roma and Egyptians who assess their health status as good or very good, which clearly shows that the actions taken in the previous period, in order to improve the health status of Roma and Egyptians, are efficient and yield results.



However, there has been a problem recorded with respect to the frequency of using healthcare services, with almost a third of Roma and Egyptians rarely using this type of services. Those who do not visit a doctor have specified their good health as the reason lying behind it, however, a certain number of Roma and Egyptians have listed health workers being impolite and inaccessible and lack of necessary personal documents required for visiting a doctor as reasons therefor.

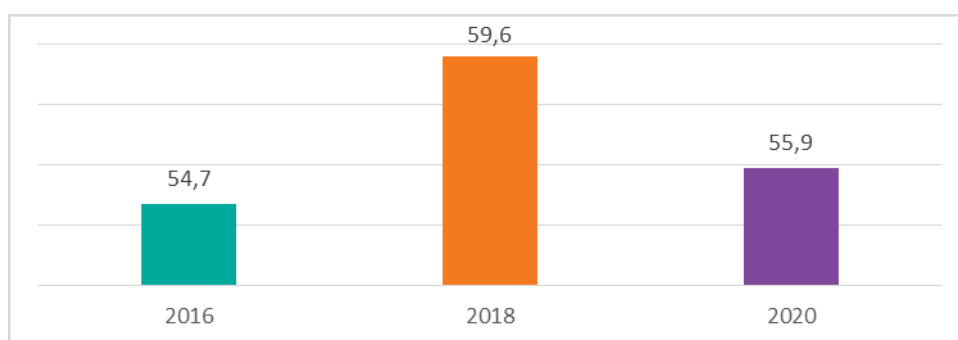


The data show that 16.5% of Roma and Egyptians claim that at least one person with a severe health condition or disability lives in their family.



Graph 44: Is there a person with a severe health condition and/or a person with a disability living in your family?

In regard to average life expectancy, the survey has shown that the average age of Roma and Egyptians is 55.9 years.<sup>92</sup>

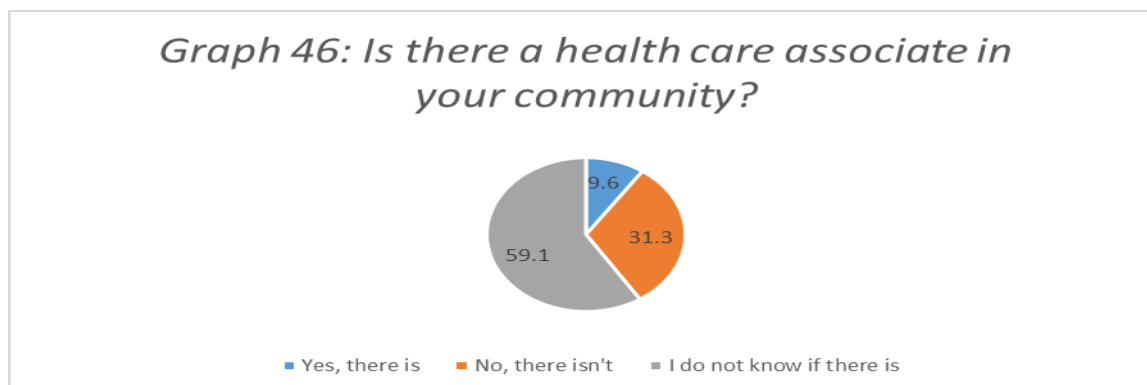


Graph 45: Timeline showing average age at the time of death in the Roma and Egyptian communities

<sup>92</sup>Even if not trustworthy act of measurement, and thereby not directly comparable, life expectancy in Montenegro can be used as a reference framework. Namely, according to the projections of Monstat Statistical Office (2019), life expectancy for women is 79.5 years and 74 years for men. Source: [monstat.org/userfiles/file/demografija/procjene%20stanovnistva/2019/n/procjene%20stanovnistva%20i%20osnovni%20demografski%20indikator%20-%202019.pdf](https://monstat.org/userfiles/file/demografija/procjene%20stanovnistva/2019/n/procjene%20stanovnistva%20i%20osnovni%20demografski%20indikator%20-%202019.pdf)



It is important to point out a small percentage (10%) of Roma and Egyptians who are familiar with that there is a healthcare associate for the social inclusion of Roma and Egyptians in their community. Those informed about it generally find it very beneficial or beneficial to a certain extent (57.6%), whereby only a fifth of Roma and Egyptians have used the services of healthcare associates.



*Graph 46: Is there a health care associate in your community?*

In regard to the previous cooperation with associates, the survey has shown that it primarily refers to providing help with free medical examinations and getting medicines, assistance in extending the validity of health insurance cards and scheduling of medical examinations, as well as to translation services when receiving medical aid, in the cases when Roma and Egyptians could not speak the language.

Taking into account the above data, the following key problems in the field of health care have been identified:

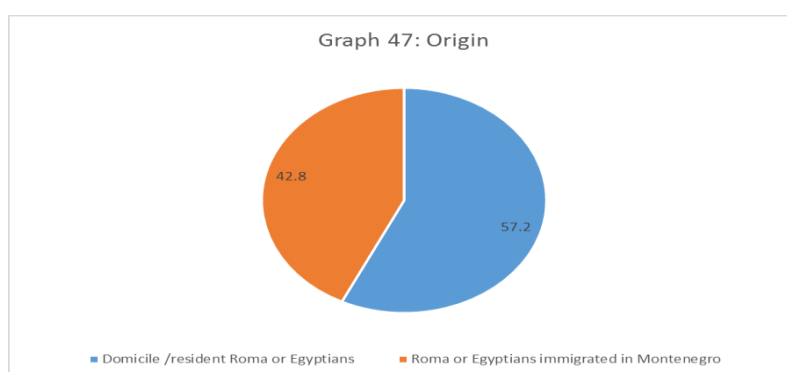
- A significant portion of the Roma and Egyptian populations do not have access to health care and health insurance. The reasons for the existence of this problem are reflected in the fact that a large number of Roma and Egyptians do not have a legal status regulated, therefore, they are unable to use benefits of the health system of Montenegro.
- The issue of direct and indirect discrimination faced by Roma and Egyptians when using the health care system services, which results in a number of members of these populations being unwilling to use the services of the system.
- A large number of Roma and Egyptians are not informed about their rights and opportunities to receive health care. Lack of knowledge regarding the manner in which the health care system functions i.e., the procedures and steps that need to be taken in order to acquire the right to use the services of the health care system.
- The average life expectancy of Roma and Egyptians is significantly shorter than the average life expectancy of the majority population. The inability to enjoy the same level of health care that is provided to members of the majority population is undoubtedly one of the reasons that affect the existence of this problem. In addition, a serious problem is reflected in the lack of available data on the health situation of Roma and Egyptian children and infant mortality rate, therefore, it is necessary to pay special attention to the collection of these data.
- Due to inadequate levels of education and other factors of deprivation, members of the Roma and Egyptian populations do not have sufficiently developed awareness of the importance to safeguard human health and of all the actions that need to be taken to improve it.

