



ROMA EDUCATION PROGRAM

Evaluation Report 2005-6

Skopje, November 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Roma Education Program is developing successfully in primary, secondary and university education and is exerting a strong influence, not only on the improvement of the regularity of attendance and of the achievements among Roma students, but also on the work of the teachers (REP and non-REP teachers, mentors and non-mentors), educators and especially on the parents.

From the perspective of the REP set goals, it can be concluded that:

- One of the basic goals of the Programme is to improve the competencies of Roma students for a more successful achievement of the standards in primary and secondary education. In this respect, the impact of the Program is strongest in the improvement of the learning achievements at all levels of the REP students' education, whereas in the area of regular attendance, great progress was made in primary and higher education, but not so much in secondary education.
- The Program is successfully functioning in the preparation of the children from preschool age for successful integration in the primary education. The increase in the percentage of children who continue into the formal education system is a sufficient argument that the REP entirely fulfils its task in increasing the competencies of pre-school children and their preparation for timely commencement of the compulsory education.
- On the plan of achieving the standards in primary and secondary education, the Roma students are progressing permanently, improving their success in learning and regular attendance. Drop out of students has decreased and the progression rate has increased.
- In the area of achieving standards in secondary education, the Roma students have, under the influence of the REP, significantly increased their learning achievements. However, there are no changes on the plan of decreasing absenteeism, i.e. regular attendance is still a challenge among Roma secondary school students.
- REP is performing successfully in higher education by retaining the students in the higher education system, thus increasing their chances for receiving a university diploma. The REP through Romaversitas provides strong support to the Roma students by organising a broad range of educational activities, aimed at improving their competencies.
- The REP has a strong influence not only on the students, but puts the REP and the other teachers in a new position. The implementation of the Program in many cases stimulates collaboration among teachers and cooperation between teachers and students. Animation of the parents and their mobilisation into the Program is somewhat more difficult to achieve. Given the already known problems Roma parents face in everyday life, it is to be expected that this problem becomes an additional challenge for FOSIM and its implementing partners.
- It can be generally concluded that the parents, albeit at a slower pace, are becoming more and more involved in the Program. Their presence and collaboration with the teachers is becoming more frequent, and their interest in their children's progress is increasing. Most often, the parents conduct regular visits to the school (during parents' meetings) and extraordinary visits to the teachers to discuss and agree joint action. The latter is especially

pronounced among part of the parents in their communication with the mentors from secondary education.

- The greatest success of the REP is achieved in the area of integration of Roma students in the schools. Thanks to the successful operation of the RECs, the REP teachers in primary and the mentors in secondary education, as well as the activities and approach applied in the collaboration with the students, this goal is being successfully achieved.
- In comparison with the 2005 results, it can be concluded that the REP teachers (with SBS and RWCT training) have strengthened not only their own influence on the Roma students - REC beneficiaries, but have also managed to raise their reputation among peer teachers. To a large extent, the statements of the teachers reflect the fact that the approaches and strategies used by REP teachers (enhanced individual approach, diverse creative activities, improved order in the work, strengthened contacts with the parents, etc.), are to a large extent an inspiration for the other teachers as well, and some attempt to apply them.
- The trend of mutual cooperation between project teachers and other teachers in the schools, which started last year, is continuing and strengthening. Teachers cooperate with each other more and more, exchange ideas and experiences, plan strategies for solving problems related to individual cases and frequently plan the activities together.
- The increase in the percentage of children who continue into the formal education system and the improvement in the learning competencies and in the regular attendance of the Roma primary school students are sufficient arguments that the RECs entirely fulfil their task through: organisation of activities for education and socialisation, motivation of the children for attendance at the Centres and for learning, strengthening of the sense of responsibility, development of habits for collegiality, hygiene, protection from diseases, proper behaviour at home and outside, socialisation, acceptance of the others, etc. The Centres also organise activities such as parents' meetings where they discuss with the parents relevant topics like regular attendance, school discipline, significance of education, the role of the parents in the children's development, the children's responsibility, hygiene, protection from diseases, etc

On the basis of the overall analysis of the research results, it can be concluded that the REP is an attractive and useful Program which at the moment, in the area of education, is the biggest support to Roma children in the country.

ENVIRONMENT

The Republic of Macedonia saw in the last four years a broad action for reforming education in all tiers. To this end, with the substantial support from the FOSIM, a number of strategic and operational documents were developed, the most significant of which is the National Programme for the Development of Education 2005-2015, which represents a conceptual framework according to which a number of operational documents were designed for the areas of: preschool, primary, secondary and higher education, IT in education, professional development of educational staff, adult education, etc. It is important to mention that this package of developmental documents was adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia in 2006, granting it the status of an official state document for the development of education in the Republic of Macedonia.

As one of the elements of the developmental documents in the context of detection of the key problems in education, the issue of marginal groups was especially addressed, with a special focus on the Roma, their social, educational and employment status. In coordination with the regionally proclaimed Roma Decade, a special Strategy for Roma was designed in 2004 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Macedonia.

In parallel to these state efforts, the NGO sector played a significant role in the affirmation and development of the Roma issues, with a special stress on the improvement of the social status and the educational structure of this population group and, within it, primarily of youth. A large number of Roma NGOs are active on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia at the moment. Especially noteworthy, however, is the role of the FOSIM in the affirmation of the Roma issue. The Foundation, in collaboration with a number of Roma NGOs, undertook a broad action towards the appraisal of the situation of Roma and detection of the key problems, especially in the area of education. With the aid of a number of developmental programmes, FOSIM permanently performs towards the elimination of the problems of Roma, thus gaining the status of the key factor in the improvement of the situation of this population group in the Republic of Macedonia, especially in the area of education.

BACKGROUND

Program description:

The ultimate aim of the Macedonia Roma Education Program is facilitation of access to a continuum of quality education for all Roma girls and boys in Macedonia. The vision encompasses creative interventions and quality improvement in programmes from pre-school through university education, ideally in multicultural settings, where Roma children are fully integrated in the learning community. Program activities focus on enabling pupils to succeed in learning, especially at transition points when Roma children and youth are most vulnerable to drop-out, discrimination and otherwise poorly served by public education. The program also addresses the need for anti-bias training of teachers and school administrators.

The Program embraces and supports the goals of the region-wide Decade for Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015, to which the Macedonian Government has already committed itself.

The Roma Education Programme envisages the education system as a pipeline moving children from pre-school to university level of education. The education pipeline for Roma children and youth in Macedonia is small compared with the one of the majority and of other ethnic groups.

The **main goal** of the Roma Education Programme is to help Roma students remain in the school system and improve their school performance and attendance, through positive interventions at all levels of education.

The objectives of the project are:

1. To prepare pre-school age Roma children for entering primary school
2. To improve the school performance of Roma students aged 7-15
3. To improve the school performance of Roma students aged 15-19
4. To promote equal opportunities and increase the academic achievements of Roma students at State Universities

The pre-school and primary school programme within the Roma Education Program are targeted and based in 5 Roma settlements: “Dame Gruev” and “Klanica” in Skopje, “Lozja” and “Sredorek” in Kumanovo, and “Trizla” in Prilep, where educational initiatives were already in place and served as good examples. In these settlements active and interested Roma NGOs advocate for, and advance future projects in the community. In addition to educational services, they also provide services for members of the community.

The pre-school component focuses on improving Roma children language competencies in the Macedonian language used in public schools. It focuses on increasing the knowledge and educational experiences of Roma children so that they can begin primary school at less of an educational disadvantage compared with their non-Roma peers. It also emphasizes personal hygiene and health issues so that Roma children could be better accepted by, and comfortable with, other children.

The primary school component of the Roma Education Programme takes action in two directions: the first one focusing on regular primary schools in targeted Roma communities, and the second one focusing on out-of-school activities for Roma students organized in non-formal Roma Educational Centres.

Extensive teacher and organisational development capacity building support is provided to the primary schools in targeted areas, in order to enable better integration of Roma children. Besides increasing the skills and knowledge of teachers for using child-centred methodologies, to each of the participating schools, Anti-Bias training is delivered. In addition, schools are trained and provided with technical assistance for designing and implementing of the School Improvement Plan.

Roma Educational Centres in targeted Roma neighbourhoods are trained to actively provide out-of-school support and other creative activities to children, their parents, and to the community as a whole. Five NGOs that have already implemented Roma education initiatives are responsible for providing services such as tutoring, assistance in homework writing, preparation for exams etc.

The Roma Education Program combines the successful Macedonia experiences of the Step by Step Programme (a child-centred methodology focusing on children of up to 12 years of age), the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Programme (RWCT, a methodology that challenges students of all ages to think critically), the experiences from REI (Roma Education Initiatives) and the Roma Educational Centres (non-formal environments that support children in achieving better school performance), established and run by local NGOs.

Evaluation process description:

For the needs of the REP, detailed research into the situation of Roma in the Republic of Macedonia was carried out in 2004, with a special focus on their educational status. As a result of this research, a Baseline Study was prepared which pinpointed the key problems and conditions that influence the adverse status of Roma, especially of Roma youth in the area of education. These conclusions were used in the development and modification of the REP and in its implementation. The REP, in addition to the permanent monitoring by FOSIM and the Roma

NGOs, was monitored by the responsible sectoral ministries of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, primarily the Ministry of Education and Science. For the purpose of maintaining and improving the quality of the program implementation a periodical evaluation was conducted in 2005, which confirmed that the REP is implemented successfully and achieves excellent results. At the same time, some of the results that indicated weaknesses and possible negative processes (especially in the area of negative influences of external factors, such as: poor finances, seasonal work of the parents and students, low educational levels of parents, insufficient support by the parents and the local authorities, etc), as well as incidental negative influences by part of the teaching staff in the school, the need for additional training for the teachers and mentors, etc. were addressed in order to improve the REP and the process of its implementation in the coming period 2005-2006. The REP Evaluation for 2005-2006 is in accordance with the prescribed dynamics for permanent monitoring of the REP implementation.

In the whole course of the research, significant support was provided by the Roma NGOs and by the FOSIM REP staff. It was necessary to collect and complete the research materials, to precisely coordinate all activities foreseen by the research dynamics, to provide all sides with information, to facilitate locations for the meetings, and to secure confidentiality and discretion in the research. In this respect, the Roma NGOs and the FOSIM REP staff completed their assignments with utmost professionalism. For example, informing the parents who were to participate in the research required direct contact with each parent individually and coordination of the timing and location of the meetings. This was an exceptionally complex and significant activity. Without their support, this research would have hardly taken place. The same relates to the transmission of information to the other research subjects, namely the secondary and higher education students - scholarship recipients, as well as primary and secondary school teachers - both mentors and non-mentors, as well as to the organisation of the meetings aimed at appraising the attitudes and opinions through the research instruments and the focus group discussions.

In addition to the problems that occurred in the organisation of the research, the research itself was accompanied with a certain number of critical moments. It was, for example, necessary to overcome the reservations of the interviewees in regard to expressing their attitudes and opinions on the REP realisation. The threat had to be alleviated, that they would affirmatively respond to all REP related questions for fear of losing the scholarship, or negatively because of ill feelings towards the RECs or the FOSIM REP implementers. Therefore, all stages of the empirical research were characterised by a high degree of anonymity and data protection. Objective data were requested from the schools; anonymous questionnaires were applied, and at the focus group discussions, nobody but the members of the interviewing team and the parents were present - there were no representatives from the FOSIM REP staff or the Roma NGOs. In this way, openness and free expression of the interviewees was ensured, which makes this research a realistic presentation of the situation in the REP.

Goal of the evaluation:

- The goal of the evaluation is to determine the periodical results from the implementation of the FOSIM - Roma Education Program in the Republic of Macedonia in the period 01 September 2005 to 01 September 2006.

Sources

• Sources of Information

Following sources have been used in the preparation of the Periodical Evaluation:

- All REP primary school students

- Selected sample of Roma students in secondary schools - scholarship recipients
- All university students - scholarship recipients
- Selected sample of Roma parents whose children are involved in RECs
- Selected sample of primary and secondary school teachers (mentors and non-mentors) from Skopje, Delchevo and Kumanovo
- Selected sample of Roma parents whose children are involved in Program activities in secondary school from Skopje, Delchevo and Kumanovo

• **Evaluation/research methods**

Following research methods have been applied in order to collect valid data to cover all research objectives - with a special focus on regular attendance and success/achievements of students in primary, secondary and university education:

- **School Documentation analysis:** Defining of the real status of student attendance/absenteeism, progression and achievements in primary and secondary education
- **Portfolios:** Pre-school children portfolios provided by RECs
- **Questionnaires:** Teachers in primary (with and without SBS and RWCT training) and secondary education (both mentors and non-mentors); Educators from RECs; Parents of students from primary schools attending the FOSIM-supported Roma Education Centres)
- **Questionnaires:** university students- scholarship recipients
- **Focus group discussions:** Parents of students - scholarship recipients in secondary education; Roma university students;

The instruments used in the evaluation build on the experience from: the research conducted for the development of the Baseline Study on the situation of Roma in Macedonia in the area of education; research and projects conducted in Macedonia and in other countries which pertain to the same or similar issues by NGOs, formal educational institutions and international organisations; results obtained from the focus groups discussions conducted with students from primary and secondary schools, parents, educators in the Roma Education Centres and teachers in primary and secondary schools.

