



Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of
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REPORT ON POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA FOR 2011

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Introduction

In order to enable continuity and development of analysis on poverty and social exclusion in Macedonia, the second edition of the Report on Poverty and Social Exclusion of the Macedonian Platform for Fight against Poverty, supported by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights Ludwig Boltzmann - Research Association Skopje (BIM-FV) has been making its own contribution to the systematic, multidimensional and multidisciplinary review of policies, conditions and challenges in the field of poverty and social exclusion in Macedonia in 2011. This, second report in a row, places a different focus on the analysis of the situation from the 2010 report by making an attempt to provide a regional analysis of the situation with poverty and social exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia. This approach allows estimation of the degree of social cohesion of the regions in Macedonia and identification of differences among vulnerable groups according to place of residence. Thus, the report constitutes a useful resource for mapping the regional situation and challenges in dealing with poverty and social exclusion as a necessary step in the development of local strategies and action plans.

The main objective of the Report on Poverty and Social Exclusion (2011) to offer an assessment and an analysis of the trends, policies, institutional capacities, vulnerable groups and challenges in the field of poverty and social exclusion in different municipalities and regions in Macedonia.

From a methodological point of view, the Report on Poverty and Social Exclusion (2011) follows only a qualitative approach. In the application of the qualitative approach, several techniques and instruments were used, such as expert interviews, analysis of the national and local legislation, and analysis of official statistical data. The expert interviews were conducted through a questionnaire of 10 questions (open end questions), through which an attempt was made to map the current situation with the programs, measures and scope of service users in the analyzed areas. The expert interviews were conducted with representatives of the local self government (Committee for Social Protection and Committee for Child Protection), representatives of the employment centers, representatives of the centers for social work (the Department for Social Financial Assistance), as well as representatives of the local non-governmental organizations.

The analysis of poverty and social exclusion within this report has been made on the basis of the assessment of the situation in the following areas: employment, social protection, social insurance (pension and disability insurance, health insurance and unemployment insurance) and education.

Given the purpose of the regional analysis in this year's Report on Poverty and Social Exclusion, the focus of the analysis was on the eight selected municipalities in each of eight statistical regions in the Republic. Macedonia. The selection of these municipalities has been made on the basis of their size (the larger centers in the region), the presence of the different ethnic groups (wherever possible) and the existence of institutions in the areas that are subject of the analysis. Although the selected cities may not be true representatives of the regions, yet they offer an indicative picture of the situation in the area of poverty and social exclusion in each of the regions.

The report, by means of its content, target-oriented and methodological framework, aims at contributing to the continuous and disaggregated monitoring of the situation in the area of poverty and social exclusion in the country, thus allowing the creation of national and local social policies based on experience-based records and evidence.

1•Poverty and social exclusion in 2011: national and regional trends

The public policies and programs aimed at tackling poverty and social exclusion in the Republic of Macedonia in 2011 did not bring any major changes and innovations in the system. Nationwide, the National Strategy for Alleviation of Poverty and Social Exclusion is the only document that directly addresses the situation of vulnerable groups and priorities for their more comprehensive coverage by the measures and services in the social protection system. However, the proposed guidelines in this national document, which was adopted in 2010, were not practically implemented in 2011. Although the Program for Realization of Social Protection in 2011 envisaged the adoption of operational plans for the implementation of the Strategy, these plans were not adopted. The only national strategic document in the field of poverty and social exclusion was not subjected to any revision in 2011, which was supposed to bring it closer to the goals and guidelines given in the Strategy of the European Union (EU) - Europe 2020.

Novelty in the “soft legislation” during 2011 was the adoption of the National Employment Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia - 2015. A positive development to be noted is that this strategy has been fully harmonized with the guidelines and priorities of the European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth - Europe 2020. In the National Employment Strategy - 2015, there is a special chapter dedicated to the social inclusion and fight against poverty. This chapter provides an overview of the situation with poverty and social exclusion, but it is based on the 2009 official statistical data. However, the chapter gives a more recent picture of the measures and programs, both initiated and implemented, in the field of social protection in 2011 (such as the special compensation for blindness and mobility, subsidies for energy consumption, the newly opened community kitchens, conditional financial allowances, etc). This chapter has contributed to the identification of the challenges and priorities in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

According to the information contained in this chapter, the main national challenges in the area of poverty and social exclusion are:

