

## MARGINALIZATION OF ROMA CHILDREN THROUGH SEGREGATION IN EDUCATION IN MACEDONIA

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### **Abstract**

In the past period until nowadays, not only in Macedonia but also in other European countries, one can notice the appearance of indirect discrimination against Roma children through the so-called segregation in special (previously used term *specialized*) schools, i.e. classes of children that attend regular schools. Segregation, i.e. separation of these children is made through their categorization as persons with mild impairments in the psychological development. In the overall educational process of the child, such categorization puts the child in subordinate position to other children who are not categorized, because such child is prevented the possibility to be educated according to the same curricula and syllabus, to be educated in an environment with children who do not have psychological problems and also has less possibility to continue the secondary education based on his/her desires.

**The main hypothesis is:** *In Macedonia, both on national and municipal level, the percentage of Roma children who are categorized as persons with psychological disabilities is significantly higher than the percentage of the total number of Roma children in comparison with the total number of children from all ethnic communities. This phenomenon results from the variety of cultural factors, lack of institutional capacities and inter-institutional cooperation, procedural and legal incompleteness, ambiguities and inadequacy, as well as lack of awareness among the parents and officials. The occurrence of indirect discrimination through segregation is systemic, persistent and deeply rooted in the society.*

**Key words:** *segregation, indirect discrimination, education, Roma children*

### **1. European context**

School segregation also seriously affects Roma and Traveller children in many member states. A disproportionate number of them are enrolled in remedial classrooms and special schools, where they receive education according to a reduced curriculum.<sup>11</sup> In some countries, the chances of Roma children being enrolled in a special school have been 27 times higher than for non-Roma children. Furthermore, Roma children are frequently enrolled in Roma-only schools or schools with a disproportionate concentration of Roma children, where in most cases they receive less demanding and often substandard education. A survey carried out in 2016 by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency in nine EU member states shows that 33% of Roma children were attending schools in which most pupils were Roma, and 13% were in Roma-only schools. Segregation also occurs within mainstream school premises, where Roma children can be assigned to separate classes and can be prevented from using common playgrounds or dining halls (Fighting; 20117, 8).

Every fifth Roma in the Czech Republic and Slovakia has attended a school or a classroom that is both special and composed of solely or mainly Roma; a similar pattern has appeared elsewhere, including in France, Greece, and Bulgaria. Every second Roma in Hungary and Slovakia has been attending a regular school or classroom composed of solely or mainly Roma; the picture in Greece, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, France and Romania is not much different. Nearly every second Roma in Greece and every fifth Roma in Romania was not in primary school at all in 2010/2011 (G. Albert; 2015, 2).

With the General Policy Recommendation number 3, ECRI to national authorities recommend:

- to vigorously combat all forms of school segregation towards Roma/Gypsy children and to ensure the effective enjoyment of equal access to education;

- to introduce into the curricula of all schools information on the history and culture of Roma/Gypsies and to provide training programmes in this subject for teachers;

With the recommendation focused to schools and to education policy makers at both national and municipal level, ECRI, ask from them to ensure that schools are obliged to incorporate the fight against racism and racial discrimination as well as respect for diversity into the way that they are run:

- a) by ensuring that the fight against such phenomena in schools, whether they emanate from pupils or educational staff, is part of a permanent policy;

- b) by setting up a system to monitor racist incidents at school and compile data on these phenomena in order to devise long-term policies to counter them;
- c) by adopting, in order to combat incidents of racism or discrimination which do not cause physical harm, educational measures such as, for example, non formal education activities in organisations dealing with victims of racism and racial discrimination;
- d) by treating incitement to racial hatred in schools and any other serious racist act, including the use of violence, threats or damage to property, as acts punishable by suspension or expulsion or any other appropriate measure;
- e) by encouraging within schools the adoption of a code of conduct against racism and racial discrimination for all staff;
- f) by favouring measures (such as special anti-racism days or weeks, campaigns or competitions) to foster awareness among both pupils and parents of racism and racial discrimination issues and the relevant school policies (ECRI General; No 10).

The problem is urgent in all Balkan countries.