Target groups:

- **Children from Preschool groups in the RECs** / enrolled in preparatory and first grade in the school year 2006/7
- **Students:**
 - **Roma children from Pre-school education**
 - **Roma Students from primary schools** attending the following FOSIM-supported Roma Education Centres: REC "Dendo Vas" and "Soncogledi" Skopje, REC "Drom" Kumanovo, REC "Kham" Kumanovo and REC "Romano Pro Angle" Prilep, and Students from primary schools: "11 Oktomvri" PS, Kumanovo; "Braka Miladinovci" PS, Skopje; "Dobre Jovanovski" PS, Prilep; "H. T. Karpos" PS, Kumanovo; and "Strasho Pindzur" PS, Skopje
 - **Roma Students from secondary schools** - scholarship recipients, from: Zlate Malakovski - Gostivar; M. M. Brico - Delchevo; TUC Goce Stojtcheski - Tetovo; Mosha Pijade - Tetovo; Kole Nedelkovski - Veles; DSTU Nace Bugjoni - Kumanovo; Taki Daskalo - Bitola; Orde Tchopela - Prilep; Dimitrija Tchuposki - Veles; Goce Deltchev - Kumanovo, and secondary school from Skopje: Cvetan Dimov; Nikola Karev; Georgi Dimitrov; Dimitar Vlahov; Kotcho Racin; State Secondary Medical School Pantche Karagjozov; Lazar Tanev.
 - **Roma Students from university education** - scholarship recipients

- **Teachers:**
 - Teachers in primary education (within REI project with and without SBS and RWCT training)
 - Teachers in secondary education - both mentors and non-mentors.
- **Parents:**
 - Parents of students from primary schools attending the FOSIM-supported Roma Education Centres
 - Parents of students from secondary school - scholarship recipients from the secondary schools in Skopje, Delchevo and Kumanovo. The locations were selected deliberately, i.e. on the basis of the student achievements (best students, average and worst).

Sample of the Evaluation

- **Basic sample:** All REP primary school students and all REP students and mentors from secondary and university education.

Sub-sample:

- 152 Pre-school children (77 male and 75 female) from Preschool groups in the REC / enrolled in preparatory and first grade in the school year 2006/7

Students:

- 239 (106 male, 133 female) Roma students from primary schools attending the following FOSIM-supported Roma Education Centres: REC "Dendo Vas" and "Soncogledi" Skopje, REC "Drom" Kumanovo, REC "Kham" Kumanovo and REC "Romano Pro Angle" Prilep;
- 252 (152 male, 100 female) students from primary schools: "11 Oktomvri" PS, Kumanovo; "Braka Miladinovci" PS, Skopje; "Dobre Jovanovski" PS, Prilep; "H. T. Karpos" PS, Kumanovo; and "Strasho Pindzur" PS, Skopje;
- 220 (98 male and 114 female) Roma students from regular secondary schools - recipients of scholarships;
- 27 (24 male and 3 female) Roma students from special secondary schools.

Sample of Primary School staff:

- 62 (30 new and 32 old) primary school Teachers from Prilep, Kumanovo, Skopje, with SBS and RWCT training;
- 20 primary school teachers from Prilep, Kumanovo, and Skopje, not included in the training;

Sample of Secondary School staff:

- 45 teachers - mentors;
- 90 teachers - non-mentors.

Sample of Students:

- 68 students from regular secondary schools - recipients of scholarships (from: Delchevo, Kumanovo, Skopje) for the focus groups;
- 48 (15 new and 33 old) students from higher education - recipients of scholarships

Sample of Parents:

- 100 parents of students from primary schools attending the FOSIM-supported Roma Education Centres

- 51 parents of students from secondary schools - recipients of scholarships (from: Delchevo, Kumanovo, Skopje).

Time of Evaluation

The research was carried out in from June to September 2006 by the Research Team consisting of:

1. Zoran Velkovski, PhD, Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy/Institute of Pedagogy, Skopje
2. Graduate students from the Faculty of Philosophy / Institute of Pedagogy, Skopje

EVALUATION REPORT

Starting position

The REP Evaluation consists of four basic components: 1) insight into and analysis of the REC documentation in order to provide evidence of the specific situation of the children at preschool age; 2) insight into and analysis of the school documentation in order to provide evidence of the specific situation of the REP students (primary and secondary education) in the area of attendance/absenteeism, achievements, drop-out and progression rates, represented through the comparison of the initial situation at the beginning of the school year (01.09.2005) and the situation at the end of the school year (30.08.2006); 3) empirical research aimed at ascertaining the opinions and attitudes of (non) REP teachers in primary and secondary education on the implementation of the Programme in the respective period; and 4) empirical research aimed at ascertaining the opinions and attitudes of university students on their own progress and on the implementation of the Programme.

The research covered a sample of 1568 students, teachers and parents. It was conducted through:

- **School Documentation analysis:** 239 (106 male, 133 female) students from primary schools attending the following FOSIM-supported Roma Education Centres: REC "Dendo Vas" REC "Soncogledi" Skopje, REC "Drom" Kumanovo, REC "Kham" Kumanovo and REC "Romano Pro Angle" Prilep; 252 (152 male, 100 female,) students from the primary schools: "11 Oktomvri" PS Kumanovo, "Braka Miladinovci" PS Skopje, "Dobre Jovanovski" PS Prilep, "H. T. Karpos" PS Kumanovo, and "Strasho Pindzur" PS Skopje; 27 (24 male and 3 female) Roma students from special secondary schools.
- **Portfolios:** 152 pre-school children (77 male and 75 female) from preschool groups in the REC / enrolled in preparatory classes and in first grade in the school year 2006/7 (pre-school children portfolios provided by the RECs).
- **Questionnaires:** 100 parents of students from primary schools attending the respective FOSIM-supported Roma Education Centres; 62 (30 new and 32 old) primary school teachers from Prilep, Kumanovo, Skopje (participating in SBS and RWCT training); 20 primary school teachers from Prilep, Kumanovo, and Skopje; 45 teachers - mentors and 90 - teachers non-mentors from the secondary school; 48 (15 new and 33 old) university students - recipients of scholarships;
- **Focus group discussions:** 68 students from secondary schools - recipients of scholarships (from: Delchevo, Kumanovo, Skopje); 51 parents of students from secondary education - recipients of scholarships (from: Delchevo, Kumanovo, Skopje).

The periodical evaluation was carried out in from June to October 2006 by the Research Team.

The analysis of the results obtained will be presented in the context of the four main goals (Goal 1, 2, 3 and 4) of the Roma Education Programme and functionally related to it.

Goal 1: To prepare pre-school age Roma children for entering primary school

The total coverage of children in all of pre-school education (covering earlier years as well as the reception/preparatory year) in the Republic of Macedonia is 18.67%. Unfortunately, there is no precise data on the number of Roma children in pre-school facilities. On the basis of separate project analyses, one can conclude that the number of Roma included at this level in the education system is very small.

In the opinion of experts in the area of education, it is precisely the poor attendance rate of Roma children in preschool facilities that creates the initial handicap, i.e. the poor start-up knowledge, which later, in combination with other factors, results in poor achievements in the higher tiers of education among this population group.

In 2006, compulsory education in the Republic of Macedonia increased by one year and has now a duration of nine years. According to the new regulations children start their compulsory education at the age of 6 instead of 7, which was the case so far. Thus, attendance of reception/preparatory year is as of this year compulsory for all children. This measure was introduced because of the conclusion that 12% of children at the respective age do not attend reception/preparatory year. Although no official data have been published, research shows that is the precisely the Roma children that do not attend the final year of preschool education; their respective number in the 12% may be negligible, but within their ethnic group the non-attending children are the majority. It is expected that this measure will increase their participation in the preparatory year, thus enabling them to have an equal start in their future education.

The contribution of the Roma Education Centres (REC) has in this respect great significance for the successful educational and psycho-physical preparation of the Roma children for the start of the compulsory education. The data from the last two years indicate that the percentage of children covered with REC activities that continue into compulsory education has been permanently increasing.

Table 1 presents data on the number of Roma children who participated in the REC pre-school activities in the period September 2005-June 2006, and those who later (September 2006) managed to enrol in the first grade of compulsory education.

Tab. 1: REC Roma children at pre-school aged and at entrance into primary school		2005			2006		
		male	female	total	male	female	total
REC	Total number of children in the preschool /kindergarten group	32	25	57	77	75	152
	Enrolled in first grade	29	22	51	73	67	140
	Not enrolled	3	3	6	4	8	12

If the research conducted for the needs of the Baseline Study in 2004 showed that 84% of the children that had attended the Roma Education Centres in the previous year enrolled in regular primary schools, that percentage increased in the 2005 research to 89.47%, only to reach 92.1% in 2006.

As can be seen, although there is a legal obligation for enrolling all 6 year olds in this first level of compulsory education, there still are children who do not start on time, i.e. who are not enrolled. Due to the lack of precise and complete data, the real percentage of Roma children not attending the RECs and not enrolled in compulsory education cannot be presented. However,

based on general data and previous years' experience, it can be concluded that the percentage of such children is still high. The increase in the duration of compulsory education can help but cannot definitively resolve the problem of the low attendance rate of Roma children in preschool facilities and their timely enrolment into compulsory education. Strong factors that negatively impact the timely enrolment of Roma children in compulsory education still persist. Frequently, even under the threat of sanctions (prescribed by the Law on Primary Education), parents do not let their children attend compulsory education on time. This trend is expected to continue in the future as well.¹

The age of the research sample, i.e. the children at pre-school age, is not conducive to application of direct research methods. Therefore, it was necessary to gain insight into the situation through analysis of portfolios of children participating in the REC activities and through a questionnaire assessing the attitudes of their parents.

On the basis of the parents' attitudes, it can be concluded that the preschool aged children reflect the general situation of their respective families. The basic factor that is constantly stressed by the parents and that determines the timely enrolment of Roma children in compulsory education are the finances. However, in comparison with last year, when the financial status, too many working hours (in the grey economy), unemployment and the low educational level of the parents were quoted as the most influential factors i.e. an "alibi" for the poor commitment of the parents to their children's education, this research demonstrates an improvement in this area. The same reasons remain as an impacting factor on the educational dedication of parents and children, but a new positive contributing factor emerges: the high motivation of parents to help their children and to devote time and finances, thus indicating an increase in the awareness on the significance of education among parents, which was not the case in previous research.

A confirmation for this conclusion comes also from the statements of the educators, working in the Roma Education Centres. Unlike the previous year, when they faced problems such as irregular attendance of the pre-school aged children and less than serious attitude of parents in cases when certain action needed to be taken with the children in the family, this year such issues occur much less frequently. The number of parents interested in the activities their children undertake in the REC is increasing, and they more and more participate in the work with the children in the REC and in the family.

Unfortunately, there are still a small number of parents who treat the Centres as a free preschool facility, which cares for their children and spares them the efforts of doing it themselves. To a large extent, this group of beneficiaries seeks the solutions outside themselves. The state is most frequently and generally to blame for the problems their children have in education, without them attempting a self-critical view of the problem. It is obvious that the individual approach needs to be strengthened in the work not only with the children but also with the parents, in order to increase the awareness of the parents of the importance of the role of the parent in the optimal development of the child.

In the area of socialisation, parents stress that their children have no problems "playing" and socialising with other children, primarily of Roma ethnicity. The same opinion is verified by the Centres' staff.

¹ Research so far indicates that one part of the Roma children do not enter compulsory education on time, i.e. at the prescribed age (7 in the past and 6 starting from this year). These children frequently enrol later and do not manage to complete compulsory age because they are too old for it.

Conclusions and recommendations: The increase in the percentage of children who continue into the formal education system is a sufficient argument that the REC entirely fulfil their task in the increasing of competencies of pre-school children and their preparation for timely commencement of the compulsory education through: organisation of play activities for education and socialisation, motivation of the children for attendance at the Centres and for learning, strengthening of the sense of responsibility, development of habits for collegiality, hygiene, protection from diseases, proper behaviour at home and outside, socialisation, acceptance of the others, etc. However, due to limited staff and spatial capacities, the Centres cannot cover a larger number of children. The Centres also organise activities such as parents' meetings where they discuss with the parents relevant topics like regular attendance, school discipline, significance of education, the role of the parents in the children's development, the children's responsibility, hygiene, protection from diseases, etc.

If greater effects are desired from the work, the RECs must strengthen the campaign in the local community and locate a significant part of their work in the families of the Roma children. The key of the problems, after all, lies with them. Therefore, it is necessary to organise more frequent meetings with the parents and to facilitate additional training on given/specific topics, preferably by professionals.

Goal 2: To improve the school performance of Roma students aged 7-15

General remarks: The research covered 239 (106 male, 133 female) primary school students, Roma Centre visitors. The basic situation of these children has not improved in the last school year and is still characterised by:

- The majority of the students live in complete families (mother and father are married), but the number of those who live in incomplete families (with only one or without a parent²) is significant;
- The families have a large number of members and many children (3 and more children/family);
- Poor financial conditions in the families, which from the perspective of allocating funds for education has a negative effect on the educational mobility of children, youth and adults;
- High parent unemployment rate. The unemployment rate among the Roma population is over 70%. Most common ways of securing financial resources are work in the grey economy and seasonal work in the agricultural and industrial sectors. Unfortunately, such work most often involves whole families including the children, which has a negative impact on their education and regular attendance.
- More than half of the families receive social welfare and have an income below 5,000 denars (80 EUR), whereas 17.50% of the families have no income.
- A large number of children live in unsuitable and often illegally erected facilities, with poor living and learning conditions.
- Roma most often reside in ethnically clean areas with other Roma who share a similar fate. This way of grouping has a negative impact on the external motivation for learning.
- In many cases, children live in environments with a strong tradition that the child is only a “young adult” and should actively contribute to securing better living conditions for the family. From the perspective of education such values have a very negative impact.