<b>Operational objective 7:</b>	Improve health care of RE population and increase equal access to quality health care system and social services		
<b>Performance indicator 1:</b> Increase the average life expectancy of members of RE population	2021  55.9 years	2023  57.4 years	2025  58.9 years
<b>Performance indicator 2:</b> Reduce the extent of discrimination faced by members of RE population in accessing services of the health care system	2021  25.8%	2023  22%	2025  20%

### Civil status and personal documents

One of the most pronounced problems faced by Roma and Egyptians is the fact that a certain number of citizens of these populations belong to the category of "legally invisible" persons i.e., the category of persons who are not recognized as legal subjects since they are not registered in the registers of births, they have no registered citizenship and lack other personal identification documents which is necessary for the normal functioning and organization of life. The lack of personal documents and the impossibility of legal registration result in the inability of members of the Roma and Egyptian populations in Montenegro to access the labour market, education system, or to exercise the right to social protection and health care, etc. This fact affects a higher level of marginalization of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegrin society, whereby out-of-hospital births and the fact that a significant number of Roma and Egyptians are internally displaced persons are specified as the main reasons for the lack of personal documents.

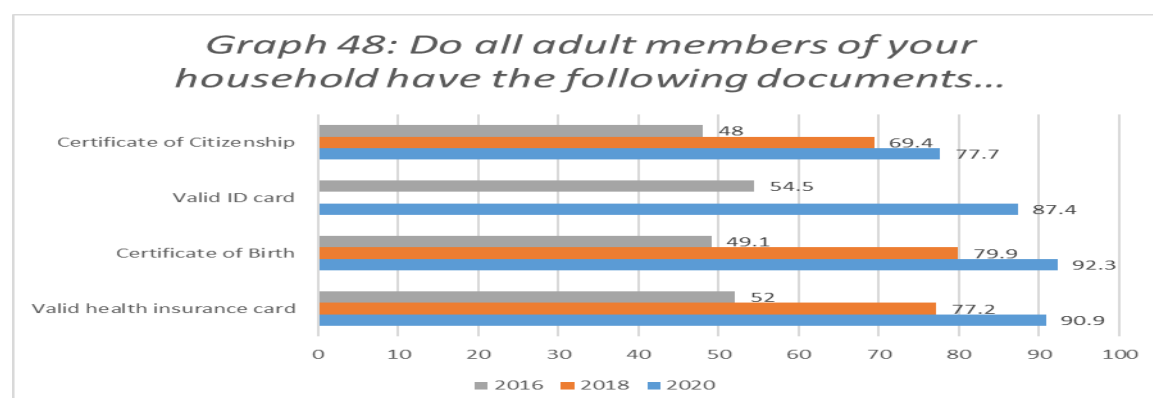
According to the DeFact survey, the structure of Roma and Egyptian population in Montenegro is such that slightly more than half of Roma and Egyptians claim to belong to the so-called domicile or resident Roma and Egyptians, while 42.8% of them claim to have immigrated to Montenegro<sup>93</sup>.



The survey has indicated that approximately 10% of Roma and Egyptians currently in Montenegro have no personal documents, which clearly identifies a growing tendency of the legal status

<sup>93</sup> 14% of respondents answered in the affirmative to the question whether any of the household members have returned from abroad in the last 12 months, which indicates a relatively high mobility of this population.

regulating in comparison to the previous period of the public policy implementation. The major shortcoming has been registered in respect to holding Montenegrin citizenship, but significant advances have been made in this segment in relation to the previous period. As reasons why they have no certificates of citizenship, Roma and Egyptians most often specify lengthy procedures for resolving this issue and lack of necessary documentation, given that most Roma and Egyptians who have immigrated from Kosovo to Montenegro have no valid documents. In this regard, it is important to point out the impossibility of these persons to return to their places of origin, the lack of financial resources to resolve their legal status and other reasons that affect this issue.



Regarding the issue of birth certificate possession, it has been recorded that 5.7% of Roma and Egyptians do not have this type of certificate. In this regard, it is important to point out that 90.9% of Roma and Egyptians hold a valid (extended) health insurance card, compared to 7% who have no health insurance cards. The MICS 6 2018 survey has shown that the majority of Roma and Egyptian children are registered in the register of births, however, there are still a number of children who have not been registered yet. According to these data, 96% of children from Roma settlements in Montenegro under the age of five have been registered in the register of births. This number includes 4% of children who have been registered with the competent state authorities, but they do not possess a birth certificate. Almost all children aged 5-17 (99%) have been registered in the register of births. This number includes 4% of children who have been registered with the competent state authorities, but they do not possess a birth certificate. Children under the age of 5 living in the north (12%) whose mothers have no or primary education (4%) and children living in households from the poorest quintile (8%) are most likely to be registered, but without possessing birth certificates. All children under the age of five from the richest quintile have been registered, respective to 94% of children belonging to the poorest quintile. Two percent of registered children from the richest quintile do not possess a birth certificate, compared to 8% of children from the poorest quintile.<sup>94</sup>

In addition to being inadequately informed about the procedures for obtaining personal documents, the main reasons for not possessing personal documents include the fact that a significant number of Roma and Egyptians possess refugee cards only. The primary issue concerns unregistered Roma and Egyptians who are internally displaced persons, as their registers of births disappeared during

<sup>94</sup> MICS 6 2018, "Montenegro Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey - Roma Settlements 2018", MICS, [https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/sites/unicef.org.montenegro/files/2019-12/MNE\\_MICS6%20Statisti%C4%8Dki%20pregled%20Registar%20ro%C4%91enih%20MNE\\_Romska%20naselja%20u%20Crnoj%20Gori%202018\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/sites/unicef.org.montenegro/files/2019-12/MNE_MICS6%20Statisti%C4%8Dki%20pregled%20Registar%20ro%C4%91enih%20MNE_Romska%20naselja%20u%20Crnoj%20Gori%202018_FINAL.pdf)

the Kosovo conflict in 1999, when a great emigration of Roma and Egyptians to Montenegro occurred. In order to resolve these and similar issues, in 2013 the Government of Montenegro and the Government of the Republic of Kosovo signed the Agreement on subsequent registration of internally displaced persons from Kosovo residing in Montenegro in the primary registers (of births, marriages and deaths) and in the register of citizens of the Republic of Kosovo. With regard to resolution of this issue, the Ministry of the Interior of Montenegro shall decide on the applications for acquiring citizenship in accordance with the Law on General Administrative Procedure<sup>95</sup> and the Law on Montenegrin Citizenship<sup>96</sup>, which prescribe procedures for correct and complete establishment of all facts relevant to lawful conduct in a specific administrative matter. With the adoption of the Law on Foreigners in 2018<sup>97</sup>, the procedure for determining the status of stateless persons and issuing travel documents to stateless persons was regulated, in accordance with the recommendations of the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro. In his annual report for 2017, the Protector pointed out the need for more precise standardization of conditions, manner and procedure for determining the status of stateless persons (Law on Foreigners or other special law), change and termination of these persons' status and rights and obligations, in accordance with the Constitution of Montenegro and the Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons. The Protector also pointed out in the Report that, according to the information received from the UNHCR office in Montenegro, there are 516 children without any status, who were born in Montenegro and who have been living in Montenegro for a long time with no regulated residence. In addition, there is lack of developed system of monitoring registered births in Montenegro i.e., a system that directly connects birth certificates with the process of acquiring legal/civil status. In this regard, in the coming period, special emphasis should be placed on developing an IT system that would contain a database and perform direct comparison of the birth certificate database and the data on new-borns who have acquired civil status.