- In all Balkan countries there are problems of inclusion of the Roma children in education process;
- The main problems are segregation of Roma children in special schools and special classes, schools without opportunities for pre- courses in official language and providing of education in mother language;
- In all Balkan countries the situation is improved the last years and all authorities have good will to improve the situation;
- In all Balkan countries the problem is prioritized in the national strategies and the countries takes the measures for implementation of the priorities;
- All Balkan countries improved the data collection for the enrolling and finishing of the pre- school, primary and secondary schools. Until now, there are a huge problem with low number of Roma children enrolled and finished pre- schools, primary and secondary schools and it is a big challenge for the future to all Balkan countries.

## 2. Research methodology

*The main hypothesis is: In Macedonia, both on national and municipal level, the percentage of Roma children who are categorized as persons with psychological disabilities is significantly higher than the percentage of the total number of Roma children in comparison with the total number of children from all ethnic communities. This phenomenon results from the variety of cultural factors, lack of institutional capacities and inter-institutional cooperation, procedural and legal incompleteness, ambiguities and inadequacy, as well as lack of awareness among the parents and officials. The occurrence of indirect discrimination through segregation is systemic, persistent and deeply rooted in the society. Therefore, this requires a systemic, institutional and organizational approach to reduce the occurrence of this phenomenon..*

The research was provided with follow tools (Ananiev, J; 2014, 8):

- The *survey* was conducted by submission of questionnaires by post to all municipalities in the country. Most of the municipalities distributed the questionnaires to the primary school directors on their territories; the schools then forwarded the summarized results or questionnaires that were filled out by the schools for further processing in SPSS. Furthermore, the questionnaire was also sent to all *special schools*. The questionnaire for the special schools requested the same information, the only difference being that these schools do not have regular classes (for children without disabilities). Both questionnaires required that the data should be structured based on the child's ethnicity. No data was provided by the special primary school "Idnina".
- Two *focus groups* were conducted. The first focus group was held on 3 July 2014 and aimed to discover the causes for the existence of the high rate of categorized Roma children. Participants in the focus group were representatives of the professional services from several special schools, the primary school in Suto Orizari, the representative of the Commission at the Institute for mental health, professor from the Institute for defectology at the Faculty of philosophy in Skopje, representatives from the Ministry of labor and social policy, Ministry of education, Ministry of health, representatives of civil organizations and international organizations that work in the area. Several topics were discussed during the focus group, that is: categorization procedure, how one distinguishes between the educational neglect from psychological development impairments, which are the institutional and staffing weaknesses, which are the weaknesses in the inter-institutional cooperation, which are the trends (both positive and negative) regarding the changes of the situation, etc. The second focus group was held on 13 November 2014 and the participants were representatives of the same institutions like in the first focus group,

while the discussion was held around the measures which are taken and will be taken by the institutions to tackle the problem. Discussion was also held regarding the draft recommendations that emerged from the findings of the research, and there was a very live discussion regarding the draft model of assessment (draft version obtained from the Ministry of labor and social policy, October 2014). The findings from the two focus groups are included in this paper and they either served as base to further specify the data from the official documents or as directions to obtain additional findings through interviews of collection of additional data. Some of the participants statements are paraphrased, and some are directly conveyed, however; due to discretion of the source of information I only indicate the institution or that the respective views were stated by a pedagogue, psychologist, teacher or school director or any of the representatives of administrative bodies or civil sector. The thematic blocks that were used to conduct the focus group discussion were prepared on the basis of previous primary situational analysis through collection of secondary sources of data (previous analyses, official documents and statistics) and conducted preparatory interviews.

- In order to ensure thorough understanding of the problem and to obtain relevant views about future action to overcome the problem, total of thirty *interviews* were conducted with: representative from the Ministry of education and science, Ministry of labor and social policy, Ministry of health, two pediatricians, three psychologists from primary schools, one defectologist from a special school and one representative of civil organization that works on protection of the rights of Roma people.