The above is in compliance with the general trends and characteristics of the Roma population in the country. The lack of finances, unregulated family relations and poor living conditions, are the main characteristics of the population covered by the Roma Education Programme.

For the purposes of the Evaluation, the data received from the Roma Centre students are compared with data from the 491 (259 male, 232 female) students from the REP primary schools.

Progression: From the total number of students enrolled in primary education who benefited from the services of the RECs, not a single one dropped out of school and only 5 or 2.09% repeated the grade. The drop-out rate out (for various reasons too old, moved away, no valid marks i.e. did not attend school, sick for the whole period, deregistered, expelled from school, etc.) at the level of REP schools, among the total number of their Roma³ students is 21.59%, whereas the rate of repetition 11.20%. The situation from last year repeats itself in this year too, with the majority of students dropping out or repeating the grade, between the 5th and the 8th grade. In this case, 75.47% of the entire drop-out between the 5th and the 8th grade occur solely in the course of the 5th grade and at the transition into the 6th grade.

² The reasons are diverse: divorced parents, one parent working abroad, both parents working abroad and the children are taken care of by relatives, most often grandparents, children living with single mothers or in extramarital unions, etc.

³ This number also includes the REC students.

Tab. 2.1: A comparative presentation of the Roma students' achievements

	Grade	ENROLLED			DROP-OUTS		REPEATERS		GRADUATES	
		Total	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
2004/05	All Roma students in REP primary schools									
	5 th -8 th grade	460	258	202	17	12	86	44	155	146
		100.00	56.09	43.91	58.62	41.38	66.15	33.85	51.49	48.51
		100.00%			6,30		28,26		65.44%	
	Students attending the REC									
5 th -8 th grade	217	107	110	3	2	9	3	93	105	
	100.00	49.31	50.69	60.00	40.00	75.00	25.00	46.97	53.03	
	100.00%			2.30%		5.53%		91.24%		
2005/06	All Roma students in REP primary schools									
	5 th -8 th grade	491	259	232	69	37	22	33	163	167
		100,00	52,75	47,25	65,09	34,91	40,00	60,00	49,39	50,61
		100,00%			21,59%		11,20%		67,21%	
	Students attending the REC									
5 th -8 th grade	239	106	133	0	0	3	2	103	131	
	100,00	44,35	55,65	0,00	0,00	66,67	33,33	44,02	55,98	
	100,00%			0,00%		2,09%		97,91%		

If we know that the highest drop-out rate among the Roma students occurs exactly at the progression from the fifth to the sixth grade, the move from one location to another has little bearing in this case. The reasons for this remain the same, i.e. until the fifth grade children do not repeat the grade irrespective of the marks/success that the students achieve. However, starting from the fifth grade progression depends on the student achievements. Thus, the majority of the students with weak achievements do not manage to progress into the higher (sixth) grade, i.e. repeat the fifth grade or simply drop out from school.

In comparison with last year's results, an improvement among the REC students is evident. The fact that only 5 students repeated the grade, is an indication that the work of the REC educators and REP teachers has improved and the weaknesses from the previous year have been alleviated, i.e. the standing in the community has improved, the working conditions are better, the system of activities functions better, innovations have been introduced in the work with the children (enhanced individual approach, diverse creative activities, increased order in the work, strengthened contacts with the parents, etc.), and the professional capacities of the educators have developed.

The analysis of the results by gender gives an answer to the dilemma that arose in the 2005 evaluation, i.e. whether repetition appears more commonly among the female population. In the total number of REP Roma students this trend is repeating itself, whereas among the REC students it has been eliminated. According to statements of the REC parents (who make less and less differences in the treatment of children based on their gender and position in the education system), REC educators and teachers, this is a result of the influence of the RECs and the teaching staff and of the increased awareness in the Roma families of the necessity for education of the female population.

The role of the RECs and the schools, given the character of their work (direct contact and direct assistance) has a prominent place in the changing of the situation in the education of Roma students, especially among the female population.

It is more than obvious that the influence of the REP schools, i.e. teachers, and the influence of the REC is beginning to show in the families of the REP students. Similarly, we cannot neglect the fact that the presence of the RECs and the teacher training for more successful work with Roma children spurred a change in the climate in the schools as well as in the local communities.

From the statements of the newly trained teachers and the teachers that were not part of the REP teacher training, it can be concluded that the non-project teachers, who in the last research showed relative reservations towards the REP and the possibility that this Programme would improve the achievements of the Roma students, have amended their attitudes and opinions regarding the issue, and now even show individual initiative for improving their own work with the Roma students.

We should not forget, that in addition to the REP influence, additional stimulus for the change of the situation comes also from the influence of other NGOs, especially the Roma ones, the government measures for overcoming the weaknesses in the education sphere among the vulnerable groups and the overall campaign for overcoming the problems of the Roma that was conducted in the country in the last period. However, it is evident that the government measures hardly yield results if they are not accompanied by activities in the field, as is the case with the REP. A confirmation for this statement is the fact that the drop-out rate is much higher among students that were not attending the REC (Table 2.2).

Tab. 2.2: Roma Students not attending the REC

5 th -8 th grade	ENROLLED			DROP-OUTS		REPEATERS		GRADUATES	
	Total	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	252	152	100	69	37	26	24	59	37
100,00	60,32	39,68	65,09	34,91	52,00	48,00	61,46	38,54	
	100,00%			42,06		19,84		38,10	

The data reveals that even 61.90% of these students did not make the progression into the higher level of education, i.e. either dropped out (42.06%) or repeated the grade (19.84%). This drop-put and repetition rate is the highest one in the country. Here also, the drop-put occurs mostly in the course of the 5th grade. From the total of 140 non-REC students 80 or 57.14% dropped out, which represents over 75% of the total drop-out between the 5th and the 8th grade.

Why is this so? In order to answer this question, we must have precise records and statistical data. Unfortunately such records and data are not available in the country. The State Statistical Office does not distribute any other data except the total number of enrolled students according to ethnic affiliation. On the other hand, the services in charge of monitoring teaching and the situation in primary education rarely check whether the students that are enrolled and registered as regular students in primary education attend regularly, whether they are sick and/or whether they attend school at all or are registered only fictitiously as a number (with a name and surname) in the school ledger. Given the high drop-put rate of the students who are treated in the school books as “does not attend classes” or “has not receive any marks”, chances are that these students have not even appeared in school, but have not been deregistered and are still counted as students of the respective school. One needs to bear in mind the legal regulations, whereby the school has no mechanisms to deregister such students. This is the cause for the difference between the registered students and the real number of students that attend school.

Upon review of the data, it becomes clear that of the total students that do not attend teaching (62), the majority are registered in the fifth grade (75.80%). “The curse” of the 5th grade is the main factor in this case, too. Very often, many children do not continue their education beyond the first level of primary school (1st to 4th grade), although the school automatically registers them in the next grade. The reasons can be various, ranging from lack of finances to continue education, poor start-up knowledge acquired in lower primary school (1st to 4th grade), to traditional attitudes that it is enough for the children to be literate, to command basic reading, writing and mathematics skills, and they do not need to continue their education further. In order to determine the situation of the considerable number of Roma students who do not attend school

at all, it is necessary to undertake additional research which would point out the real reasons for the occurrence of this problem.

It is interesting to notice that in the total number of dropouts, in addition to those who have been deregistered or have left school for other reasons or have not attended school at all, 36 have been deregistered because of being too old for primary education. These overage students are a logical result of a trend, common in poor communities, especially the Roma ones, to send children to school when they are already too old. In this way, these children become too old for education while they are in primary school and do not complete their education. After leaving the school they have two choices: 1) to enrol into schools for adults and complete primary education, or 2) not continue their education at all. Thus, the regular statistical reports of the state services always contain a category “persons with incomplete primary education”.

This manifestation should be the object of a state analysis in order to detect the real situation and undertake immediate measures for this problem to be eliminated. It is evident that the legal obligation for timely attendance/start of children in compulsory education is not sufficient. The measures are clear. Either the legal regulations have to be enacted through penal measures (which in the condition of great poverty in these families would be a very unpopular measure only creating social tensions) or other measures should be undertaken, such as the REP or similar programmes, with intermediary mechanisms to resolve this problem.

Regular attendance and success/achievements: Table 2.3 presents data on regular attendance and success of REC students and of all Roma students in the REP schools. It is evident that in regard to attendance/absenteeism, the REC students have a lower rate of absences than the average rate at the level of REP schools, i.e. that they have progressed more in comparison with the other students. The advantage of the REC students would be even more visible if the total number of absences included those of the students who had left schools or repeated the grade, and who are to be found among the students that do not attend the RECs.

Tab. 2. 3: Comparative presentation of absences and the average success rate of the Roma students

2005	Absences			Average school success
	Excused	Unexcused	Total	
All Roma students in REP primary schools				2,58
5 th -8 th grade (average)	51,82	35,52	87,34	
Students attending the REC				2,73
5 th -8 th grade (average)	60,25	26,55	86,80	
2006 ⁴	Absences			Average school success
	Excused	Unexcused	Total	
All Roma students in REP primary schools				2,79
5 th -8 th grade (average)	52,47	26,35	78,79	
Students attending the REC				2,95
5 th -8 th grade (average)	49,96	19,35	69,31	

The average number of absences per student in the REP schools is 78.79, whereas among the REC students it amounts to 69.31. Unlike the 2005 research, when the difference in the average number of absences between the two groups of students was very small, in this year it has drastically risen. The REC students show better results in all three categories of absences (total, excused, unexcused).

⁴ Students that left school or repeated the grade are not included in the calculation.

It has to be stressed though that this trend of improvements in the attendance rate is not characteristic of the REC students only. It is evident that in comparison with 2005, the average number of absences per student at the level of REP schools has improved.

In regard to the gender distribution, the trend of male students having a higher rate of absences than the female students remains.

If one compares the attendance rate of the REC students with the attendance rate of the non-REC Roma students, the differences become even greater. Table 2.4 reveals that the attendance rate of the latter students is very low.

Tab. 2.4: Students not attending the REC				
2006⁵	Absences			Average school success
	Excused	Unexcused	Total	
5th-8th grade (average)	58,60	43,42	102,02	2,47

Although the calculation does not take into account the drop-outs and the repeaters, the average number of absences is exceptionally high - 102.02 per student, or in other words an absence in the duration of three weeks in the course of the year for each student. Necessarily, such a high rate of absenteeism directly affects the average learning achievements, resulting in an average mark of 2.47 per student.

Given that student success in learning is directly related to the regular attendance of teaching, it is encouraging to see the trend of improvement of the attendance rate among the REC students, which gives rise to the expectation for an improvement of their achievements in their further education. However, we should not forget that, despite the decreasing absenteeism rate, the REC students still belong to the group of students with a higher absenteeism rate on a national level. It is evident that this characteristic of Roma students is one of the biggest impediments to achieving better learning success and progress in learning is still present.

If we take a look at the overall distribution of absences, we will notice an uneven spread, i.e. there is a division of students into those with a high number of absences and those with a low number of absences. In the second category of students, it is noteworthy to mention those with no absences at all in the whole of the last school year. As a rule, high achievers always have a lower rate of absence.

The poor financial situation among part of the Roma families prevents additional allocation of resources from the family budget for the education of the children, but also causes the children to be engaged during the school year in seasonal work or other types of work, with the aim of improving the family budget. The children's seasonal work for appropriate wage (picking grapes, vegetables, etc.) is most present in autumn, more precisely at the beginning of the school year. Such work not only increases the number of absences, i.e. decreases the regularity of the attendance, but also additionally impacts the future success of part of the children for the duration of the entire school year, as they miss a significant part of the learning material, miss out on the basis and have great difficulties in catching up with the other children afterwards. In the end, it all results in a low success rate in learning.

⁵ Students that left school or repeated the grade are not included in the calculation.

Another argument for the success with which the REC educators and the REP teachers realise their assignments is the data on the average learning achievements of the students. Unlike the previous year, when the REC students had an average mark of 2.73 (on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being awarded for excellent achievements), that average mark has risen to 2.95 in 2006. The improvements are exceptionally great given the fact that they were achieved in only one year.

What are the reasons for this? We know that in 2005 the students that were interviewed complained about bad living conditions and everyday problems they were facing (lack of textbooks, lack of learning materials and stationery, bad learning conditions; lack of clothing and footwear, poor finances, lack of separate room for learning, problems with reading and writing, teachers talking too fast and the poor command of the Macedonian language). The same reasons were also pointed out by the REC educators, the teachers and above all the parents. However, the 2006 research points out to certain changes detected in the opinions and attitudes of the teachers, educators and parents. They could be summarised as follows: increased interest by the parents in the education of their children (they try to devote attention and create better living and learning conditions); enhanced experience by the REC educators resulting in a better organisation and diversity of activities, increased competencies of teachers and accordingly a more successful approach in the work with Roma students, increased motivation for learning and self-confidence among the students themselves. We single out, as very important, the opinion of the teachers who did not participate in the REP training, who stress that the credit for the improvement of the attendance and success of the students goes to the trained teachers, the REC staff, the other teachers in the school and the parents, the same ones that in 2005 were identified as a weak influence factor.