One of the problems is that a significant number of Roma and Egyptians who possess temporary documentation do not register their children to acquire civil status, which especially applies to displaced persons coming from Kosovo who are obliged to resolve their status in their country of residence. These procedures require the allocation of significant funds due to which these people usually decide not to register their children. It is further stated that there is a problem of regulating permanent residence permits in Montenegro of minor children, of parents from the former Yugoslav republics, who have not acquired the status of foreigners with permanent residency due to the lack of personal documents from the country of origin. In connection with the aforementioned, the Protector recommends the continuation of activities related to the registration of children in the register of births for the purpose of protection against statelessness.<sup>98</sup>

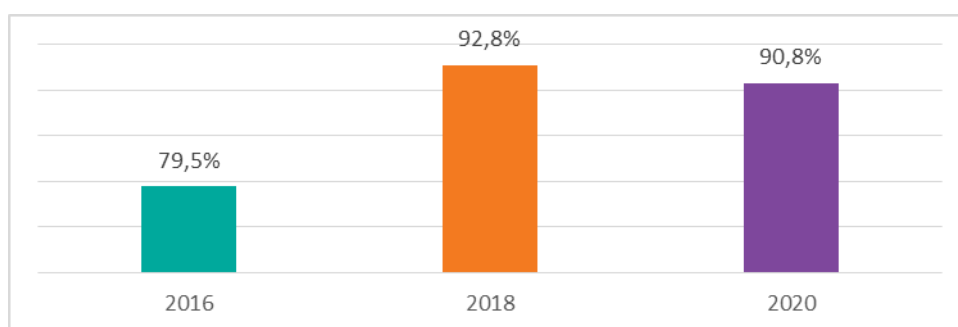
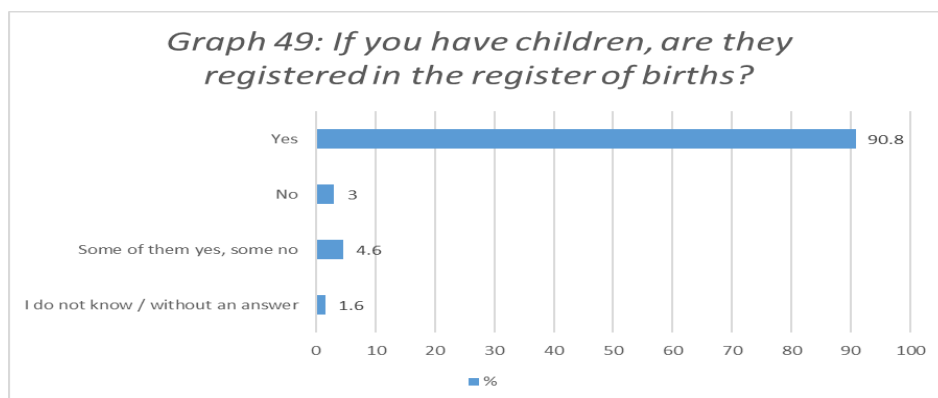
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<sup>95</sup> Law on Administrative Procedure, "Official Gazette of Montenegro," no.56/2014, 20/2015, 40/2016,37/2017

<sup>96</sup> Law on Montenegrin Citizenship, "Official Gazette of Montenegro," no.13/2008, 40/2010, 28/2011, 46/2011 and 20/2014, 54/2016,79/2019

<sup>97</sup> Law on Foreigners, "Official Gazette of Montenegro," no. 12/2018

<sup>98</sup> Ombudsman report for 2017, [http://www.ombudsman.co.me/docs/1522665383\\_final-izvjestaj-za-2017.pdf](http://www.ombudsman.co.me/docs/1522665383_final-izvjestaj-za-2017.pdf)



*Graph 50: Timeline showing the percentage of children registered in the register of births*

When it comes to possessing a valid ID card and a birth certificate, there are no statistically significant differences found between the Roma and Egyptians who identify as residents and those who are recently arrived immigrants. On the other hand, when it comes to a valid health insurance card (97.9% of residing Roma and Egyptians and 93% of immigrants claim to possess it), when it comes to registration of children in birth registers (97.7% of residing Roma and Egyptians and 92.1% of immigrants claim that their children have been registered), while regarding a certificate of citizenship (88.2% of residing Roma and Egyptians claim to possess it and 79.6% of immigrants state so).

In order to resolve the issue of the legal status of Roma and Egyptians, in the coming period of the policy implementation, a primary focus will be placed on the following:

- Continuing the implementation of simplified procedures for obtaining personal documents in order to increase the level of registration and to resolve the legal status of members of the Roma and Egyptian populations, with special emphasis on resolving the legal status of children.
- Strengthening the capacity of the competent state authorities for the implementation of procedures, primarily of registration in the register of births, as well as of the procedure for determining the status of stateless persons.
- Harmonization of national legislation and administrative procedures in order to ensure effective access to rights for persons recognized as having the status of stateless persons.
- Strengthening cooperation with the countries of origin of persons with unsettled legal status, primarily with the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Kosovo, in order to enhance the registration procedures in these countries, regarding persons living in Montenegro.
- Assistance in obtaining personal documents which is reflected in increasing the level of informing and mobilizing Roma and Egyptians with respect to obtaining personal

documentation. It is also necessary to provide financial support to the Roma and Egyptian communities required for the issuance of personal documents.

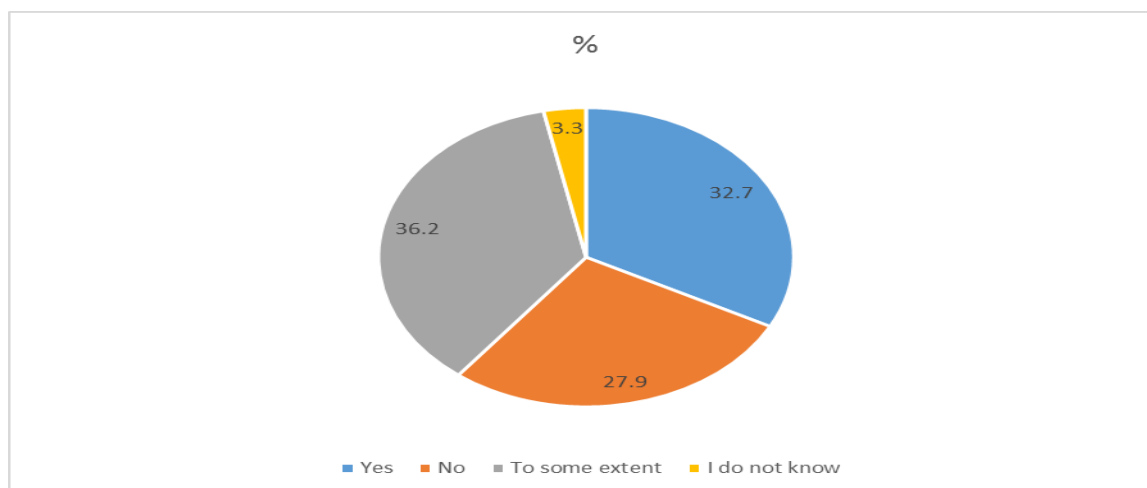
<b>Operational objective 8:</b>	Improving the situation of RE population by resolving the issue of their civil status and possession of personal documents		
<b>Performance indicator 1:</b> Reduce the percentage of RE population who do not possess personal documents	2021  10%	2023  5%	2025  0%
<b>Performance indicator 2:</b> Ensure that all Roma and Egyptians are registered in the registers of births	2021  5.7% of Roma and Egyptians do not possess a birth certificate	2023  3% of Roma and Egyptians do not possess a birth certificate from the register of births	2025  0%

## COVID-19

The COVID-19 epidemic has shown how vulnerable the Roma and Egyptian communities are to a sudden crisis. The report on the rapid assessment of the social impact of the epidemic COVID-19<sup>99</sup> has indicated that it is primarily a population living in settlements where it is very difficult to maintain hygiene, a population suffering from various chronic diseases that shorten their overall life expectancy and make them a group at a special risk of serious complications of COVID-19. They lack food and resources to provide supplies needed for a longer period of isolation, they are susceptible to various forms of misinformation and unable to perform regular tasks. A number of other vulnerabilities can be added to this list. For example, with only 54.2% of households having Internet access and only 15% of them having a computer at home, online education is not available to many Roma and Egyptian children, which further increases the risk of their exclusion from the education system and the community. The survey findings point out serious obstacles that Roma and Egyptian refugee communities face in regard to their participation in distance learning programs, whereby they are being neglected and deprived from education. This is especially true for refugee children, among whom 45.45% do not have a TV or a tablet, nor access to the Internet, which prevents them from gaining access to education.