### **3. Quantitative indicators about segregation of roma children in the period 2010-2014**

The designed sample is a structured sample, i.e. it includes the municipalities which have registered a child from the Roma ethnic community. The total percentage of segregation does not reflect the situation on national level, because the municipalities that did not fill out the questionnaires are not processed (filled out by 57 municipalities) as well as the municipalities where there are no categorized Roma children. This structured sample was made because one group consists of the municipalities where it is believed that Roma children live (where at least one child is categorized in a period of five years), and other municipalities are not included especially if those are big municipalities and there are no Roma communities over there.

On the basis of received data, the results about the municipalities with the biggest number of categorized Roma children are presented below. During the school year 2010/2011, the biggest percentage of categorized Roma children in the regular classes existed in Vinica - 63%, while in the special classes in Stip - 77,78%. The same trend persists in the school year 2011/2012. The percentage in Vinica is highest with regard to the regular classes - 65%, while in Stip with regard to the special classes - 78,38%.

In the school year 2012/2013, Stip leads the way with regard to regular classes - 35,29%, and Prilep with regard to special classes – 66%. In the school year 2013/2014, the highest is the percentage of categorized Roma children in the regular classes in Delcevo - 55,55%, while with regard to the special classes the leading place is taken by Prilep - 63%.

If the school year 2010/2011 is taken as a starting year, while 2013/2014 as the last year, in general, one cannot notice a significant trend of decline in the number of categorized Roma children in the regular classes. In Stip, where the percentage is very high, one cannot notice any decline, - 33% in Debar, - 63% in Vinica. With regard to special classes, these changes are more visible and this is a positive fact given that the overall purpose is to increase the trend of decline in the special classes to the regular classes that categorized children attend.

Despite the trend of decline, still the decline is not significant given that we speak about a period of four years. In Stip, the percentage reduced for 16%, in Kumanovo for 32%, in Bitola for 9%, in Vinica for 11%, while stagnation is noticed in Delcevo, Tetovo, Struga, Kavadarci and Prilep (the last two municipalities still have the same high percentage of over 50%). Trend of increase is noticed in Kocani for 4%, Kisela Voda for 43%, Kicevo for 11%.

**Table 1**

Municipality	Roma students, who were categorized as children with psychological disabilities and attended regular schools in regular classes in 2010/2011	Roma students, who were categorized as children with psychological disabilities and attended regular schools in regular classes in 2011/2012	Roma students, who were categorized as children with psychological disabilities and attended regular schools in regular classes in 2012/2013	Roma students, who were categorized as children with psychological disabilities and attended regular schools in regular classes in 2013/2014
Stip	35,29	42,86	35,29	35,29
Kumanovo	14,85	23,85	16,13	14,89
Cair	20,00	18,18	10	16,67
Tearce	14,29	23,08	0	22,22
Gostivar	0,00	0	0	0
Debar	33,33	33,33	0	0
Vinica	63,16	65	0	0
Aerodrom	8,70	6	0	7,5
Gazi Baba	5,45	0	10,13	10
Gjorce Petrov	10,00	11,76	0	4,17
Kocani	0,00	0	100	100
Veles	0,00	0	0	0
Kisela Voda	4,08	0	7,27	4,17
Delcevo	0,00	0	0	55,56
Tetovo	13,16	14,63	20	13,85
Struga	0,00	0,00	0	0
Kavadarci	9,09	9,09	9,09	9,09
Rankovce	50,00	50,00	50	50
Prilep	7,14	10,71	12,28	3,03
Kicevo	0	0	0	12,5
Kriva Palanka	0	11,11	0	18,18
Rosoman	0	20	50	50

Table 2 shows the percentage of Roma children with psychological disabilities per municipalities. The percentage is calculated in terms of the total number of children with disabilities in certain municipality that attend a particular type of classes. The comparison refers to the different school years when Roma with disabilities were enrolled to attend special classes, per municipality.