The improvement of the regular attendance and the learning achievements among the Roma students stresses the need not only to continue the REC activities and strengthen the efforts of the school staff, but also to strengthen the REP campaign in the Roma communities and to increase the involvement of the state in this issue (primarily of the politicians from the Roma ethnic group and the local authority), thus confirming the need for an integral approach in resolving this problem. It is, namely, not sufficient only to undertake educational measures, but it is imperative that they be accompanied by parallel developmental measures, such as those pertaining to economic development (employment opportunities) and improvement of the socio-cultural environment in the Roma communities.

REP influence

In addition to data on regular attendance and learning achievements, the evaluation had as its goal obtaining data on the overall influence and realisation of the REP Programme. The aim of the evaluation was to collect indirect information on the implementation of the REP in primary education. These data relate to:

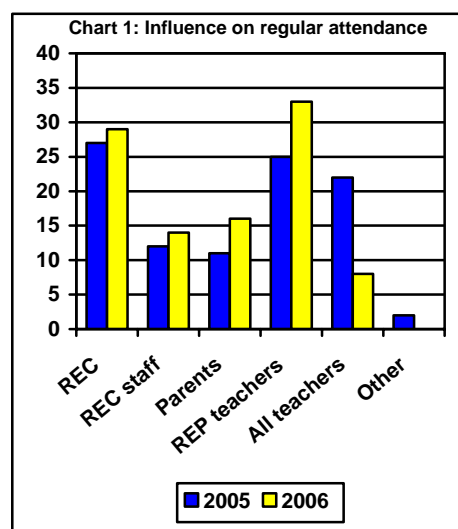
Students: All persons contacted to a large degree agree that the Roma students - beneficiaries of the RECs - were characterised in the current school year by: increased motivation for learning, improved regularity of attendance, improved discipline, improved success, increased self-confidence, more active participation in the teaching process, enhanced creativity, respect towards teachers and visible satisfaction when completing assignments/responsibilities successfully. These characteristics manifested themselves not only at school, but were also witnessed in the RECs and partly also by the parents themselves - especially the motivation and successful achievements.

It is characteristic that both teachers and educators stress the trend of progress, but with great disproportions among the students. Two groups are created: a growing one composed of students who progress faster and another one progressing at the old trend, i.e. slowly or not progressing at all. This situation is most often related to the family conditions of the weaker students, with the poor start-up knowledge, the parents and the objective conditions in which these students live pointed to as the main reasons for this situation. It is clear that such insight opens new challenges for an enhanced individual approach and greater efforts for overcoming the problem.

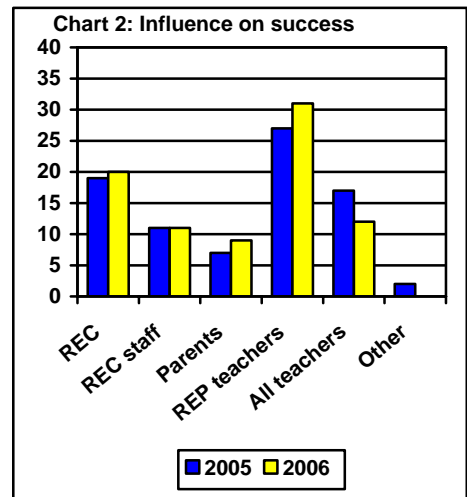
Teachers: According to the statements of educators and non-REP teachers (those who have undergone training and those who haven't), the factors of influence for the improvement of the regularity of attendance among REC students are the REP teachers, as the most influential factor, then the RECs, the parents and then other teachers. It is noticeable that parents appear in 31% of the responses as strong factors that contribute to the regular attendance of students.

In comparison with the 2005 results it can be concluded that the REP teachers have strengthened not only their own influence on the Roma students - REC beneficiaries, but have also managed to raise their reputation among peer teachers. A significant number of teacher statements reflected the fact that the approaches and strategies used by REP teachers are to a large extent an inspiration for the other teachers as well, and some attempt to apply them.

The trend of mutual cooperation between project teachers and other teachers in the schools, which started last year continues and strengthens. Teacher cooperate with each other more and more, exchange ideas and experiences, plan strategies for solving problems related to individual cases and frequently plan the activities together. This information is very important from the perspective of the REP sustainability.



The improvement of the knowledge and successfulness of the work of the REP teachers is verified also through the opinions and attitudes of the other teachers relating to the regularity of attendance and success of the Roma students. According to them the strongest factor that influenced the improvement of the achievements of the Roma students were, above all, the REP teachers. It is interesting to note that in this case, unlike in the research from 2005, the influence of the other teachers is smaller. This clearly points to the absence of bias, present before, and to objective assessment of all teachers regarding this issue. This is also evident in the pointing out to the RECs as a significant factor in the improvement of the student success.



Parents: In the research, the parents were pointed out as very strong factors of influence on the progress of the students. It is evident that their influence has increased in comparison with the previous year. Maybe their influence is not big, but is still significant and points out to the trend of greater involvement and interest by the parents in the education of their children.

A confirmation for this trend of greater involvement of the parents in the process of education of their children can be found in responses of the parents themselves and in the answers of the educators and teachers. Their statements lead to the conclusion that the number of parents who show interest and willingness for collaboration is rising. They are present in the school more often, they take interest in the progress of their children, and they seek advice from the teachers and show readiness to help. From the perspective of the REP these changes in the parents should be stimulated and disseminated to as many other parents as possible. Only through active families can the Roma students hope to achieve greater success in education.

Problems: All the research so far confirms the fact that in addition to the school and teachers, it is the parents, i.e. the family that is the crucial factor, and that without coordination with it, no success can be achieved. It is precisely in this area that a part of the Roma students, especially those displaying poor results in regular attendance and achievements, have pronounced weaknesses. The parents, i.e. the families of a significant number of students are not in the same line of action with the school, and even act in contradiction. The results show that it is possible to act in alleviating this situation and to achieve an even greater success.

The financial situation of the families manifests itself in this case as well, as a strong factor that directly affects the success of students in the area of regular attendance and achievements. Its most significant influence can be seen in the inability to provide learning resources, in the poor living and learning conditions at home, lack of quality time of the parents due to long working hours or work in the grey economy, frequent occupying of children with seasonal work in order to improve the family budget (in this period a large number of absences are being made and the regular learning rhythm is disrupted), etc. This problem is being stressed by teachers, parents and REC educators alike.

Conclusions and recommendations: The REP is developing successfully in primary education and is exerting a strong influence, not only on the improvement of the regularity of the attendance and achievement of success among Roma students, but also on the work of the teachers (both REP and non-REP), educators and especially on the parents. In relation to the

differences that exist between the REC students and the other students, there is a common agreement that great progress has been made among the REC students. The advantage of the REC students in regard to attendance and success in learning, as well as in communication, socialisation, discipline, independence and responsibility, has often been reiterated.

This Programme has managed to unite the most significant factors for successful education of Roma children and to establish an integral approach in the education of these students. The progress in the involvement of the parents in the Programme is evident, but this involvement is still insufficient. It is more than clear that the RECs and the teachers should put in additional efforts for a greater animation of the parents, of course within their capacities and in accordance with the objective factors that often minimise the efforts being made to improve the situation in the area of education of Roma students. Therefore, it is necessary to establish contacts with the Centres for Social Work, State Inspectorate and other relevant institutions in order to prevent some of the problems, especially those related to seasonal work of children. This activity needs active involvement of the school directors and/or members of the professional support service.

In addition, should it be impossible to attract further resources, thought should be given to a broader affirmation of the REP in the local communities where Roma live and to engaging volunteers who would disseminate the Programme among other Roma students.

It can be concluded that the REP is an attractive and useful Programme which at the moment, in the area of education, is the biggest support to Roma children in the country.

Goal 3: To improve the school performance of Roma students aged 15-19

The REP in secondary education is a logical continuation of the realisation of the activities started in preschool and in primary education. It is based on two principles: 1) the mentorship principle and 2) the principle of scholarship and educational support. The REP in secondary education aims at helping Roma students in their more successful advancement in education.

The Research covered: 220 (98 male and 114 female) Roma students from 55 regular secondary schools, and also 27 (24 male and 3 female) Roma students from 3 schools for students with special needs- recipients of scholarships. For the needs of the research focus group discussions were organised with 68 students from secondary schools - recipients of scholarships and their parents (51) from Delchevo, Kumanovo and Skopje). In addition, the research included 45 teachers - mentors and 90 teachers - non-mentors.

This Research aimed at providing response to the following questions:

- How successfully do Roma students meet the standards in secondary education, with a special focus on regular attendance and achievements?
- What problems do Roma students face in the course of their secondary education?
- How important is the scholarship for the Roma students?
- What does the REP need to do in order to be more successful?

The following responses to the respective questions are given on the bases of analysis of the school documentation on the progress of Roma students in secondary education, attitudes and oppositions of teachers and direct statements of students and parents, as well as on the bases of comparison of the results with those achieved in 2005:

1. How successfully do Roma students meet the standards in secondary education, with a special focus on regular attendance and achievements?

Table 4 enables us to see how the students from secondary schools - recipients of scholarships improved their progress in the area of transition by 2.75% in comparison with last year.

Tab. 3.1: Retention rate of secondary school students - recipients of scholarships

2004/2005											
ENROLLED			DROP-OUTS			REPEATERS			GRADUATES		
Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F
235	133	102	8	5	3	7	5	2	220	123	97
100.00	56.60	43.40	100.00	62.50	37.50	100.00	71.43	28.57	100.00	55.90	44.10
100.00%			3,42			2,97			93,61		
2005/2006											
ENROLLED			DROP-OUTS			REPEATERS			GRADUATES		
Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F
220	119	101	6	3	3	2	2	0	212	114	98
100.00	54,09	45,91	100.00	50,00	50,00	100.00	100,00	0,00	100.00	53,77	46,23
100.00%			2,74%			0,90%			96,36%		

From the total of 220 students, 96.36% (212) successfully completed the school year and progressed to the next grade. Progress is evident in respect to the issue of drop out, which has improved by 0.68%. If this trend of decrease of drop out, i.e. increase of progression of Roma

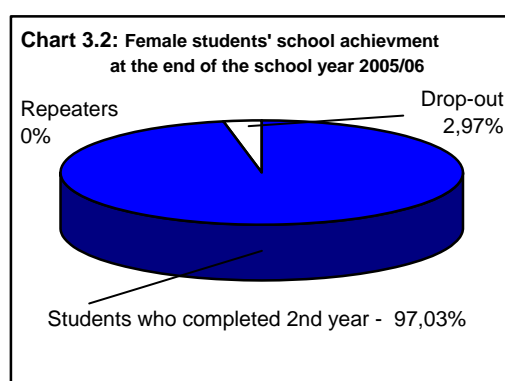
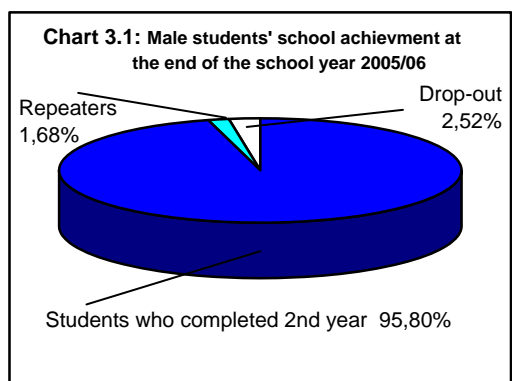
students continues, an especially high percentage of Roma students can be expected to complete their education in 2004/2008, when they are in the fourth/last year of their secondary education.

The results also reveal that the number of repeaters has decreased to 0.90%, which is an improvement by 2.07% in comparison with last year. The fact that out of 220 students only 2 repeated the grade is particularly important and indicates strong influence of the REP in improving the success of Roma students in secondary education. This situation clearly points to the appearance of a new trend and a possible conclusion that the Roma students (especially the less successful ones) have increased their motivation for completing secondary education. This conclusion is based to a large extent on the statements of the parents such as: “If (he/she) needs to let him/her repeated the grade, but (he/she) must go to school” or “(He/she) has problems, but he/she wants to go to school very much” or “I know he/she is a poor student, but I will do anything to help him/her to finish secondary education”. Such an approach to education by the parents and students points to a change in the attitudes on education and overcoming of despondency and views such as: “He/she is not good enough for education and therefore it is best that he/she does something and contributes to the family”.

That the motivation for learning is high among REP students is verified by the statements of the mentors and other teachers. The best illustration is account of one mentor: “My student is trying, making efforts, attending all meetings and wants to succeed, but is not achieving better results because he has an exceptionally low level of start-up knowledge” or in other cases “poor living and learning conditions at home”, “lack of time, i.e. he is very busy with helping his parents improve the family budget” etc. This means it is not the motivation that is the problem, which was the case last year among these students, but it is the influence of other most often external factors.

The research in 2005 pointed out that “drop out among Roma students is biggest in the first year of secondary education” and that should “the trend of decreasing the drop our rate is maintained or even improved in the coming period, it is to be expected that great success will be achieved in the area of student progression”. The 2006 research confirms this conclusion.