- *inadequate targeting of the socially disadvantaged categories;*
- *reduced access of vulnerable groups on the labor market (ethnic communities, women, disabled people, elderly people and others)*
- *insufficient involvement of the local government in social inclusion projects;*
- *insufficient development of the personal services that include specific vulnerable groups;*
- *lack of compliant action of the central and local government in the area of social protection;*

- *lack of public works on a local level for people who have difficulties to integrate in the labor market;*
- *undefined minimum wage, and*
- *underdeveloped social entrepreneurship (p. 42, 2011).*

Although some of these challenges have been tackled by recent adoption of legal acts and system measures (for example, the adoption of the Law on Minimum Wage in 2012, or the introduction of electronic recording of the social protection beneficiaries which has started in 2012), it is still evident that most of them require more continuous and more systematic efforts in the field of fight against poverty and social exclusion. Given the focus of the National Report on Poverty and Social Exclusion (i.e. the regional aspects of poverty and social exclusion), the fact that among the listed challenges there are a few that are related to management policies of the central and local government aimed at fighting poverty and social exclusion, is concerning.

The importance of the National Employment Strategy is furthermore enhanced by the fact that it presents situations and national targets of the state related to the individual indicators and the supranational EU 2020 targets. While it may be noted that unlike in the field of employment, where the targets are differentiated according to the various indicators and profiles proposed in EU2020, in the field of poverty and social exclusion, the state has decided to measure and define the national target by means of one indicator only, i.e. only by measuring poverty as a percentage of households living below the threshold of 70% of the average expenditures on a national level. Namely, the EU2020 approach to measuring poverty and social exclusion envisages three indicators - number of persons living at risk of poverty (in terms of income), number of financially deprived persons and number of persons with low work intensity (or households of no employed persons). The sum of all these indicators (or composite indicator) enables us to make an assessment of persons living in poverty and social exclusion. The listed national target, based only on one indicator, disables an integrated insight and approach to poverty as well as more specific assessment and treatment of social exclusion. At the same time, the forecast rate of poverty reduction of only 1.9% until 2015 indicates a modest share of the measures that are tailored to tackle these social problems.

Table 1: Situation and targets for separate indicators

	<i>Macedonia 2010</i>	<i>National target 2015</i>	<i>EU target 2020</i>
<i>Employment rate (age 20-64)</i>	48,1%	55%	75%
<i>Youth employment rate (15-29)</i>	26,5%	29%	/
<i>Youth employment rate (15-24)</i>	15,4%	17%	/
<i>Women employment rate</i>	34%	42%	/
<i>Elderly people employment rate</i>	34,2%	41%	/
<i>Early school leavers</i>	16,2%	14%	10%
<i>Person with higher education (age 30-34)</i>	14,2%	19%	40%
<i>Population living below the poverty line</i>	30,9%	29%	/

Source: Ministry of labor and social policy, 2011

Along with the adoption of the 2015 Employment Strategy, during 2011 the National Action Employment Plan 2011-2013 was also adopted. It represents a systematization of specific measures by means of which the state will try to tackle the problems of persons excluded from the labor market, as well as of those with low qualifications and income.

The other measures that were implemented during 2011 by the central government and referred to the reduction of poverty and social exclusion include: a proposal for amendments to the Law on Social Protection, concerning the introduction of a special allowance for blindness and special allowance for mobility in the amount of 7,000 denars, which will be exclusively used by 1080 completely blind persons and 1061 person with most severe physical disabilities (which will come into force on 1 July 2012); extension of the Program for Conditional Financial Allowance for Secondary Education for Students from Households Beneficiaries of Social Financial Assistance, for which a total number of 9.560 students have applied in the academic year 2010/2011; continuation of the implementation of measures for reduction of energy-related poverty for the beneficiaries of social financial assistance and permanent financial assistance through a Program for Subsidizing the Consumption of Energy which resulted in allocating energy consumption subsidies in the amount of 600 denars to 17,343 households in March 2011. From the service perspective, during 2011 the trend of opening community kitchens continued, so by the end of 2011 there were 36 community kitchens providing one hot meal a day for 3,357 socially disadvantaged persons.