**Table 2**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Roma students, who were categorized as children with psychological disabilities and attended regular schools in special classes in 2010/2011</b>	<b>Roma students, who were categorized as children with psychological disabilities and attended regular schools in special classes in 2011/2012</b>	<b>Roma students, who were categorized as children with psychological disabilities and attended regular schools in special classes in 2012/2013</b>	<b>Roma students, who were categorized as children with psychological disabilities and attended regular schools in special classes in 2013/2014</b>
Stip	77,78	78,38	60	61,29
Kumanovo	71,21	55,17	48	39,58
Tearce	0	0	12,5	0
Gostivar	25	25	17,65	0
Vinica	11	12,5	0	0
Gazi Baba	0	0	7,69	0
Kocani	31,82	26,67	41,18	35,71
Kisela Voda	7,14	7,14	61,54	50
Delcevo	60	47,06	53,33	56,25
Tetovo	15,15	15,15	0	16,67
Struga	10	9,09	11,11	9,09
Kavadarci	57,89	52,94	59,09	56,52
Prilep	60,78	66,07	66,04	63,04
Kicevo	0	12,5	12,5	12,5
Bitola	51,61	37,5	38,24	42,42

If one takes into consideration only those municipalities that in any school year from 2010/2011 to 2013/2014 registered at least one categorized

Roma child, the total percentage of reduction of the number of these categorized children in the regular classes is very insignificant and accounts for 1,2%, while in the special classes this decline in the school year 2013/2014 as compared to 2010/2011 accounts for 5%, as clearly shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

	2010/2011 1	2011/2012 2	2012/2013 3	2013/2014 4
Percentage of Roma students who are categorized as children with disabilities in the regular classes on national level	8,6675	9,886	8,857	7,632
Percentage of Roma students who are categorized as children with disabilities in the special classes on national level	44	41,43	41,315	39,012

Although the analysis uses only the total number of the municipalities that in any of the years from 2010 to 2014 registered at least one Roma child in the schools, one can notice that the enrollment of Roma children who are categorized as children with psychological disabilities in 2014 compared to 2010 increased for 20%, and the same is the percentage of the 5 number of Roma children, who were enrolled in first grade in special classes in 2014 in comparison with 2010.

This constitutes a good trend, given the general recommendation to increase the number of categorized children in the regular classes, thus respecting the process of inclusion. However, there is a persistent concern due to the fact that the percentage of Roma children is still very high; who are enrolled in the regular classes just because they are categorized and this constitutes the so-called latent or semi-segregation within the classes (see below the part that refers to causes for segregation).

**Table 4**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Roma students who are enrolled as children with psychological disabilities and enrolled in the first grade in regular schools in regular classes	25	54,17	51,52	40	45,45
Roma students who are enrolled as children with psychological disabilities and enrolled in the first grade in regular schools in special classes	75	45,83	48,48	60	54,55

#### **4. Procedural reasons for existence of segregation**

##### *4.1. School level*

Based on the official documents, interviews and conducted focus groups, one can generally conclude that the procedures in the categorization process are not clear. Furthermore, one can conclude from the first focus group that part of the participants (employed at the professional services in the schools or teachers) are not sufficiently familiar with the existing procedures.

One can conclude that *besides the parent, no one else can initiate the categorization procedure for the child*. Also, the role of the professional service and the teacher in the school regarding the overall procedure is not defined with regard to the initiation of the procedure or in the course of its realization. There are no standardized tests in the course of enrollment of children in the first grade, except on the level of City of Skopje among the pedagogues within the Association of pedagogues of the City of Skopje (according to the statement of a pedagogue who participated in the focus group). The need for standardization on national level was also emphasized as well as the absence of an advisor pedagogue at the Bureau for development of education in order to introduce and coordinate the reconciliation of tests and testing procedure.

During primary and secondary education, Roma children are not given the possibility to be taught in the mother tongue (Roma or Turkish language,

depending on the region where they live, except if Macedonian is their mother tongue). *Language is another barrier in the process of testing the child and also in the course of the teaching, and lack or insufficient command of the language, may also serve as base to get wrong picture about the psychological development of the child.*

*Except from the focus group discussion:*

*Are there problems with regard to the poor command of language?*

“Testing is done with the assistance of 1-4 grade teachers. In our team, we always have a colleague who speaks Roma language in order to be able to understand each other.”

The psychologist points out that when the teachers have problem with a particular child in the course of the teaching and refer the child to the psychologist with an argument that the child is educationally neglected, often it is concluded that the child cannot understand the teachers because of poor command of Macedonian language. “When we are not certain if a particular child has mild disability, we refer the child to the Commission at the Institute for mental health so that they can give their opinion.”