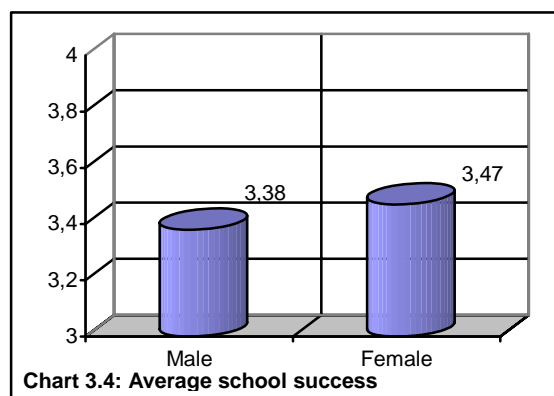
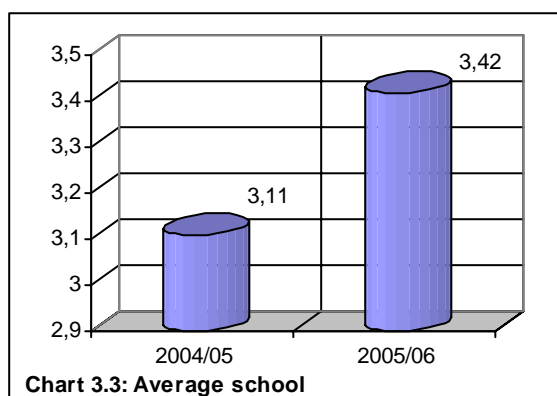
The gender distribution indicates that the drop out rate is higher among male students than the female students (*Chart 3.1*). It is obvious that the trend apparent in primary education continues in secondary education and to a large extent counters the long-term trend present among Roma students - which the girls are the students that drop out in the course of their education. It is obvious that the problem lies in the “entry” into school. If the female students do not drop out in primary education and manage to enrol into secondary education, it is likely that they will complete it with success, with big and realistic chances to further continue their education.



In comparison with last year, the Roma female students have managed to decrease their presence in both categories (drop outs and repeaters). This situation gives REP a special trait and indicates that the Programme is performing well in the area of gender equality. From the perspective of the perceived weaknesses of the Roma population in regard to the educational level of the female population (large percentage of illiterate and low levels of education), these results also have a great significance.

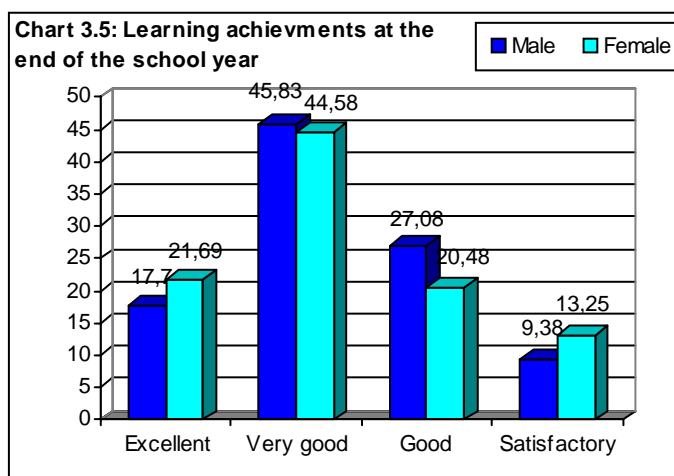
Success in learning: The decrease in the drop out and repetition among the REP students is accompanied by a visible improvement in the learning process. Unlike the previous year (2005), when the REP students had an average mark 3.11 on the scale of 1 - 5 (5 being awarded for excellent knowledge), this year they have improved it to 3.42 (Chart 3.3). The improvement of nearly half a mark in one year is a great achievement of the students and the REP as a whole.

That this is a huge progress is confirmed by the fact that the overall average success of the REP students is higher than the overall average success in the schools they attend which is 3.39 (of all students, including non Roma).⁶ Although the male REP students managed to improve their average success to 3.38, it is still below the success of the female REP students. Furthermore, the female REP students progress faster and have significantly (3.47) overcome the school average (Chart 3.4).



In regard to the learning success achieved by the students - scholarship recipients, a conclusion can be drawn that there is an equal distribution of students according to the marks at the end of the school year and the gender, with a slight domination of the female students in the category Excellent.

Chart 3.5 demonstrates that students of both sexes are concentrated in the category Very good, and together with those from the category Excellent create the majority of students. Given



⁶ This average success has been calculated according to data received from 50 secondary schools attended by REP students. The average success of all students contains the REP students' success. Data on average student success could not be obtained.

previous trends, where the Roma students were concentrated at the lower end of the marking scale, this data points to a significant achievement in the learning success of the students - scholarship recipients.

If we know that these students started the 2004/5 school with an average mark of 2.58 (between the second and the third level), managed to improve it at the end of the same year to 3.11 (between the third and fourth level of achievement), at the end of the 2005/06 school year to reach 3.42, which is close to the fourth level of achievements. This trend of progress speaks for itself that the Programme has already achieved its goal pertaining to student achievements.

The comparative analysis shows that not only did the number of students who successfully completed the first year increase, but the number of those who had one failing mark to correct through a correction exam decreased. It is evident that this year, the number of students with 2 failing marks to correct increased, but they too managed to pass the year. It should however be noted that this is data from 10 June 2006, i.e. the school year at the time was still ongoing. Given the previously mentioned data, these students too managed to complete the year successfully.

Tab. 3.2: School achievements at the end of the school year	2005	%	2006	%
Students who completed 1st year	185	78,72	179	81,36
Correction exam 1	23	9,79	15	6,82
Correction exam 2	12	5,11	16	7,27
Repeaters	7	2,98	2	0,91
Other	0	0	2	0,91
Drop out	8	3,40	6	2,73
Total	235	100,00	220	100,00

The data analysis points to several factors that impacted the improvement of the achievements of the REP students - scholarship recipients. Without doubt, the single most significant factor was the involvement of the mentors. This influence is especially emphasized by the students themselves, their parents and, what is very important, by the other teachers. Of the available choice responses on which is the most influential factor for the progress of the Roma students, the non-REP teachers selected only three: most significant is the impact of the mentors (70%), followed by the mentoring team (15%) and the other teachers.

They also stress the changes that occurred among the students in the last period visible through: improved attendance rate among part of the students, improved learning achievements, enhanced respect towards the teachers, increased self-confidence and activity during classes and greater responsibility in the fulfilment of the obligations.

The statements by the non-REP teachers this year are much more correct; on one hand it is evident that the work of the mentors and the success the students achieve cannot be denied, and on the other hand, the mentors have improved more and more their standing among the other teachers.

The mentoring system regarded from the perspective of success in learning is showing good results. It impacts not only students, but also contributes to the improvement of the climate in the school, strengthening of the collaboration among the mentors and the cooperation with the other teachers. Not a single REP teacher stated that he/she does not cooperate with the mentors. The majority of them maintain a regular cooperation in issues affecting REP students (78.92%), whereas the others conduct occasional meetings (2.07%) or meet as the need arises (19.01%). This speaks by itself of the strong support the Roma students receive from their mentors in the school and the willingness of the other teachers to help.

Unlike last year, when the mentors and students started the Programme with problems characteristic for every new beginning, this year such problems rarely occur. It is more than obvious that contacts have been established, the students have adapted to the needs of the mentors and that a system exists in their work.

The influence of the mentors does not stop at the control of regular attendance (an activity stressed by the students and parents), but contributes to the increase of knowledge and skills of the mentored students and enhancement of the communication with the parents of the students. According to statements from the mentors, most frequent forms of work they applied with the students were:

- consultative individual and group meetings,
- meetings with the students and the non-REP teachers,
- direct tutoring (individual teaching),
- direct work with the textbook,
- advice on how to use the free time,
- repetition and practice, not only in their subject but also in the other subjects,
- problem solving.

The mentors are especially proud of having progressed in the past period in the implementation of their primary objective - to teach the students how to learn. The majority of mentors prepare regularly monthly workplans, whereas a small number of them prepare only weekly workplans. The plans are prepared in cooperation with the students, and in those schools that have a mentors' team, also in agreement with the other members of the team. Unlike last year, the participation of the parents in the preparation of the plans increased this year. Although not directly related to the preparations of the workplans, it is worth mentioning that the number of parents interested in the obligations their child has in schools is increasing; they also regularly consult with the teachers and take over their respective responsibilities. Unfortunately, there still are parents who rarely or not at all communicate with the teachers and the mentor, and leave their children completely in the care of the mentor teacher. Because of this, more efforts need to be made in future for greater involvement of the parents and their taking over respective responsibilities that are contained in the plan. Given that the majority of mentors stated that they have a good cooperation with the parents, which was in turn confirmed by the parents themselves during the focus group discussions, it is to be expected that this drawback can be easily eliminated.

In the course of last year, the activities undertaken by the mentors in the area of socio-cultural development of students were rare. This year, there is an increase in the scope of these activities. It is heartening to see that both the students and the mentors express their satisfaction with these activities. The mentors frequently organise visits to various institutions and events (cinema, theatre, sports events, museums, etc.), that they realise together with the students. Therefore it not surprising that the students - recipients of scholarships are well integrated in the school environment (which is also confirmed by mentors, students and other teachers participating in the research). Those students who did experience problems with their integration were able to overcome them with the help of the mentors and the mentors' team.

This year we have similar statements as before emphasizing the problem with the low competency levels of students related to abilities for making choices and critical thinking and problems solving skills. The reasons remain the same, i.e. the development of such skills requires a longer period of hard work. Given the relatively weak start-up competencies at the

disposal of the majority of the Roma students, this was to be expected. Thanks to the increased efforts of the mentors this year, it can be reasonable expected that these problems will be in the coming period, if not resolved, at least diminished.

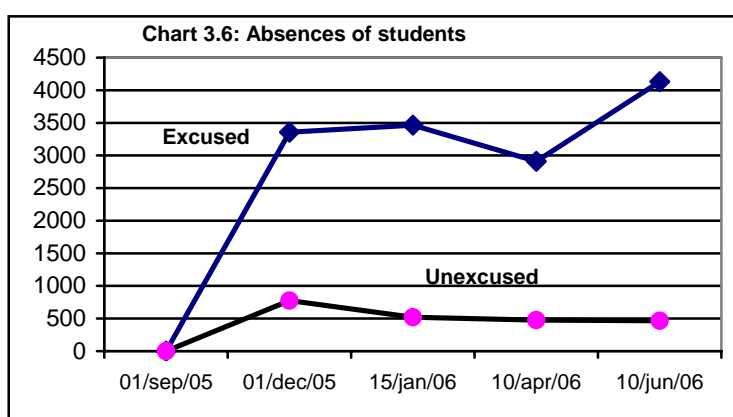
Regular attendance: In respect to the regular attendance, there is no statistical improvement among the REP students. Aware that regular attendance to a large extent positively impacts achieving success in learning, the mentors made significant efforts the last period to improve the regular attendance. Unfortunately, data reveal that little has been achieved in this respect.

It is obvious that regular attendance of teaching is not a strong side of the Roma secondary school students. Unlike the REP primary school students, the secondary school group is characterised by a large number of absences.

Period	Excused absences		Unexcused absences	
	male	female	male	female
01.09/05 - 01.12/05	2151	1206	578	197
01.12/05 - 15.01/06	1818	1647	282	237
15.01/06 - 10.04/06	1896	1014	315	160
10.04/06 - 10.06/06	2454	1677	298	169
Sub total	8319	5544	1473	763
Total	13863		2236	

According to official school data, the REP students had at the end of the 2005/06 school year 16099 absences, of which 13863 (63.01 absences per student) are excused absences, whereas 2236 (10.01 absences per student) are unexcused. Calculated as school days, this means that an average student had an excused absence for almost 10 days, and 1.5 days without any justification/excuse. What are reasons for these absences and why can't the mentors achieve better results in this area?

Based on the statements of the mentors, of the teachers (both REP and non-REP), of part of the parents and part of the students, it can be concluded that there are very strong factors that impact regular attendance, and that for the time being they are immune to the REP interventions.



One of the reasons is without a doubt *the poor financial situation of the families*. Given the fact that the secondary schools are not located in communities where Roma live and students need transportation, then the lack of finances in the family as a rule results in frequent absence from school, mostly expressed through being late at the first lessons, because the students do not use transportation means and walk to school.

The weak immunological status of the Roma students is the second reason for absences. Due to the bad physical conditions in which the majority of these students live, their immunological status is weak and they are more prone to diseases that keep them away from school. The high number of absences, detected among the secondary school students goes to verify this conclusion. In addition, of all the ethnic groups in the country, the Roma are the ones who vaccinate their children the least.

The two reasons are most commonly present in winter, and primarily in the bigger cities, such as Skopje, Prilep, Shtip and Bitola. A confirmation of this statement can be found in the distribution of the absences according to the time when they were made, as per Chart 3.6. It is evident that

the biggest number of absences was made in the autumn and, above all, winter period, decreasing in the spring period and drastically increasing in late spring. This distribution of the absences speaks in favour of the already detected problem, which not only the REP students face, but also the other Roma students, and which impacts regular attendance.

The 2005 research mentioned *the weaknesses in the acquired knowledge* as one of the reasons for the high number of absences, i.e. the deliberate truancy whenever assessment and marking is planned for the lesson(s). Given that the problems with the learning achievements were overcome, and the issue of absences remains, this reason has to be discarded or treated as a reason with a very low negative influence.

A possible reason for the great number of absences is also the general situation in secondary education in the Republic of Macedonia. Irregular attendance is not a problem only among Roma students, which is evident in the fact that the average number of absences among the REP students is very close to the average number of absences in one of the Skopje elite secondary general schools, with a very low Roma student presence, of 53.19 absences per student per year.

In relation to the gender distribution of absences, it is evident that, unlike the female students whose attendance rate is within the expectations and very close to that of the other ethnic groups, the male students are much more at risk in this regards. Following the already stated reasons affecting the regular attendance of students, it is to be expected that the male population is more involved in all already mentioned segments. Thus, the fact that male students have more absences is not surprising.