Numerous Roma and Egyptian families have suffered significant or complete loss of income. By the rapid assessment of social impact, it has been determined that many members of the Roma community have been affected severely by the epidemic. Most members of the Roma and Egyptian communities managed to earn significantly reduced income or suffered complete loss of income. Many Roma and Egyptians face the inability to pay bills. The survey conducted by DeFacto has found that 68.9% of Roma and Egyptians claim to have lost all or part of their sources of income during the epidemic.

<sup>99</sup>Survey Report can be found at [https://montenegro.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Izveštaj o brzoi procjeni socijalnog uticaja epidemije COVID-a-19 u Crnoj Gori Apri-Jun2020.pdf](https://montenegro.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Izveštaj%20o%20brzoi%20procjeni%20socijalnog%20uticaja%20epidemije%20COVID-a-19%20u%20Crnoj%20Gori%20Apri-Jun2020.pdf)

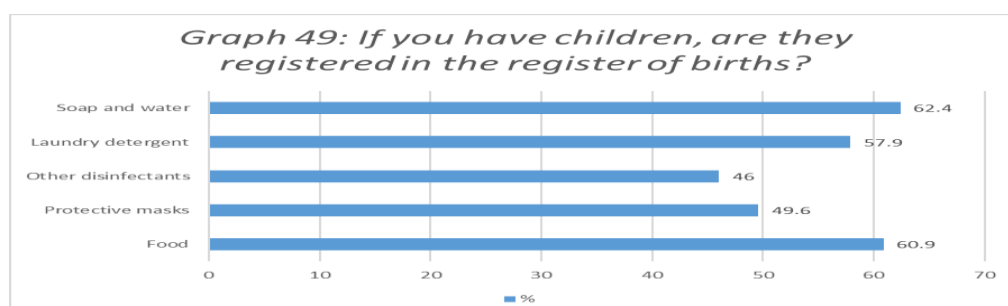


Graph 51: Have you lost your source of income due to the coronavirus epidemic in Montenegro?

The Covid-19 impact is especially pronounced in the informal economy, which is quite prevalent among Roma and Egyptians. Distancing and closure measures have interrupted and prevented the performance of these activities during the year and have resulted in a negative impact on the living standards of Roma and Egyptians.

When it comes to public services, during the period of isolation, children generally need support/assistance in distance learning. This applies to beneficiaries of material aid, Roma families, refugee children, foster children and children whose parents have a medical history of psychoactive substance use. According to parents, Roma children face many difficulties in distance learning and need help with homework. They also fear discrimination when time comes to go back to school. Almost half of the children of refugees and asylum seekers have stated the need for support in accessing online education.<sup>100</sup>

The members of this community need support in the form of food aid, hygiene products, medicines, clothing.<sup>101</sup> In regard to public services, the most needed ones include healthcare services, followed by soup kitchen services and assistance in finding a job. The data show the lack of basic foods and disinfectants during the COVID-19 epidemic. The worst situation has been determined in respect to disinfectants. 37.6% of Roma and Egyptians did not have access even to soap and water and 54% of them claim that they had no access to other disinfectants. 50.4% of them claim that they did not have enough protective masks.



Graph 52: At the time of the coronavirus epidemic, did you have enough of the following supplies ("YES" response rate)?

<sup>100</sup>Survey Report can be found at: [https://montenegro.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Izveštaj o brznoj procjeni socijalnog uticaja epidemije COVID-a-19 u Crnoj Gori Apri-Jun2020.pdf](https://montenegro.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/Izveštaj%20o%20brznoj%20procjeni%20socijalnog%20uticaja%20epidemije%20COVID-a-19%20u%20Crnoj%20Gori%20Apri-Jun2020.pdf)

<sup>101</sup> DeFact Survey has shown that 81.1% of Roma and Egyptians received help from the Red Cross during the epidemic.

Many people from Roma and Egyptian refugee communities live in large families and in very small spaces of poor quality, so the measure of physical distancing was impossible for them to follow. Their usually unstable sources of income have been drastically reduced, which has increased the socioeconomic vulnerability of these families.

Refugees (asylum seekers), including some refugees from the former Yugoslavia and people at risk of statelessness, have been significantly affected by the epidemic. They belong to the poorest and most vulnerable groups of the population, with their socioeconomic status most uncertain. Of particular concern is the group of about 900 people whose legal status is still unstable, as these people have not been covered by any form of public planning.

## Domestic violence, child marriage and begging

### Domestic violence

Domestic violence is a special form of violence that violates the rights to life, freedom, physical, mental and sexual integrity, safety and human dignity of a family member. The Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of Montenegro<sup>102</sup> defines “domestic violence” as an act or omission of a family member that endangers the physical, mental, sexual or economic integrity, mental health and tranquillity of another family member, regardless of where it was committed.

Domestic violence, which greatly affects Roma and Egyptian population, primarily takes place through various forms of psychological, physical, sexual and financial or material abuse. There is a lack of precise data on the extent of domestic violence, as most acts of violence take place within a relatively closed and patriarchal community and usually go unsaid. Social tolerance of violence against women in the Roma and Egyptian communities has influenced community members to consider it “normal behaviour,” therefore, domestic violence is widely accepted even among Romani and Egyptian women. On the other hand, Romani and Egyptian women are particularly isolated from the majority population, which limits their access to public institutions and services that deal with violence against women. In cases where access to services is not prevented by a physical barrier, the quality of services and the attitude of service providers towards violence against women, and especially towards domestic violence, lead to the formation of barriers and to reduced confidence of victims in accessing such services.

The MICS 6 2018 survey for Montenegro has shown a very high level of acceptance of domestic violence in Roma and Egyptian communities.

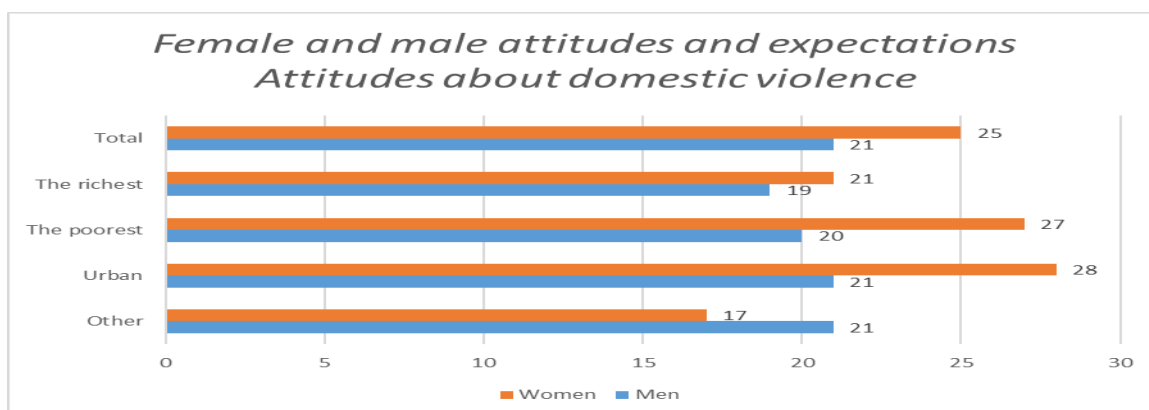
Female and male attitudes and expectations