It may happen during the educational process that a particular child should be tested if one notices certain problems regarding the development.

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*What happens with the children who are tested in schools where no one is familiar with their mother tongue? For instance, Roma in Eastern Macedonia speak Turkish language?*

“Testing is done with difficulties, while during the teaching usually another Roma child is asked to translate. Particular disabilities are often detected a bit late during the first or second grade, and rarely during the testing. Disabilities are usually detected during the teaching or while playing with other children.”

“The parents of children who have problems to use Macedonian language are informed that they need to pay more attention to this problem.”

“Roma language is like an optional subject.”

“It is very difficult to make sure that attention is paid to every child with such problem, also when s/he plays with the other children. However, the school Braka Ramiz is a positive example, because most of the students are Roma and they help each other. It is most problematic when the number of Roma children is lower. During the breaks, teachers try to talk to them in Macedonian language.”

*Do you individually decide that the child should go the Institute for mental health or you inform the parent that the child should be taken there for assessment?*

“I inform the parents and they rarely show resistance. Some parents take the children for an assessment; others have not done that yet. It is up to the parents’ will.”

One has to underline that the *procedure for continuous monitoring of the psychological development of the child within the school and the process for initiation of categorization* is not regulated. The respective procedure is not regulated either on national or school level, and everything is up to the established practice so far.

#### 4.2. *Categorization commissions*

The Commission at the Institute for Mental Health and the commissions that function in several towns in the country have the competences about categorization of children’s disability. The criteria that parents use whether they should take the child for categorization to the Commission at the Institute for mental health or to the regional committees are neither clear enough nor there is clear distinction between the competencies of the commissions that function within the municipalities on one hand, and the Commission within the Institute for mental health, on the other hand.

*The assessment and categorization of the child is not done on basis of written protocols.* The process is carried out by a multidisciplinary team comprised of psychiatrist, psychologist, defectologist and social worker. From defectological and psychological aspect, on the basis of conducted interviews, one can conclude that the family and the broad environment influence the

psychological development of the child, while the insufficient education and insufficient life skills and habits may contribute to the so-called social difference in the child which is reflected on the psychological impairment of the child. *From the discussions during the interviews and focus groups, one can conclude that there is no developed methodology and procedures to distinguish between educational neglect and impairment in the psychological development.*

*Excerpt from the focus group discussion:*

*How can one distinguish between intellectual disability and educational neglect?*

“For instance, a child cannot tell the different colors, cannot count to ten, and a certain non-verbal test is given, some kind of puzzle. After the first test, the child is not referred to the Commission in order to create feeling of trust. After four or five meetings, the child is referred to the Commission. The questions are general. How many members are there in your family? What do you do during the day? What is the weather like outside? and similar questions. Any non-communication with the psychologist is also treated as an indication for a problem.”

“Most of them have been clients since their early age. There is biological, psychological or social impairment and most often they have been referred by the pediatrician. We have opened health cards for most of them since the age of 18 months. The percentage of such children is unknown. Most of them are referred by the special, but also by the regular schools. There is also big number of children who are referred later. They must have a referral from a family doctor.”

“Triage is most desirable, however; it is not done. It means that the child should be examined at the Institute before it is referred to the Commission. It is done at the admission unit by a doctor. Family doctors need to be more precise, they schedule the appointments with any specialist at the Institute, and not with the most adequate specialist. The family doctor should make a referral to the psychiatrist at the Institute, and not a general referral to the Institute. The obligatory documentation includes: referral from a family doctor; letter from the Centre for social work, because regardless of the findings, they must be registered at the Centre for social work; health insurance; birth certificate for the child and identification card of the parent. It is not important whether there is referral from the school.”

“The parent must give consent about categorization. It is necessary that the Commission also gets the opinion from the triage, however the Commission would accept the case even without triage.”

*What do educational neglect and intellectual disability mean? How do you recognize the line of division? Question for the representative from the Institute for mental health.*

“One cannot decide. We use both verbal and non-verbal tests, for example if the child does not speak the language. Maybe the child has some mild disability, however; it does not belong to a certain category. The difference between educational neglect and impaired psychological development includes obstacles in the emotional and intellectual abilities and similar. Cognitive, social and emotional skills are far more different in comparison with the skills of children with educational neglect. We give conclusions, and not findings about the children with educational neglect. If one sees a conclusion, it is obvious that it is not a matter of a child with intellectual disability.”