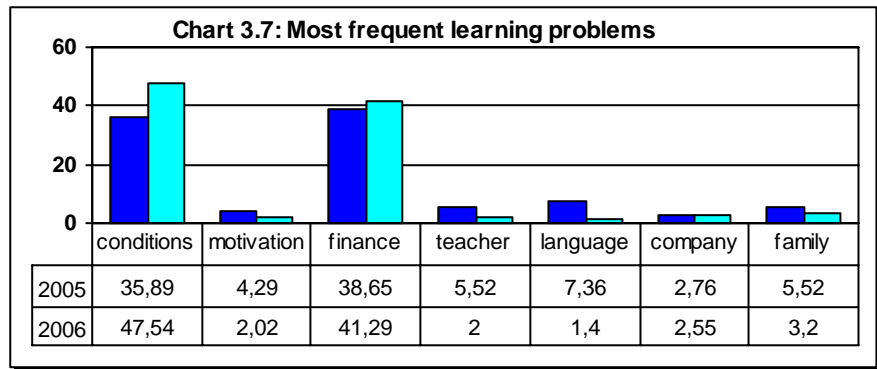
As a commentary for this situation, we will repeat the views already presented in the 2005 report.

“It is evident that the increase of the regularity of attendance can be influenced through programmes such as the REP, but it is also clear that this problem requires a much broader approach. The mentor teachers, although showing willingness to fight this problem and achieving certain results, nevertheless do not have the power to eliminate it completely. Similarly as in the case of primary school students, the full resolution of the problem with the absenteeism requires parallel action in the form of economic measures, which would result in the improvement of the financial situation of part of the Roma families (those most at risk) and in the form of a strengthened campaign in the Roma communities on the need for education of children and youth. Thus, the REP successfully accomplishes its goals, but for them to be completely achieved, it is necessary to fulfil other conditions, which depend on other players.”

2. Which problems do Roma students face in the course of their secondary education ?

In the course of their learning, REP students face numerous problems. The part addressing the attendance of students mentions some of the problems, which are external in nature. The results from the focus group discussions showed that the *learning conditions* and the *finances* are the biggest problems Roma students face. It is interesting to see that in comparison with the 2005 responses, other reasons are hardly mentioned. Specifically, the teachers and the language of instruction are almost never quoted as reasons now. The problem of motivation is also in the decline; there are very few students who identify motivation as an obstacle to their progress in education. It is evident that on the issue of motivation, the REP is functioning successfully.

The mentors themselves confirm the statement that poor learning conditions are indeed a problem. In addition to the poor learning conditions in the homes of the majority of the Roma students, there is also a lack of facilities for meetings and for the work of mentors and students together in the schools themselves.



Given that in most cases such meetings are held in school, this situation can cause additional big problems for the mentors and students and reflect itself negatively on the overall success of the REP in secondary education. However, it is evident that the problems are not experienced by all students in the same way. For some of them either the problems are minimal, or they manage, despite the problems, to achieve a good success in their learning.

There is overlap in the account of the most important problems among students and mentors. However, unlike the students, the mentors stress the need for greater involvement of the parents. According to them, there is evidence that parents are more active and come to school more frequently to inquire about the progress of their children. However, they stress that part of the parents, primarily those of the worst students, not only do not come to school, but are difficult to contact when the need arises. It is precisely these students that have the greatest number of absences and that have weaker achievements than the other students. This statement is justified by the parents with too much work and lack of time to devote to their children. This attitude of the parents makes their children victims.

3. How important is the scholarship for the Roma students?

Without exception, all REP students, parents and REP and non-REP teachers, stress that the scholarship is a great help to these students and that without it, their progress would be much slower. Given that the majority of the REP students come from poor families, the scholarship they receive is of great significance to them. The statements of the students and of the parents lead to the conclusion that the scholarship is mostly used by the students for provision of school literature (textbooks) and learning materials. Part of them state that whatever is left is used for buying clothes or for fun.

The significance of the scholarship is strengthened by the fact that the majority of students and their parents state that without it, the students could hardly continue their education.

Conclusions and recommendations:

The REP is achieving great success in secondary education. The influence of the Programme is strongest in the area of improving the achievements of the REP students whereas there are still problems with the improvement of the regular attendance.

The REP program is exerting great influence not only on the students, but also puts the REP teachers and the other teachers in a new position. The realisation of the Programme in the majority of cases has a stimulative influence on the collaboration among teachers and the cooperation between the teachers and the students. The effects on the animation of parents and their involvement in the Programme are somewhat weaker. Given the problems pointed out so far that parents face in everyday life, it is to be expected that this problem becomes an additional challenge for the organisers of the REP and its direct implementers.

The mentorship system should be maintained and strengthened by the FOSIM. For this purpose it is necessary to:

- conduct a analysis of the mentors' needs for additional training;
- organise additional mentor training based on needs assessment of their training needs
- organise more frequent additional REP student training in subjects where they have poor achievements;
- organise more frequent mentor meetings where positive and successful examples from the practice are presented,
- design models for enhanced communication between mentors and parents,
- review the possibility for increasing the remuneration for the mentors, especially since some of them point out that they use their own resources for the realisation of some of their activities.

Goal 4: To promote equal opportunities and increase the academic achievements of Roma students at State Universities

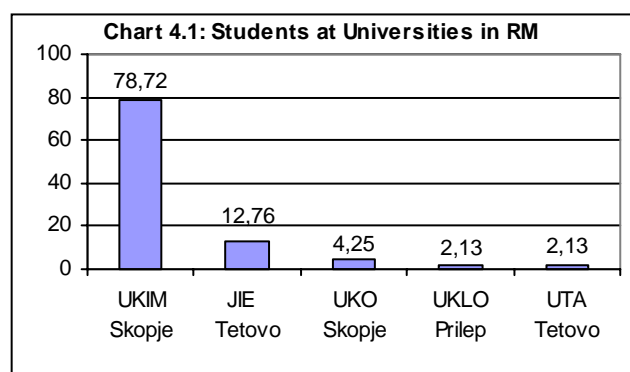
In order to get a full picture of the realisation of the REP in higher education, research was conducted aimed at obtaining insight into the university files of the REP students and, with the help of questionnaires and focus group discussions, into the students' attitudes and opinions on the course of the Programme and their own progress in learning.

For the purposes of the fourth goal of the Project for Education of Roma: To promote equal opportunities and increase the academic achievements of Roma students at State Universities, a research was carried out among 48 (15 new and 33 old) higher education students - recipients of scholarships. This evaluation presents data on students covered in the first project year (2004/05), whereas the data on students covered in the second project year (2005/06) can only be commented after the completion of the academic year, which ends in December with the last examination period which enables them to complete the study year.

In the course of last year, of the total of 63 students - recipients of scholarships, 2 graduated, 33 (20 female and 13 male) continued their studies and retained the right to the scholarship, whereas 28 students, due to their poor learning performance, lost the right to a scholarship. Of these, 15 are female and 13 male. One characteristic of this group is that even 4 of them refused to benefit from the services of a mentor. Similarly, these students only erratically attended the training and the educational-recreational activities organised by FOSIM/Romaversitas.

The group of 33 students that continued their education and continued to receive a scholarship grew by additional 15 students, so that the total number of students in the Programme is now 47 (28 female and 19 male students - one student graduated as the research was carried out).

Students and Universities: Data shows that 37 students are enrolled in the "Ss Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje, 6 students in the South-east European University in Tetovo, 1 student in the "St. Clement of Ohrid" University in Bitola/Prilep, 2 students in the Skopje Police Academy and 1 in the University of Tetovo (Chart 4.1).

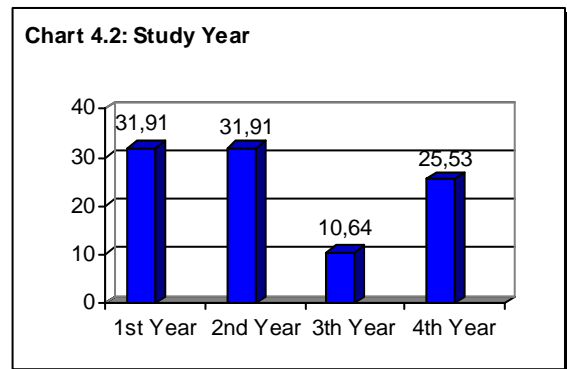


The distribution according to the study year indicates that the majority of students - recipients of scholarships are concentrated in the first and the second year of study (Chart 4.2).

According to scientific disciplines, the students are enrolled in the following study programmes: 7 in Legal Sciences, 6 in Social Work and Social Policy, 4 in Primary Education Teaching, 5 in Musical Sciences (vocal-instrumental majors), 3 in Preschool Education Teaching, 2 in Journalism, 2 in Political Sciences, 2 in Sociology and 1 student each in Drama, English Language, Philosophy, Finance Studies, History/Archive Management, Public Administration, Computer Sciences and Technology, Communication Skills and Technology, Macedonian

Language, International Economy and Business, Medicine, Management, Musical Pedagogy and Theory, Pedagogy and Mining.

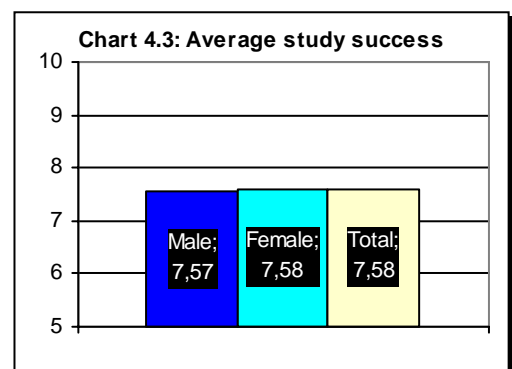
By analysing the selection of the faculties and scientific areas, it can be concluded that the Roma students prefer social sciences. This choice is in line with the general trend in the country where socio-political and humanistic sciences dominate as the most attractive study options among the student population. For a while now, the technical, natural and bio-medical sciences are not sufficiently attractive for the secondary school graduates, and the faculties educating such scientific profiles have problems in filling the enrolment quotas, i.e. have small number of students.



This trend is even more absurd if one takes into account the fact that it is precisely the dominant and most attractive study profiles (law, economy, social work and social policy and other profiles from the socio-political and humanistic sciences) that are dominant among the unemployed higher education graduates in the Republic of Macedonia.

However, from the perspective of the general problems the Roma population faces, such a choice has its advantages. The majority of students enrol in study courses which educate teachers. Given that research analysing Roma issues in the country so far put to the forefront the issues of education and selected the lack of Roma teachers in schools as one of the stronger factors that adversely affect the educational achievements of Roma students, such a choice of the REP students is significant not only in respect of their own future, but benefits the whole Roma population in the state.

Study achievements/success: Looking at student success/achievements, the results indicate that the REP students achieve satisfactory success in their studies, on average 7.58⁷. There are no differences between the success rate of female and of male students. REP students believe that the achieved success is a realistic reflection of their actual knowledge; even 72.73% believe that this is true, whereas only 15.15% believe that the success is not a real reflection of their achievements, and the remaining 12.12% are not sure and don't know whether they could achieve more. In regard to satisfaction with their own progress in education so far, 60.61% are satisfied, whereas 39.39% think they can achieve more.



However, it should be noted that the data comes only from those REP students who successfully passed the first selection phases. We should not forget that last year, 28 students lost the right to scholarship because of poor results. Due to the loss of the scholarship and the poor achievements these students are now in a highly precarious position in respect to their further education.

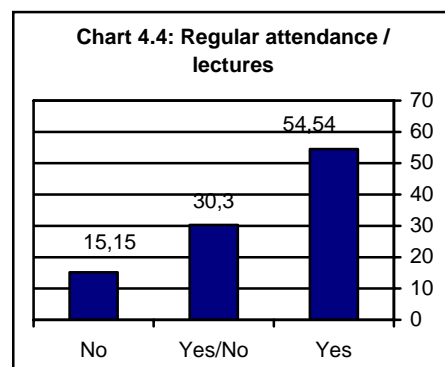
⁷ On a scale of 5 to 10, 5 being a fail grade.

It must be stressed that the real picture of the REP students enrolled in the 2004/05 school year will be only visible in 2007/08, when these students are expected to complete their studies.

Generally speaking, the REP managed to advance the trend of inclusion of Roma in higher education. If we compare the number of 2 Roma university graduates in 1997, 8 Roma graduates in 2002, with the current number of scholarship recipients, and bearing in mind their learning achievements, it is to be expected that the number of Roma university graduates increases in the coming years.

At the end of the first project year (for the cohort 2004/05) the retention rate of the REP students is 55.50%, which is an improvement of 3.5% in regard to the situation determined in the Baseline Study, where the retention rate was 52.00%.

This conclusion will turn into reality only if in the coming period more attention is devoted to the regular attendance of the REP students. Data reveals, namely, that only 54.54% of the students regularly attended the university lectures, 30.30% regularly attended only specific subjects, whereas 15.15% did not attend teaching regularly. Bearing in mind that regular presence during all forms of teaching at the university is one of the preconditions for successful learning, we can only imagine what the average success rate of the REP students would have been, if they had regularly attended their lectures. It is evident that in this respect, more efforts should be made in future and mechanisms should be created for increasing the attendance rate of the REP students.



Study problems: The majority of the REP students stated that the biggest problems that hampered their education were: *financial problems* (21.21%) and *the unrealistic marks awarded to them by the professors* (15.15%), whereas 12.12% stated that they have no problems. Most of the REP students (30.30%) listed a different range of problems, such as: *lack of time, personal problems, insufficient efforts, commitments outside the university, laziness, lack of concentration and carelessness*.