Attitudes about domestic violence

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<sup>102</sup> Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, Official Gazette of Montenegro, no. 46/2010





Graph 53: Percentage of adults aged 15–49 in Roma settlements who justify physical violence against their wives for any of the following reasons: if she goes out without her husband's knowledge; if she neglects their children; if she quarrels with her husband; if she refuses to have sex with her husband; if her food burns, presented according to the quintile of wealth and the type of settlement

Regarding violence against children, the data show the following:

- Among children aged 1–14 living in Roma settlements in Montenegro, 64% have been exposed to at least one form of psychological or physical punishment by adult members of the household.
- 11% of children have been subjected to severe corporal punishment.
- Only 16% of children have had experience with nonviolent methods of child discipline.
- Boys living in Roma settlements have been more exposed to physical discipline (43%) than girls (38%).
- Among the surveyed parents/guardians in Roma settlements, 19% believe that children must be physically punished in order to be well-raised, brought up or educated in the right way, which indicates an interesting contrast to the actual prevalence of physical discipline (41% of children have been subjected to corporal punishment).

The key challenge in combating domestic violence in Roma and Egyptian communities is the number of domestic violence cases prosecuted, with particular emphasis on the number of cases that have resulted in indictments, prosecutions and punishments for perpetrators. The general problem with prosecuting perpetrators of domestic violence is reflected in lengthy court proceedings, with the victim lacking adequate protection while awaiting judgment and afterwards. This is primarily a consequence of insufficient funds and human resources within formal and NGO institutions that provide care and support to the victim, including also economic, psychological and physical empowerment. Also, there is a deficit of psychosocial programs for bullies, as well as the lack of professional staff who would work on changing the bullies' behaviour. A significant obstacle is the valid criminal policy for perpetrators of violence, which is currently unstrict and leaves room for repeat offenders.

In addition, it is important to point out the unwillingness of the victims of domestic violence themselves to report this criminal offense. This is not a problem that affects the Roma and Egyptian

communities only, but also the majority population, whereby the findings of the UNDP<sup>103</sup> survey indicate that on average:

- almost three quarters of citizens (73%) believe that there are more cases of domestic violence that are unreported to the competent institutions, and this view is more common among citizens who believe that it is necessary for every form of violence to find its way to the institutions.
- one fifth of citizens (19%) have more optimistic estimates and believe that there is a larger number of cases that reach the competent institutions, and this attitude is equally widespread among the citizens of Montenegro, regardless of their socio-demographic characteristics

Regarding the reasons for non-reporting of violence cases, the most common are as follows:

- 62% believe that the main reason for non-reporting is fear of offender or fear of revenge/further violence,
- 24% believe that it is a matter of concerns about privacy i.e., embarrassment/shame
- 7% of citizens believe that distrust in the state and authorities, the desire to preserve family and patriarchalism and traditionalism are the main factors of non-reporting

In this regard, and in order to effectively combat domestic violence within the Roma and Egyptian communities, in the coming period it is necessary to establish an improved system of institutional protection of victims of domestic violence, primarily through the development of measures to combat domestic violence and forced marriages. It is necessary to work on strengthening the cooperation among all relevant state institutions and NGOs dealing with this field and the institution of the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms in order to encourage the victims of violence, begging or child marriage to use mechanisms of protection against discrimination. In addition, it is necessary to increase the level of implementation of existing legislation, as well as to increase the number of processed and resolved cases of domestic violence. Special emphasis is placed on the need to open new service centres and shelters for victims of domestic violence and increase the capacity of existing ones, in addition to the development of adequate reintegration programs.

#### Operational objectives and indicators

<b>Operational objective 9:</b>	Improving the legal and institutional protection of Romani and Egyptian women against gender-based violence		
<b>Performance indicator 1:</b> Reduce the percentage of adults in Roma and Egyptian settlements who justify physical violence against their spouses	2021 MICS: 25% women and 21 % men	2023 20 % women 16 % men	2025 15% women 11 % men
<b>Performance indicator 2:</b> Percentage of women aged 20-24 married before the	22% (before the age of 15)	16 % (before the age of 15)	10% (before the age of 15)

<sup>103</sup> Ipsos, UNDP, "Domestic Violence and Violence against Women",  
<https://www.rodnamapa.me/assets/documents/violence/istrazivanja/nasilje-u-porodici-istrazivanje.pdf>

age of 15 or 18 [SDG 5.3.1]	55% (before the age of 18)	40% (before the age of 18)	20% (before the age of 18)
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### Child marriage

A serious problem faced by the Roma community in Montenegro is the occurrence of child marriages and extramarital unions, where a child <sup>104</sup> enters into such a community with another child or an adult. The Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) believe that the minimum age required for marriage of both men and women should be 18, regardless of parental consent.

Article 24 of the Family Law<sup>105</sup> stipulates that a person who has not reached the age of 18 may not enter a marriage. Exceptionally, the court may allow the marriage of a minor over the age of 16, in accordance with a special law. Also, the Family Law envisages the nullity of a marriage that has not been entered into before the competent authority, which is most often the case with forced and child marriages.

The Criminal Code<sup>106</sup>, within articles 214, 215, 216, 444 thereof, prescribes the criminal offenses of entering into a null and void marriage, enabling the conclusion of illicit marriage or extramarital union with a minor and the criminal offense of human trafficking as criminal offenses against family and marriage. It is especially important to note that forced child marriages and extramarital unions, especially in the part related to the coercive nature of entering into these types of marriage, entail the characteristics of the criminal offense of human trafficking<sup>107</sup>. Child marriage is a form of forced marriage, given that one or both parties have not personally expressed their full, free and informed consent thereto.<sup>108</sup> UNICEF defines forced marriage as a marriage entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties thereto and/or in which one or both parties cannot end or leave the marriage, inter alia, due to coercion or intense pressure from society or family.

Within Roma and Egyptian communities, child marriages primarily affect girls and women, although boys are also at risk of child marriages. Child marriage is a violation of human and children's rights, impeding children's development and often resulting in school dropouts, labour market exclusion, poverty, social exclusion, violence, compromised mental health, early pregnancy, health impairment and many accompanying adverse phenomena in child development.<sup>109</sup>

Roma and Egyptian communities are predominantly based on tradition and customary law. In such communities, there is a belief that by entering into this type of marital union, children are provided with basic necessities of life, as well as with certain economic stability. In addition, lack of education

<sup>104</sup> According to the Convention on the Child's Rights, a child is any human being who has not reached the age of 18, if adulthood and maturity is not reached earlier provided by the law that shall apply to the child.

<sup>105</sup> Family Law, "Official Gazette of Montenegro," no. 53/2016 and 76/2020

<sup>106</sup> Criminal Code of Montenegro, Official Gazette of Montenegro, no. 44/2017, 49/2018 and 3/2020

<sup>107</sup> According to the Information about the achieved results in the field of combat against human trafficking for 2020, prepared by the Mol, Montenegro has been recognized, in recent years, as the country of origin, transition and destination for men, women and children who have been the victims of human trafficking. According to the data for the last 5 years, the Police Administration filed a total of five indictments, the competent prosecutor's office brought two actions, whereas one final judgement for committing the criminal offense of human trafficking was adopted before the competent court.