#### *4.3. Records about the psychological development of children in the pre-school period*

One can conclude that pediatricians are not involved in the process nor proactively keep records about the psychological development of the child since birth to first grade. Such records are not organized by the state neither through the medical centers in certain municipalities nor through the activities of psychologists and pediatricians. This is necessary in order to see whether the impairments of the psychological development had been identified in the child since the pre-school period, because according to the experts, it more likely that a child would have such impairment of the psychological development during the school period if such impairment also existed during the pre-school period. If such records are kept, there will be more likelihood to be able to distinguish between educational neglect and impairments of the psychological development that lead to intellectual disability.

#### *4. 4. Transfer from special school or class to a regular class*

The professionals in the areas of defectology, psychology and pedagogy have reached consensus regarding the need for continuous and legally standardized re-categorization of children who are categorized with mild

impairments in the psychological development. Also, there is consensus about the need of the so-called inclusion, i.e. inclusion of children with mild psychological impairments in the regular classes. Such process can contribute to increased integration of children and will ensure bigger impact on their development.

The trends about the inclusion of categorized children in the regular classes were previously presented, however; one has to underline that the *inclusion of a categorized child in the regular classes constitutes discrimination, because it is a kind of semi-segregation*. Apparently, the child is included in the regular classes, however given that the child is learning according to tailored programs with lower quality and also the approach to this child is individual, this is still segregation within the class. If individual approach is applied to every child in the class, then the approach to the categorized child will not differ. *While a particular child is invalidly categorized and goes to a regular class or transferred from special to a regular class, that child is still indirectly discriminated against through the so-called semi or latent segregation within the class.*

*Excerpts from the focus group discussion:*

*Director of special school*

“Big numbers of children are sent from the special to the regular schools, but afterwards the parents request to return the child to the special school because of the child’s inability to get adjusted to the program.”

“These children in massive numbers are sent to special schools with letters from regular schools. Their explanation is that they cannot respond to the needs of those children.”

“20 children are faced with this problem. They cannot get adjusted to the curriculum. Those children have educational and social limitations. They cannot fit into the environment. They are having problems regarding the transfer from special to a regular school.”

“They have an assistant for the external assessment, however, there is no such assistant for these children in the regular schools.”

#### 4.5. *Interinstitutional cooperation*

One can conclude low level of interinstitutional cooperation among the national institutions such as the Ministry of health, Ministry of labor and social policy and the Ministry of education and science as well as among the national and local authorities, national institutions and the schools in general, and the national and local authorities with the civil sector. During the joint policy creation to tackle this problem, an encouraging fact is the joint work of institutions in the preparation of the draft model for assessment. Special schools and schools which have employed defectologists do not dispose of developed procedures that enable them to be engaged by regular schools with children with mild psychological development impairments.

There is lack of coordinated policies for training both the staff and the parents about the negative effects from this phenomenon and about taking preventive measures. There is absence of developed system that enables to bring closer the knowledge and skills of Roma children to the other children, if assessed that this is necessary, through extracurricular activities or introduction of zero grade that will serve as a preparatory period. The system of kindergartens is excluded from the system of continuous monitoring of the child development, which is perceived as a negative aspect.

Some participants in the focus groups emphasized that local self-government units often present unreal data about the number of children with categorization in order to receive more funds from the state, because funding provided for these children is bigger. It is unclear which is the way that schools with categorized children are financed and it is unknown how much funds are allocated by the state that really reach those children, i.e. about the needs for their more quality education, or these funds are reallocated for other purposes.

There are indicators that show positive trends in tackling the problem. The new model that is proposed by the Ministry of labor and social policy is not directed towards the categorization of the child based on the impairments, but rather an assessment of the child's abilities, i.e. it is concentrated on emphasizing the child's abilities and finding ways how to adjust the conditions in order to enhance those abilities. The approach towards the disability is now based on the social model, rather than the medical model, i.e. it is not concentrated only on the diagnosis but the child's situation and how to improve it. Specifically, how to create conditions that will be adjusted to the child's situation.