It is evident that no one problem is dominant and should be regarded as the strongest. Unlike the primary and secondary REP students, where financial problems dominated by far, among the university REP students, although statistically significant, such problems are relevant only for a small number of students. It is worth noting that problems of the kind: *bad learning conditions at home, the language of teaching, bad company and domestic problems* are hardly mentioned at all.

The data provided lend themselves to the conclusion that there is, however, a big difference between the university students and the primary and secondary school students. In order to reach university and satisfy the rigorous selection criteria for enrolment into university, one needs high achievements from secondary and one should possess qualities that guarantee success, such as: good leaning environment at home, developed learning habits and learning competencies, strong motivation, support from the family, etc. Of the REP students that were part of the research in 2005 and who make up the majority of the research sample in 2006, 88.46% had Excellent or

Very Good marks/success in secondary education; in addition, in the 2005 research they did not identify the financial problems as a significant factor influencing learning. Thus, the current statements are not surprising. This does not mean that these students do not face financial problems; the lack of finances is also specified as a problem, only it is not so much emphasized. It is obvious that individual financial participation, in combination with the scholarship they receive, minimises the domination of this issue despite the high costs of studying.⁸

Students and Mentors

An efficient relationship between students - scholarship recipients and mentors is one of the fundamental prerequisites on which the REP bases its expectations regarding the progress of Roma students in higher education. The mentoring system is set up in order to help the students in their learning, to guide and lead them in the course of their education and to facilitate opportunities for all motivated Roma students to develop their personal skills and to improve their academic performance. These are the foundations/ideas of the mentoring system in the higher education in the REP.

How it should be: According to the REP design, in the course of the mentoring, the mentor must permanently inform the student on the organisation of the faculty, the faculty code of ethics, the faculty normative regulations, the regime of studies, the studying conditions, the opportunities for using the student services (professional students service, student information service, etc.), libraries in and outside the faculty, various benefits (loans), ways of communication with the resources inside and outside the faculty and the opportunities for progression.

Similarly, the mentor should help the scholarship recipient prepare a workplan. He/she is especially responsible for enabling the student for continuous learning with a focus on programmes that are more challenging for the student, independent learning, writing of seminar papers, consultations with other professors and assistants, project work, activities in and outside of the faculty; he/she should help the students, depending on the specificities and difficulty level of the activities, set a realistic implementation dynamics, help the student acquire the necessary literature, get involved in projects, get in touch with the teaching staff, use various data bases and the Internet (if available), get in touch with senior students who might help him/her in learning the more difficult subjects; helps the student plan the learning time, advises the student how to solve problems, encourages the socialisation of the student - scholarship recipient in and outside of the facility (through various forms stimulates the interaction of the student with other students), helps the student summarise the results of the implemented activities, etc. The mentor also helps the student rationalise his/her own studying efforts, teaches him/her how to learn, works with the scholarship recipient in grasping and comprehending the ethos (meaning, essence) of each subject in the context of acquisition of competencies, controls, maintains and encourages the motivation of the student - scholarship recipient for learning.

On the other hand, the student - scholarship recipient also has obligations: to cooperate with the mentor, to attend teaching regularly, to realise tasks set by the mentor, to abide by the framework for realisation of the tasks, in collaboration with the mentor to prepare a workplan, to attend

⁸ All students pay a fee at the state universities. The amount of the tuition is between 150 (at the less attractive faculties) to 1200 EUR (for example at the Faculty of Medicine in Skopje) per year, depending on the study programme.

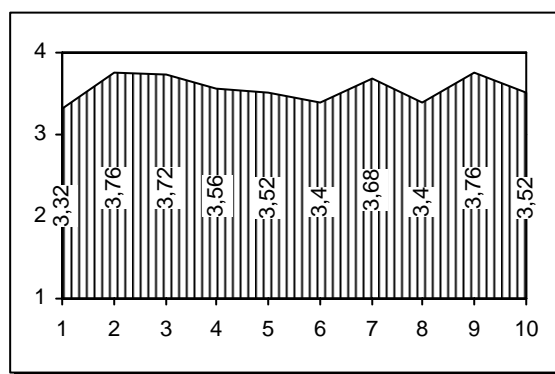
consultations with the mentor regularly, not to ask the mentor to solve his personal problems and to show high motivation for learning.

How it is: We will try to find out how the mentoring system in the REP higher education Programme functions through the statements of the REP students in regard to this issue, divided into 5 categories: intention, communication, trust, process and progress.

- **Intention:**

We can found out with what intention the students approach the mentorship system, i.e. what they expect and what they are ready to accept and provide, through the responses of the Roma students to the questions presented in the research. At the scale of answers according to the following categories: 1 = I completely disagree, 2 = I disagree, 3 = I agree and 4 = I fully agree, the Roma students gave the following statements:

Tab. 4.1: Intention	
1.	This mentor relationship is a huge priority for me.
2.	I am a responsible student.
3.	I am sincere in the contacts with the mentor.
4.	I am aware that the mentor is a person who wants to help me succeed in my studies.
5.	I take the mentor's advice seriously.
6.	I fulfil the tasks set by the mentor very conscientiously.
7.	I presented my goals to the mentor.
8.	I determine the work plan together with the mentor.
9.	I am aware that my success depends solely on me.
10.	I am grateful to the mentor for the help he/she provides

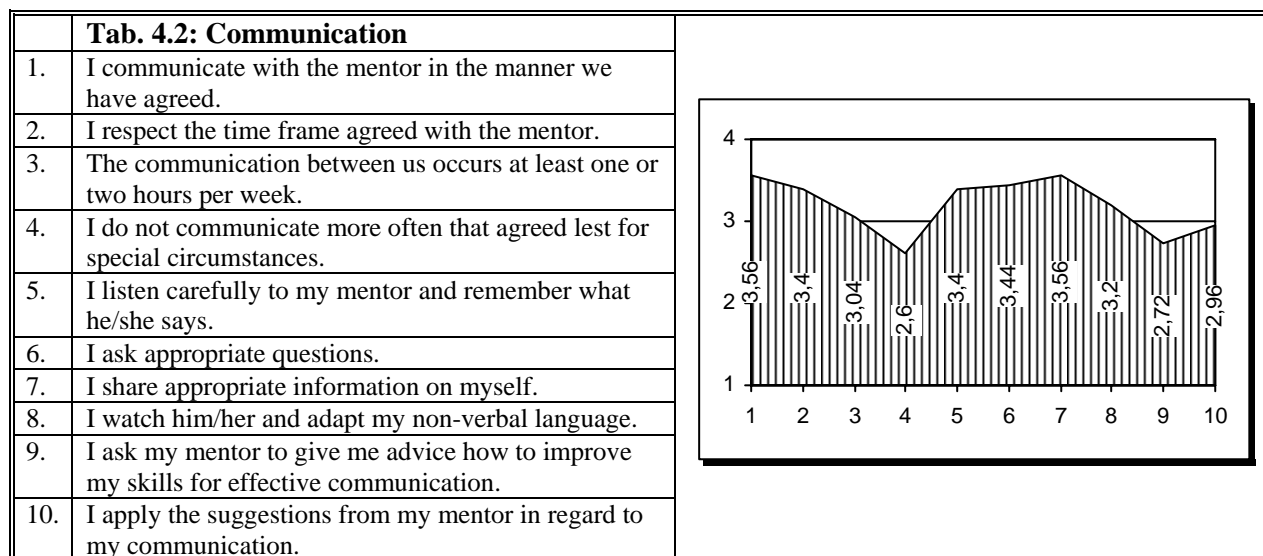


The results presented in Table 4.1 show that the responses lie between levels 3 and 4, indicating high awareness among the Roma students on the significance of cooperation between them and the mentors. However, taking a good look at the differences, certain discrepancies appear. For example, two statements stand out: statement 2 - *I am a responsible student* and statement 9 - *I am aware that my success depends solely on me*. These slight discrepancies actually point out to a high level of consciousness among the students, who recognise the mentor's position and understand and respect his/her role, but are primarily turned towards themselves and realise that their success in learning depends primarily on themselves. The REP students enter into cooperation with the mentors sincerely and with a high level of respect for their position.

Statement 6 is also indicative: *I fulfil the tasks set by the mentor very conscientiously* as well as statement 8: *I determine the work plan together with the mentor*, which display the lowest level of agreement and point out to the existence of weaknesses in the accomplishment of these two mentoring functions with some of the students. The following questions arise: are there some students that really don't take seriously the tasks set by the mentors or are there mentors that do not set any tasks? Are there cases where the mentor and the student do not determine the workplan together? It is evident that such statements must be examined by the organisers of the Programme and if there really are problems in the cooperation between some students and their mentors, must take appropriate action.

- **Communication**

How is the communication between the mentors and students organised? The responses presented in Table 4.2 indicate pronounced differences in the statements of agreement among the REP students.



The majority of the REP students communicate with their mentors in the agreed manner, they listen carefully and remember what their mentor tells them, they are active and try to ask appropriate questions and do not hesitate to share information on themselves in the communication with the mentors. Effective communication dominates among the mentors and students. It is encouraging to see that the students are willing to share information on themselves, which, from the perspective of effective mentoring, is significant as it helps the mentor efficiently adapt his/her approach and content of work. Worth noticing is the low level of agreement on statements 9 and 10. Does that mean that a significant number of students think that they do not need any further development and advancement of their skills for communication, or believe that the mentor is unable to help them in regard to this issue? The statements and opinions of the students give rise to the conclusion that they believe they possess sufficient skills for effective communication and have no further needs in this respect.

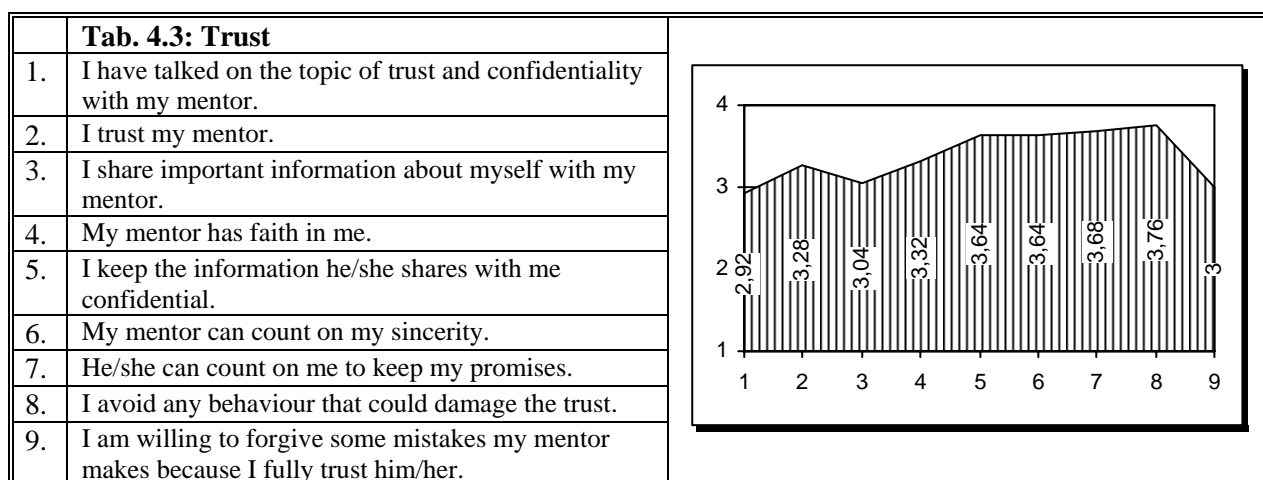
- **Trust/faith:**

Effective mentorship is necessary in order to build a high degree of mutual trust between the mentor and the mentoree.

The statements of the students lead to the conclusion that a high level of trust has been developed between the mentors and the REP students. The slight differences in the statements indicate that the topic was rarely discussed, which to some extent is correct, as trust is gained through deeds and not words, and to a large extent it depends on the approach applied by the mentor to develop a higher level of trust between himself and the student.

On the other hand, the statement *I trust my mentor* is expected to result in a high level of agreement, but that is not the case. Some students assess this statement with the agreement level

I disagree. These situations should be detected, monitored and overcome by the organisers of the REP because they have the potential of causing additional problems, primarily among the students. Where the trust is lost, there is no cooperation.



In this case too, greatest agreement is found in the statements relating to the students and their attitudes, primarily their trust/faith in their own qualities, as was the case with the statements 5, 6, 7 and 8.

It is worth paying attention to statement 9: *I am willing to forgive some mistakes my mentor makes because I fully trust him/her.* The overall average degree of agreement is within the I agree category, but the individual analysis points to cases of disagreement (i.e. answers in the category 1 and 2), and to comments some of them have on the work of the mentor. Whether that means that in certain cases we have mentors who act in a manner that cannot be forgiven or whether the students express their general principles remains to be seen. Given the variations in the answers that appeared in other statements too, especially regarding *trust*, we tend to believe that there is ground for this issue to be reviewed and acted upon.

- **Process:**

The statements of the students presented in Table 4.4 exemplify the manner in which the process of mentoring is conducted. It is evident that in regard to planning there a high level of agreement, which means that the students participate in the selection of places for the meetings actively and equitably. As a rule, these meetings are conducted in the facilities of the faculties; in rare cases the meetings are held in another location, such as the home of the student or the home of the mentor, (which for example was very frequent in secondary education). It is important however that there are no reservations among the students on the locations of the meetings and that to a large extent the site is well accepted both by themselves and by the mentors.