<sup>108</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child

<sup>109</sup> Guidelines for actions taken by the competent institutions in cases of recognizing and processing child marriage and extramarital unions

<file:///C:/Users/zeljko.vukcevic/Downloads/Smjernice%20za%20postupanje%20nadle%C5%BEnih%20institucija-procesuiranje%20dje%C4%8Djih%20brakova%20i%20vanbra%C4%8Dnih%20zaj..pdf>

or low educational status<sup>110</sup>, all forms of material deprivation and pressure from the community, within which these practices are accepted, put Roma and Egyptian children in a very difficult and hopeless situation. The research conducted by the Centre for Roma Initiatives in 2015 "Arranged marriage: More Powerful than Law,"<sup>111</sup> dealing with the extent to what tradition and customary law are involved in the conclusion of child marriages, has indicated the following:

- In almost 50% of cases, the decision to enter into an illicit marriage is not made by the future partners themselves, but by their parents, immediate family members or extended family on their behalf.
- In 42% of cases, partners have not even known each other before entering into marriage. The research has shown that even a specific amount of money is granted when arranging the conclusion of an illicit marriage, which attributes the nature of the criminal offense of human trafficking to this type of phenomena.
- Over 70% of married and even over 80% of unmarried female respondents do not support this practice and expect that institutions of the system should be more aggressive in combating such phenomena in practice.

Statistically, according to the latest UNDP survey (2017), the child marriage rate in Montenegro is 41%. Regarding the comparative relation of child marriage rate between the general population and Roma and Egyptian communities, it is important to point out the findings of the "Montenegro Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey<sup>112</sup> conducted by MONSTAT and UNICEF in 2018, which show that the child marriage rate in Montenegro is relatively low i.e., approximately as follows:

- The share of women aged 20-24 who got married before the age of 15 is very low (2%). Also, there are no men aged 15-49 who got married before the age of 15.
- 18, 8% of women and 1% of men aged 20-49 got married before the age of 18.
- There is a negative correlation between the level of education and getting married before the age of 18 determined in women aged 20-49. Namely, this share includes 28% of women with primary school, or a lower education level, and decreases to 1% among those with higher education.
- Women aged 20-49 from the poorest welfare index quintile were more likely to get married before the age of 18 (19%) than women from the richest quintile (5%).

However, data concerning the Roma and Egyptian communities show a significantly higher rate of child marriage:

- A total of 22% of women aged 20-24 got married before the age of 15. This is significantly higher in comparison to 6% of men aged 20-24 who got married before the age of 15.
- 55% of women and 25% of men aged 20-49 got married before the age of 18.
- There is a negative correlation between the level of education and getting married before the age of 18 determined in women aged 20-49. Namely, 59% of women with pre-school or no education got married before the age of 15 and this share decreases to 25% among those with secondary or higher education.

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<sup>110</sup> Ipsos Strategic Marketing 2013, Study on the educational barriers in Montenegro: Roma and Egyptian Children, UNICEF Montenegro

<sup>111</sup> Center for Roma Initiatives, 2015, "Arranged marriage: More powerful than the Law."

<sup>112</sup> MICS 6 2018, "Montenegro Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey - Roma Settlements," 2018

In order to solve the problem of child illicit and arranged marriages, it is necessary to act within the following framework:

- Improving the implementation of existing legal regulations, primarily by increasing the number of cases of child marriages/ human trafficking processed. During 2019/2020, 13 cases classified as human trafficking were processed, out of which 6 cases were awarded the status of a human trafficking victim.
- Addressing the issue of representation of traditions and customs in Roma and Egyptian communities through organizing educational campaigns and improving their social and economic situation in order to prevent child marriage. In this regard, the system institutions in charge of working with victims of these crimes should treat children who are victims of this phenomenon as domestic violence victims or as children without parental care and similar integrative approaches should be initiated towards them.
- Enhancing accommodation capacities through the construction of shelters dealing with accommodation of illicit and arranged child marriages, which would enable victims to reintegrate into society.

### Child begging

Child begging represents a problem which, in most cases, entail children from the Roma community appearing as victims of exploitation. These are primarily children who do not attend school, who are without health insurance, and registration in the registers. The conditions in which these children live and spend their childhood on the streets represent one of the grave violations of children's rights. Namely, such life circumstances deprive children of many child rights guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, such as rights pertaining to social protection, health care, etc. Children from the Roma community who are engaged in begging and live on the streets are at risk of being subjected to economic and sexual exploitation, slavery and slavery-like subjection, as well as victims of human trafficking. In most cases, these children are not included in the educational system due to which, and in order to survive and live, they often give in the terror of adults who abuse them in various ways.

Data from the Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare show that, in the period between 2020 and 2021, a significant number of cases of child begging victims were processed as an economic form of domestic violence, including a total of 32 cases (M-21, F-11) which were processed in 2020, while 3 child begging cases were processed (M-2, F-1) by the end of the first quarter of 2021.

The 2107 CEDEM Survey on the child begging in Montenegro<sup>113</sup>, has shown that the key barriers to successfully combating child begging faced by Roma and Egyptian children are reflected in the following:

- a large number of children engaged in begging do not possess the necessary documentation to be integrated into institutions. Additional problems include:
  - inadequacy of sanctions provided by law and the inconsistent application thereof,
  - lack of human and financial resources,
  - lack of systematic records of children involved in begging (including inconsistencies in data management within different institutions),

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<sup>113</sup> CEDEM, "Child Begging in Montenegro," 2017, <http://www.cedem.me/publikacije/istrazivanja/ostala-istrazivanja/send/31-ostala-istrazivanja/1880-djecje-prosjacenje>

- underdevelopment of social services and institutions for accommodation and care of children found in begging or at risk of exploitation.
- lack of integration of Roma and Egyptian children into the schooling system. This implies dropping out of primary school, or permanent absence from school.
- ineffective institutional communication with parents of Roma and Egyptian children, or the lack thereof. Parents represent a pivotal point in begging prevention. In the event of parents tolerating, or even worse, initiating the begging of their own children, it is very difficult to prevent such behaviour.
- lack of Roma mediators or authentic representatives of Roma and Egyptians who act as intermediaries in communication between the institutions of the system and the R&E community.
- distancing and stigmatization of the Roma population performed by the majority population, as well as prejudices against them. Practice shows that the vast majority of citizens belonging to the majority population either openly or covertly stigmatize Roma and Egyptians, inflict verbal and often physical violence upon them, and simply discriminate against them in almost all situations and according to all criteria.
- lack of systematic records of children engaged in begging.
- underdevelopment of social services and institutions for accommodation and care of children found in begging or at risk of exploitation.