The fact that the initiative for assessment can be made by the pediatrician is really encouraging, and that implies continuous monitoring of the child's development and redefinition of the assessment. The system of nine regional centers/commissions that will be responsible for the assessment and one national Commission is already defined, whereby it is expected that second instance action will be enhanced and there will be more control and

reconciliation in the work. However, one can conclude dependency on the Ministry of labor and social policy, although the composition of the commission needs to be multidisciplinary and the considered matters need to be inter-sectoral. Although there is a plan to apply the World Health Organization international classification, yet its application is not sufficiently clear in the country and there is no foreseen transitory period to be tested.

Furthermore, each case file that will be opened by the Commission will be handled by one member of the commission, i.e. s/he will be responsible for it. It is not sufficiently clear whether the same person can be fully competent about all aspects of the case file (although the work on the case file is multidisciplinary) given the different types of disability. It is not planned that the handling of case files (responsible person for the case file) is under the competence of the staff in the administrative service so that everyone can have equal access to the treatment of the problem and everyone as professional can deal from his/her own aspect of expertise so that s/he is not burdened with administrative work and unnecessary interference with the case file and other aspects of expertise which are not in his/her field of expertise.

## **5. Recommendations**

1. Strengthening the institutional cooperation among the Ministry of education and science, Ministry of health, Ministry of labor and social policy and local government units in order to tackle the problem of segregation and create joint policies for future prevention of these phenomena.
2. Creation of protocols that enable the professional services to make clear distinction between educational neglect and impairments in the psychological development of the child, both during the testing process at enrollment in first grade and during the whole educational process. It is necessary that the school psychologist is given possibility to officially inform the parent about identified problems and to indicate to the need for categorization. Such possibility should also be provided to the school psychologist in order to notify the child's family doctor.
3. Since the child's earliest age, pediatricians should dispose of data about the child's psychological development and to keep record of some problems in the child's health record. This shall contribute to easier identification if the child has a particular history of psychological development impairments and also to distinguish between the educational or social neglect of the child.

4. Throughout the testing for first grade and in the course of categorization there is need to provide an interpreter in the language that the child understands, or the team should include a member that understands the language used by the child. This obligation should be regulated as a norm.
5. When children are tested as persons with mild disability and they are further sent to special classes or regular classes, one should take into consideration only the official document – Finding and opinion from the Commission at the Institute for mental health or the commissions in certain municipalities. Opinions from other similar institutions or certificates issued by particular doctors should not be taken into consideration (although such documents do not enable the parent to receive the monthly cash benefit, yet, it still happens that children are specified or categorized as persons with psychological disability according to such documents).
6. Given that local self-government units quite often do not provide real data about the number of categorized children, and in order to be allocated bigger amounts of funding from the Ministry of education and science (by using the previously stated documents), one has to strengthen the control over the credibility of data. Namely, it is necessary that either each municipality is requested to provide the opinions and findings in an annex or to create an integrated database where the staff from the Ministry of labor and education can check the database at the Institute of mental health.
7. There is necessity to start the testing of children by the school professional services at the age of five. It is necessary that pre-school classes start functioning within the primary schools in order to provide preparatory educational activities. After the child has undergone the testing process and his/her educational neglect is established, it would be necessary to establish an institutional mechanism that will instruct the parent about the duty to enroll the child in such pre-school preparatory activities. The purpose would be to ensure an approximately equal scope and quality of knowledge with the other children so that the child can fit into the regular educational process. Throughout the educational process, it would be necessary to tailor the program for certain subjects for each child that is further identified as educationally neglected, or the children that entered the educational process without any pre-school preparations. Tailored program implies that additional classes are organized for those children and that more

intensive work should be undertaken during the teaching process. Any tailored teaching should be controlled by the professional services and they need to keep records about any effects on school level.