There is also a high level of satisfaction by both sides with the manner in which the meetings are conducted. This situation is of great importance as any dissatisfaction with the way the meetings are realised can cause disruption of the mentoring relationship and result in inefficient meetings, waste of time and interruption of the cooperation.

Tab. 4.4: Process	
1.	I take the responsibility for the planning of our meetings.

2.	I like all or most of the locations where the meetings are held.	
3.	My mentor likes the locations where the meetings are held.	
4.	I like the duration of our meetings.	
5.	My mentor likes the duration of our meetings.	
6.	I am satisfied with the way we conduct our meetings.	
7.	My mentor is satisfied with the way we conduct our meetings.	
8.	My mentor maintains contact with my parents.	
9.	My parents have faith in my mentor.	
10.	My mentor makes all possible efforts to help.	

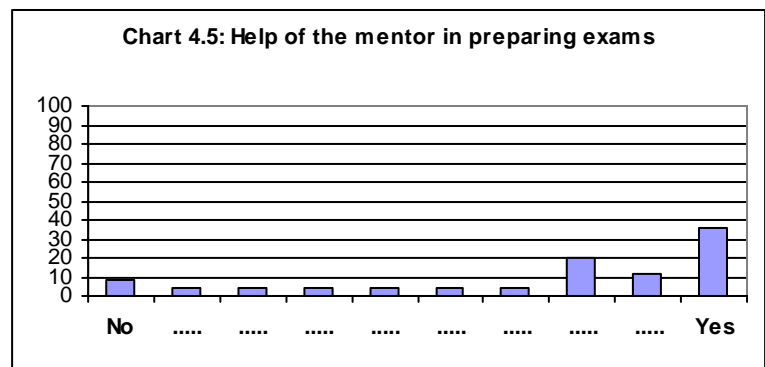
What is indicative is the low level of agreement with statement 8: *My mentor maintains contact with my parents* and statement 9: *My parents have faith in my mentor*. It is more than clear that the contacts between the mentor and the parent are minimal or non-existent. Such attitudes are expected, given the students are not primary and secondary school students. They are mature citizens with a developed sense of dignity, trust in themselves and willingness to decide on their own. To a large extent, the students would feel embarrassed if the mentor was to cooperate with his/her parents and thus attempt to realise a certain objective that would be beneficial to the student. Unlike the parent-mentor relations in secondary education, where such cooperation is desirable, it is to be expected that the parent-mentor relations do not function in higher education.

• **Progress:**

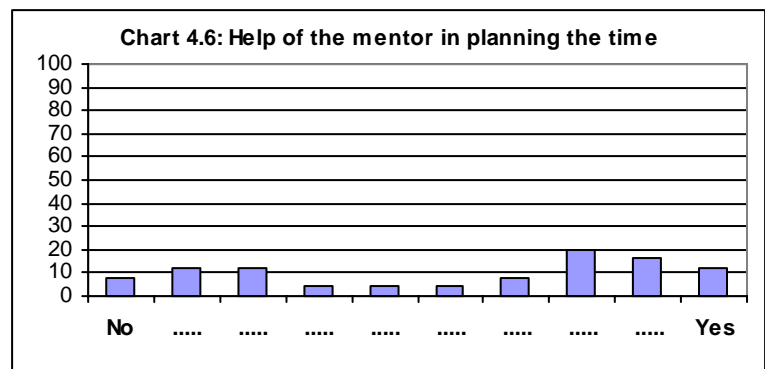
In regard to the progress and the ways it is being achieved, there are evident differences among the students. On one side, the majority state that they try to make a contribution and make the work of the mentor easier in his efforts to enhance their progress; they inform him/her regularly of the results they achieve in their learning and have adjusted themselves to the mentoring conditions.

	Tab. 4.5: Progress	
1.	I work on one or more achievable objectives with the help of my mentor.	
2.	I make my mentor's job of helping me in my progress easier.	
3.	I identify interesting ways of learning/studying that I can try/apply.	
4.	The ways of learning my mentor suggests help me in my studies.	
5.	With the help of my mentor I developed regular learning habits.	
6.	I inform my mentor of the results of my learning.	
7.	I have significantly progressed since I started working with my mentor.	
8.	I am making significant progress in my ability to be mentored.	
9.	My mentor is informed and satisfied with my progress.	
10.	I celebrate/mark my progress.	

What is concerning are the great discrepancies, i.e. the low level of agreements with statement 4: *The ways of learning my mentor suggests help me in my studies* and statement 5: *With the help of my mentor I developed regular learning habits*. This is where we have a problem. One of the basic functions of the mentor, if not the most important one, is to offer, i.e. to help the students find ways of learning and developing regular learning habits. The mentoring role in the REP lies not only in its advisory and informative functions. The mentors need to fulfil their educational function, i.e. to try to *teach the students how to learn* in the university living and learning environment.



It is evident that the REP needs to re-examine this issue and detect the causes for this development. If weaknesses in the performance of the educational function among some mentors are detected (to which this research points out), then it is necessary to take countermeasures. If certain mentors don't possess the competencies to train students in the area of application of diverse learning techniques, planning and organisation of learning and planning and organisation of the overall studying, then it is necessary to organise training for these mentors to build their competencies. The acquisition of such competencies requires good training in the area of higher education didactics, i.e. adult learning.



Students and the REP:

In the last period and in close cooperation, the FOSIM / ROMAVERSITAS managed to organise a rich programme for the REP students in order to improve their academic competencies and stimulate their learning motivation. The Programme offered to the REP students contains diverse types of activities of educational and entertainment nature. We need to mention, above all, that a number of trainings were actively attended by a large number of students, such as those for:

- Communication skills
- Skills for academic reading and writing in Macedonian
- Skills for academic reading and writing in English
- Social politics: introduction into the theory and practice
- Right to ownership: Ownership rights and other rights to ownership in theory, positive right and the legal sciences in Macedonia
- Human rights and criminal law

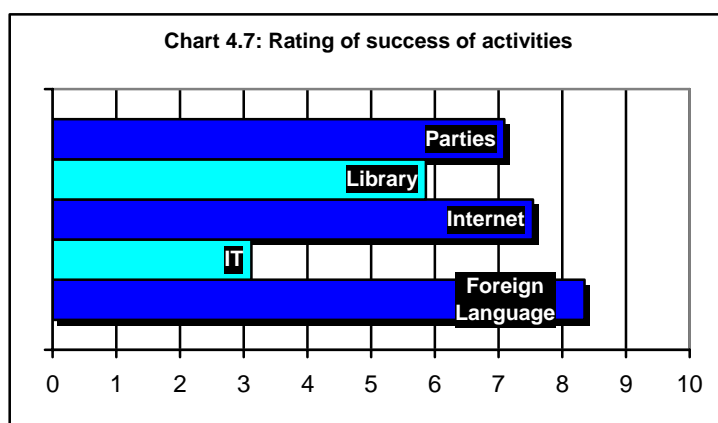
- Civic education in the educational and broader system in the Republic of Macedonia and the world

We also need to mention the activities within the **Roma Index** and also the Student Initiatives and Projects (SIP).

The realisation of all abovementioned activities (trainings, events, parties, etc.) increased the reputation of Romaversitas among the REP students. Therefore, close to 80% of the students demonstrate great satisfaction, and the remaining 20% partial satisfaction with the way in which the Romaversitas Programme for Mentoring and Scholarships is implemented. It is worth mentioning that there no student stated dissatisfaction with the programme.

The Roma students rated the trainings/activities offered to them on the scale of 1 - unsuccessful to 10 - successful as follows:

It is evident that they are mostly impressed by the training related to foreign language acquisition, use of the Internet and the library, as well as the parties organised for strengthening the social and recreational/sports capacities of students.



However, low rating was given to the training for building skills in the area of information technology. Given the importance of the IT competencies, additional analysis is needed about the weaknesses of such training, followed by measures for their elimination. The importance of these competencies and their application in the process of university education require immediate action.

Romaversitas is successful in the area of information sharing with the REP students. The majority of the students, i.e. more than 95% of them stated that they are informed on time on what is planned and what is foreseen in the Programme. It is encouraging that such information comes from the Romaversitas staff directly, and very rarely indirectly.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The REP is achieved successfully in higher education and great satisfaction is evident among the students in respect to the cooperation with the FOSIM / ROMAVERSITAS.

On the issue of learning, students progress successfully within the frame of their abilities. The problems they face and that could obstruct learning and overall progress of students are not sufficiently strong and not of a nature that could actually exert such an impact. The only comment that could be made relates to their attendance at classes, which must improve in the coming period.

The mentoring system functions successfully, but leaves room for through. The fact that the students who don't have a mentor have an average overall success of 7.48, which is very close to the overall average success, points to the need for re-examination whether mentorship is

necessary in higher education, and if so, how can it be made more successful. We are of the opinion that it would be best, if a centre or unit is formed within Romaversitas for student support, which would perform the same function as the mentors. As compensation, we recommend that the mentorship system in secondary education is strengthened, i.e. the competencies of students are strengthened before they enter university. In this way, the start in higher education will be more successful.

CONCLUSION

The REP successfully realises the set goals and objectives with the children in pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher education. The Programme is a success story of the Republic of Macedonia and an example for an efficient approach towards strengthening the educational component among children and youth from the Roma ethnic group. In this way, the REP directly contributes to the enrichment of the culture of living of the Roma in Macedonia and to enhancing their integration.

The REP consistently follows the already confirmed view that isolated approaches to the solution of the Roma educational issue give poor or no results. Thus, the starting point of the REP is that through an integrated approach and action focused on all levels of education, a stronger and continued progress of the Roma students can be achieved. The only “problem” of the REP is the fact that this Programme is not accompanied by interventions in the area of economy, i.e. with interventions that will increase employment among Roma and mitigate the bad financial situation of the majority of the Roma population. The lack of finances among the Roma families is the basic generator of a number of problems that reflect themselves in education too. Unfortunately, this problem is beyond the capacities of the REP. It is primarily an issue to which the response can be provided by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, Roma politicians, local authorities and Roma businessmen.

The REP demonstrated that good educational results can be achieved through planned actions which have as their goal educational and financial support to Roma children and youth. These results would be much better if the financial situation of the majority of the families was better. This relates, in particular, to the regular attendance of students in primary and secondary education, where it is evident that the largest part of the absences are made in periods of large-scale seasonal work of the Roma families (together with their children) undertaken in order to improve the family budget and in the winter period, when the poor financial situation of the family affects, for example, transportation to school. If the enhanced campaign on the significance of education, ongoing in Roma communities, manages to change the attitude that school is useless, traditionally prevailing among Roma, better results are to be expected. In this area, the role of the Roma NGOs is very important. It is evident that their activities, primarily focused on Roma youth, should be redefined and some of them reoriented towards the Roma adults. Without interventions in the Roma families and changes among the adults/parents, the whole process of enhancing the education of the Roma youth will be long and hard.

In the analysis of the status of realisation of the REP in primary, secondary and higher education and the results of the research, following conclusions emerged:

- The REC activities successfully strengthen the competencies of the preschool-aged children and prepare them successfully for a timely and successful entrance into compulsory education.
- The RECs implement significant and successful activities for education, socialisation and motivation of children for learning and regular attendance of the REC.
- The RECs are in need of further strengthening their staff.
- Should greater effects from their work be desired, the RECs must enhance the campaign in the local communities and locate one part of it in the Roma families, with a special focus on the parents.

- The REP is successfully developing in primary education and is exerting strong influence on the improvement of the attendance and achievements rates of Roma students.
- The REP in primary education is strongly impacting the work of the REP teachers, strengthening their competencies, introducing new teaching strategies and improving the collaboration between the REP and the non-REP teachers.
- The REP in primary education is showing progress in the work with parents and students, but results could and should be better. In this area, it is necessary to develop strategies for more efficient involvement of the parents in the REP.
- It is necessary to affirm the REP in the Roma communities and to increase the coverage of Roma students.
- The possibility for “linking” the social assistance that the parents receive with the regular attendance and achievements of their children in school should be examined.
- The REP is achieving success in secondary education. The influence of the Programme is strongest in the area of improving the achievements of the REP students, whereas there are still problems with the improvement of the regular attendance.
- The REP has a stimulative influence on the collaboration among teachers and the cooperation between the teachers and the students;
- The REP should strengthen its activities with the parents of secondary education students. Their greater involvement is necessary.
- The mentorship system in secondary education should be maintained and strengthened;
- The possibility for increasing the remuneration for the mentors should be reviewed, especially since some of them point out that they use their own resources for the realisation of some of their activities.
- The REP is implemented successfully in higher education and great satisfaction is evident among the students.
- On the issue of learning, students progress successfully within the frame of their abilities.
- Activities should be undertaken for improving the attendance rate of students at lessons.
- It should be reconsidered, whether the mentorship system should be continued in higher education or substituted with another type of student support, such as the establishment of a Centre for Educational Support of Roma Students. That way, the scholarship awarding organisation will have direct insight whether the student really needs mentor support and/or whether he/she fulfils his/her obligations.

The evaluation demonstrated that the problem of the Roma students lies in the “start”. In the course of the education process, there are several starting/critical positions: 1) the start of compulsory education (a good number of Roma do not enrol on time), 2) the start of the 6th grade of primary education (a large number of students enter the 5th grade with low competencies and drop out or repeat the grade), 3) the start of secondary education (a low percentage of Roma students continue into secondary education), and 4) the start of university education (the percentage of Roma students is very low). Therefore, it is necessary to focus the efforts of the REP dominantly in these critical stages, necessarily through preventive actions, so that the Roma students can face the “start” ready.