It is especially important to point out the lack of accommodation capacities i.e., in Montenegro, there is only one Day Care Center for children with behavioural problems, "Defendologija," which has been operating and in existence since 2017 which deals directly with children and families at risk of begging. In order to address the problem of child begging, it is necessary to provide assistance in psychosocial treatment of victims of begging, their inclusion in the education system and constant and regular work with families in order to prevent child begging. In addition, it is important to provide minimum economic conditions for the normal and decent life of children and their families and to encourage economic empowerment of parents so that they can start their own businesses. It is necessary to work on and develop the following:

- Implementation of the Family Support Program (FSP) promotes a balanced approach to risk and protective factors in an effort to reduce and neutralize the effects of risk factors and potentiate the effects of protective ones. In this sense, the FSP encourages positive behaviour, develops potentials, improves skills, stimulates functional relationships and connections i.e. promotes empowerment of the child, parents, family and their connection with the informal, personal or formal network of support in the community, whenever possible.
- Positive Discipline Approach: A program designed for parents of children of all ages that addresses common issues that occur between birth and late adolescence. It helps to prepare for life challenges and to find solutions. It is also intended for those who provide support to parents, including parent educators, facilitators of parental groups and social workers in charge of supporting families in order to encourage problem-solving regarding the challenges that families face.
- HEART program - an art-based approach that aims to provide psychosocial support to children who are in the state of severe or chronic stress. It helps children process and express their feelings.
- ECCD program (Early Childhood Care and Development of children aged 3-6) deals with motor, cognitive, social emotional development, as well as with child speech development, through workshops and activities adapted and structured as required by individuals or

groups. The program also helps professionals in connection with group management and group activities, how to create and establish rules and how to teach children to abide by them, how to provide feedback, and how to teach children to cooperate as well as to solve problems.

- Program for the development of children's social emotional competencies: Encourages and develops children's social emotional competencies for learning and building positive peer relationships with respecting and promoting diversity, with emphasis on understanding and respecting the importance of developmental context and its impact on children's learning and development. The program recognizes the importance of enabling the full participation of children as they grow up.
- Organization of actions and campaigns aimed at raising public awareness of the issue of begging and of mechanisms for prevention and assistance to victims.

#### Operational objectives and indicators

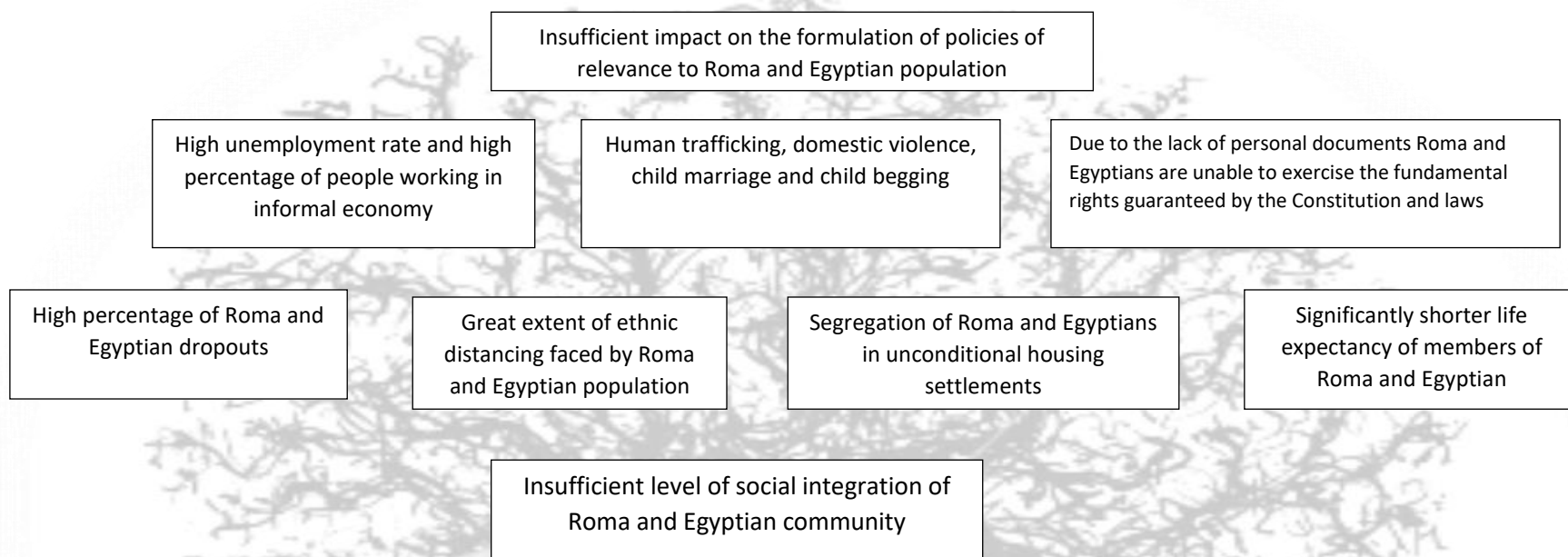
Operational objective 10	Providing social and legal protection against domestic violence, child and arranged marriages and child begging for Roma and Egyptian children		
<b>Performance indicator 1:</b> Reduce the percentage of Roma and Egyptian children who have been subjected to some form of psychological or physical punishment by adult household members  Reduce the percentage of Roma and Egyptian children who have been subjected to severe corporal punishment	2021  64%	2023  62%	2025  59%
	11%	10%	9%
<b>Performance indicator 2:</b> Increasing the number of identified and processed cases of child marriage and child begging (male).	2021  7 cases of child arranged marriages  32 cases of child begging as a form of domestic violence *M (21) F(11)	2023  10  50	2025  15  80
		2023  80	2025  85
<b>Performance indicator 3:</b> Improve the early childhood development of Roma and Egyptian	2021  Early Childhood	2023  80	2025  85

children aged 0-6	<p>Development Index <sup>114</sup><sub>[OBJ]</sub> Roma settlements: 77</p> <p>Percentage of children aged 0-5 months who are exclusively breastfed (MICS):14%</p> <p>Percentage of children aged 25-59 months in Roma settlements with whom their mothers, fathers or any adult member of the household participated in at least 4 activities: With mothers 36% With fathers 18%.</p>	17%	20%
<p><b>Performance indicator 4:</b> Establishment of specialized services for children who have been victims of illicit and arranged marriages and children who are street involved or at risk of becoming street involved.</p>	<p>2021</p> <p>1 Drop-in center in the Municipality of Nikšić</p>	<p>2023</p> <p>2 Drop-in centers</p>	<p>2025</p> <p>3 Drop-in centers</p>

<sup>114</sup>ECDI: Early Childhood Development Index; Percentage of children aged 3–4 in Roma settlements at an appropriate level of development in terms of literacy/numeracy, physical, social and emotional domains, and learning-related domains



## Problem tree



Roma and Egyptians are underrepresented in all types of education

Low level of professional qualifications for performing qualified jobs

High level of discrimination, anti-Gypsism against Roma and Egyptians

Roma and Egyptians belong to the poorest categories of society

Services of the healthcare system are used insufficiently by Roma and Egyptians

Unconditional housing facilities in which a significant number of Roma and Egyptians live

Roma and Egyptians are underrepresented in political decision-making processes

Significant number of Roma and Egyptians do not possess personal documents

Inadequate financial resources for education

Insufficient level of support provided regarding self-employment

Stereotypes and prejudices of the majority population

Large number of household members

Lack of information about available healthcare

Overcrowding in housing facilities

Lack of authentic political actors

Lack of personal documents required for enrolment in

Access to poorly-paid jobs

Insufficient legal and institutional support

Exclusion from the formal employment system

Lack of health insurance

Uncertain legal status of housing facilities

Legal framework that does not treat Roma and Egyptians as national minority groups

## Financial framework

The following table gives an overview of the entire strategic document funding for the next five-year period, including the main sources of financing as follows:

- Budget of Monenegro,
- Donor support and
- Funds received from IPA funds.