8. Parents need more education regarding the educational needs of their children, as well as the need for pre-school classes or additional classes, however; at the same time, they need to be informed about the negative aspects of categorization, if the parent insists on that which in fact is unnecessary.
9. There is need to raise the awareness of the school staff as well as the bodies that make or will make the categorization that it is an exceptionally responsible activity, as well as that any incorrect action may give rise to indirect discrimination. Also, there is a need to raise the awareness about the existence of prejudices which are deeply rooted in the society with regard to certain categories of citizens, including Roma.
10. Mechanism for sanctions should be created if established that a child was inadequately categorized. The procedure for reexamination of categorization may be initiated by parents, family doctor or school pedagogue or psychologist. The two-layer mechanism needs to be strengthened, that is, second instance that will decide upon filed appeals.
11. In the course of primary education, mechanism needs to be established for re-assessment of the child as well as to specify if there is need to change the findings and opinion about categorization of the child, however, not as result of irregular categorization, but as result of positive changes in the development of the child. It is recommended that the individuals from the previous item make initiatives for such repeated assessment.
12. Mechanism should be created for continuous assessment of the child for whom there are findings and opinion about impairment of the psychological development. Such assessment should contribute to identify the possibilities to transfer the child in a regular class or in a special class if the child goes to a special school.
13. Program should be designed for so-called mobile defectologists (the existing ones, i.e. those employed at the special schools or regular schools should be utilized or new defectologists should be employed).

This program will enable to engage the defectologists in one municipality primarily for the children who are categorized and included in regular classes.

14. Local self-government units need to create programs for raising the awareness of Roma parents that they need to increase their engagement for work with children at pre-school age. Also, it is recommended that centers are created within municipalities where parents and children, along with a teacher can be given an opportunity to acquire certain knowledge and skills needed for the children in some form of free extracurricular activities.
15. Promotion and improvement of programs for free kinder gartens for Roma children.

General recommendation to the countries with the problem of segregation: Policymakers can and should take urgent steps to ensure widespread desegregation outcomes. First, as most national and European institutions prioritize Roma education as a means for social inclusion, the focus on desegregation should be clearer in/ the policy papers. Secondly, policies should be reconfigured to combine social development and human rights approaches. Human rights approaches focusing on litigation are often reactive and address past injustices. This is important but the strategy needs to be complemented with forward-looking measures that enhance the chances of effective and sustainable desegregation. A range of social inclusion methods should be added to facilitate this sort of “holistic approach” to the complexities of future Roma desegregation. Roma economic is obviously a critical starting point. Widespread employment discrimination cannot be ignored when aiming to achieve desegregation and equal opportunities in education (A. Fuller; 2015, 120).

## **6. Conclusions**

In the period from 2010-2014, one could notice a high percentage of segregated Roma children both in the regular schools as part of the regular and special classes and in the special schools which constitutes indirect, systemic and persistent discrimination.

Most problematic are the municipalities of Stip, Kocani, Bitola, Kisela Voda, Kumanovo, Vinica, Prilep, Delcevo, Kavadarci and Bitola, however; one cannot disregard the percentage of segregated Roma children also in the other municipalities.

One can conclude a trend of slight decline in the number of categorized Roma children and slight decline in the number of these children in special

classes and increase in their number in the regular classes. Although the increase in the number of Roma children in the regular classes is due to the ongoing process of inclusion, yet, if the child is categorized with mild psychological disability and goes to regular classes but learns according to a tailored program with lower quality and the approach to that child is special (and such individual approach is not applied to every child), one can conclude that the segregation still persists in a latent form. Nevertheless, it exists and in such case it constitutes indirect discrimination.

There are cultural and societal determinants for this phenomenon which can be identified in the family context, also generally in the culture of the Roma community, in the stereotypes of other communities towards the Roma community etc. However, this cannot serve as justification for the existence of this problem.

There is lack of clear protocols to distinguish between the educational neglect from the impairment of psychological development, as well as standardized tests for the assessment made by commissions at different levels. Furthermore, there is lack of standardized tests for the work of school professional services used during the enrollment of the child in first grade or during the assessment of the child's possible disability in the higher grades.

There is lack of institutional cooperation during the policy creation to tackle this problem and also in general with regard to the categorization of children with mild intellectual disability.

Some progress has been made in the efforts to tackle this problem and create a new model that will contribute to the assessment of the child's abilities and not to the categorization of disability.

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