Year	Budget funds	Donor support	IPA	Total
<b>2021</b>	661,682.35 € <sup>115</sup>	361,384.00 €	612,000.00 <sup>116</sup> €	1,635,066.35 €
<b>2022</b>	650,000.00 €	250,000.00 €	350,000.00 €	1,250,000.00 €
<b>2023</b>	650,000.00 €	250,000.00 €	350,000.00 €	1,250,000.00 €
<b>2024</b>	650,000.00 €	250,000.00 €	350,000.00 €	1,250,000.00 €
<b>2025</b>	650,000.00 €	250,000.00 €	350,000.00 €	1,250,000.00 €
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,261,682.35 €</b>	<b>1,361,384.00 €</b>	<b>2,012,000.00 €</b>	<b>6,635,066.35 €</b>

Defining the budget framework for the implementation of the strategic framework must be performed in line with the Guidelines for Roma Responsive Budgeting<sup>117</sup>. The guidelines stem from the work of the Intergovernmental Working Group for Roma Responsive Budgeting. Relevant national institutions should be able to recognize and provide an adequate response to the potential to promote Roma integration in the preparation and adoption of policy proposals and specific policy measures, including both general social economic policies or target Roma integration policies. The ultimate goal is to ensure Roma equality by reducing the social economic gap between Roma and the rest of society. This goal can only be achieved by including Roma integration appropriately into existing general policies and public services. A number of general policies are of relevance for Roma and, therefore, this issue can be addressed simply by monitoring Roma participation in such policies

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<sup>115</sup> The specified amount includes EUR 50,000 as an estimate of the minimum amount of financial resources for funding projects with the Fund for the Protection and Exercise of Minority Rights, which will relate to the protection and exercise of the rights of Roma and Egyptians. Also, the specified amount includes financial resources (100,000.00 euros - estimated minimum amount) for funding NGO projects through sectoral analyzes in the field of protection and promotion of human and minority rights, protection of the rights of Roma and Egyptians. In 2018, NGO projects in the total amount of 131,000 euros were financed in this field, including the total amount of 215,000 euros in 2019, and the total amount of 136,000 euros in 2020.

<sup>116</sup> A certain number of activities through IPA projects will be realized during 2022 as well i.e., a specific portion of the said financial resources will be spent in 2022. These are the IPA projects "Social Inclusion of Roma (Men and Women) and Egyptian (Men and Women) with the Mediation of Social Inclusion Associates" and "Public Campaigns against Forced/Arranged/Child Marriages, Domestic Violence and Begging" which will be implemented within the Joint MNE-EU Program for Employment, Education and Social Protection (SOPEES). The project ideas were prepared by the Department for European Integration, Programming and Implementation of EU Funds, which functioned within the former Ministry of Human and Minority Rights in cooperation with the former Department for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Roma and Egyptian, now the Directorate for Roma and Egyptian Inclusion.

<sup>117</sup> Guidelines for Roma Responsive Budgeting, Regional Cooperation Council, Roma Integration 2020, <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/docs/96/guidelines-for-roma-responsive-budgeting>

as to determine whether they are producing the same results for Roma as for other citizens. However, in the case of specific general policies, there may also be a need for additional efforts to achieve the same results for Roma as for others. Such additional efforts can be grouped into the following three categories:

- coverage expanding measures to change the criteria for beneficiaries, thus ensuring equal coverage of Roma, in the same manner in which other persons in a similar situation are covered,
- affirmative action measures to allocate a certain part of public services to Roma in order to provide them with equal opportunities,
- adapting measures in order to change existing or introduce new public services designed according to the specific circumstances of Roma and other persons in a similar situation.

## Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

Regarding the process of drafting, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025, it is important to point out the existence of two bodies:

- Working group for development of a strategic document
- Commission for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the strategic document

The working group is composed of the representatives of:

Ministry of Justice and Human and Minority Rights (Directorate for Roma and Egyptian Inclusion); Roma Council; Union of Municipalities of Montenegro; Child's Council; Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports; Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare; MONSTAT-Statistical Office of Montenegro; Ministry of Economic Development; Fund for the Protection and Exercise of Minority Rights; Center for the Preservation and Development of Minority Culture; Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism; Red Cross of Montenegro; Ministry of Public Administration, Digital Society and Media; Ministry of the Interior; International organizations, Nongovernmental organizations.

The Ministry of Justice and Human and Minority Rights is the umbrella institution responsible for coordinating the operations of the Working Group, developing, implementing and reporting on the strategic document implementation. The strategic document concerned is accompanied by an Action Plan that is to be prepared separately for each year of duration of the strategy concerned.

Bearing in mind that the Ministry of Justice and Human and Minority Rights i.e., Directorate for Roma and Egyptian Inclusion is the umbrella institution responsible for developing the public policy concerned, the coordination of the entire process of monitoring, reporting and evaluation lies within the responsibility of the mentioned entity.

The Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025 is a strategic document whose implementation requires the involvement of all interested institutions, including public administration bodies, NGOs dealing with the protection of Roma and Egyptian rights, and international organizations that have a significant influence on the public policy development. Accordingly, the institutions concerned will be obliged to provide information on the activities realized within the Action Plan, for the purpose of timely and adequate collection of data for the preparation of annual and final reports, as well as in order to evaluate the achieved level of performance, but also to identify challenges that may arise during the implementation of planned activities.

The main competencies of the Working Group are reflected in the preparation of two types of reports on the implementation of the strategic document:

- Annual report on the implementation of the Action Plan
- Final report on the implementation of the strategic document.

The Working Group will meet at least four times a year i.e., it will hold one meeting during each quarter minimum, respective to the relevance, scope and complexity of the area that requires more frequent meetings of the Working Group. In this way, the implementation process will be considered in a timely and continuous manner, as well as possible obstacles and challenges that the institutions may face in the implementation of activities. The data necessary for preparation of the reports will be collected throughout the year and will be submitted quarterly to the Ministry of Justice and Human and Minority Rights, as the coordinating body of the Working Group. At the last annual meeting, the above data will be reviewed and possibly supplemented in order to ensure the necessary quality of the reports.

The Ministry of Justice and Human and Minority Rights will be in charge of collecting and compiling data relevant to the preparation of the reports, as well as of coordination and operations of the operational team. In addition, all possible problems and obstacles that may arise during the implementation of the strategic document will be addressed by the Working Group at regular quarterly meetings.

The reporting process will go through several instances. Specifically, members of the Working Group will submit data to the Ministry of Justice and Human and Minority Rights at the end of each quarter, and the Ministry will carry out data consolidation and prepare the report before the last meeting of the operational team in the subject year. After discussion with other members of the Working Group, the reports (annual and final) will be sent to the Commission for monitoring the implementation of the strategic document. The Commission is the second operational body formed by the decision of the Ministry of Justice and Human and Minority Rights and composed of representatives of all the institutions that formed an integral part of the Working Group for the strategic document development. The competence of the Commission is reflected in the review of the report received, which upon obtaining the approval from the Commission will be sent to the General Secretariat of the Government of Montenegro for opinion, after which a positive opinion will be sent to the Government of Montenegro for adoption.

To ensure transparency in the strategy implementation process, the reports will be published on the website of the Ministry of Justice and Human and Minority Rights.

## Evaluation

Evaluation of the strategic document concerned will be conducted ex post and by external experts due to its complexity and coverage, but also due to ensuring a higher degree of objectivity. Funds for the implementation will be provided from the budget of the Ministry of Justice and Human and Minority Rights. It has been planned that this process will commence in the first half of 2025 and be completed by October of the same year, in order to provide timely evaluation of the findings, which will be presented in the final report, as well as to provide adequate bases for creating potentially a new strategic document. The evaluation findings will provide a clear and precise overview of the success of the development of this policy through a unified strategic document. Thus, the aim is to determine whether the planned effects are achieved through joint action i.e., whether the implemented activities lead to the improvement of the rights and status of the Roma and Egyptian communities in Montenegro.