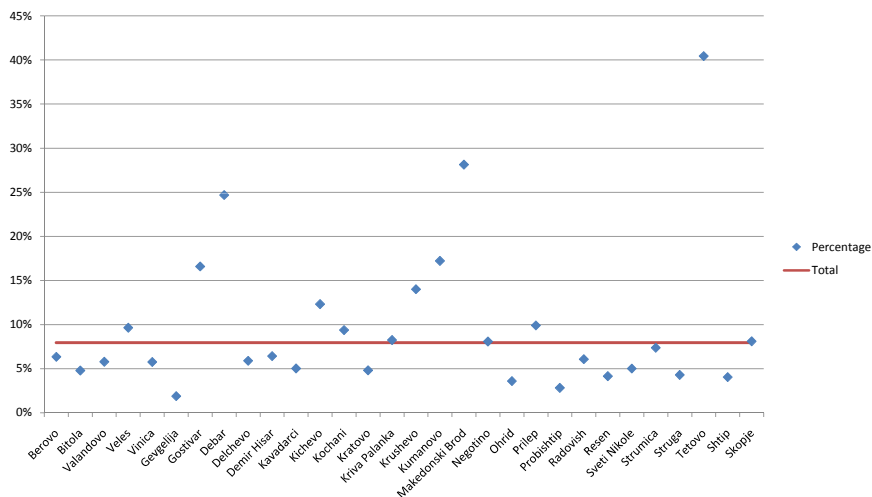
On a local level, the intensity of adoption of local strategies and local action plans for tackling poverty and social exclusion in 2011 was quite much lower than in previous years. In 2011 only eight municipalities, i.e. Lipkovo, Konce, Studenicani, Caska, Radovis, Berovo Negotino and Pehcevo, developed specific strategies for tackling poverty and social exclusion. The financial and expert support that these municipalities received from the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights was the main factor for the development of these local strategies for tackling poverty and social exclusion. Most municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia generally address the problems of poverty and social exclusion by preparing an annual program which contains local measures targeting the socially vulnerable categories of citizens in the section on social and child care; preparing local action plans for employment, which to a great extent contain the same measures from the National Action Plan, without any major innovations, and depending on the specific features of certain municipalities, national action plans for employment of the Roma population were accordingly adopted.

The local programs and measures for tackling poverty and social exclusion are largely conditioned by the available local financial and human resources, as well as by the priorities of the local government. However, considering the available statistics on the socially vulnerable population at a local level, such as the number of households - beneficiaries of social financial assistance and the number of unemployed people, the conclusion is that the number and diversity of the social programs and measures targeted at the vulnerable categories on a local level must be increased.

The given overview of households - beneficiaries of social financial assistance, shows that, in 2011, the biggest deviations from the average number of beneficiaries of SFA in Macedonia (7.94%) were in the Polog region (Tetovo ¹, Gostivar), in the Southwest Region (Debar, Makedonski Brod), and also in the Northeast region, i.e. in Kumanovo.

1 The high rate of households - beneficiaries of SFA in Tetovo primarily arises from the fact that the number of beneficiaries of SFA registered in the Center for Social Work in Tetovo does not include only the town of Tetovo, but also other populated areas in the municipality. Although the real rate might be somewhat lower, still this does not imply the the number of beneficiaries of SFA in Tetovo municipality is much smaller.

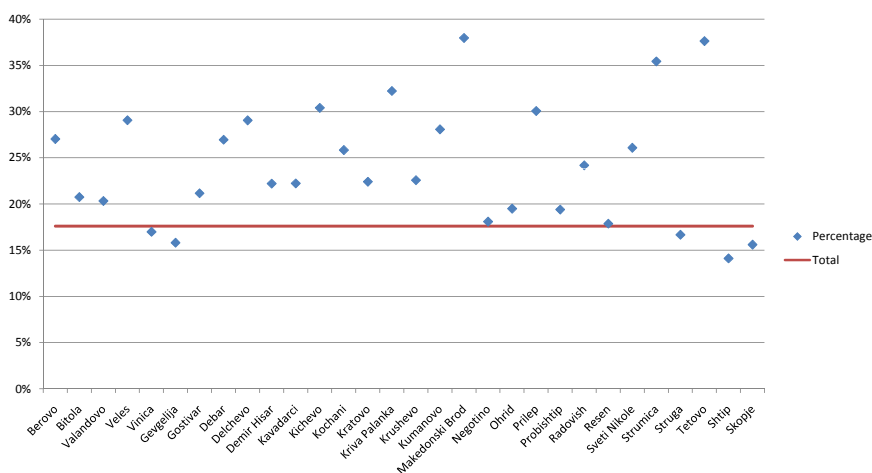
Graph 1: Percentage of households, beneficiaries of SFA per city, 2011



Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data from the 2002 census, conducted by the State Statistical Office, on the number of households per city and data from the centers for social work on the number of households-beneficiaries of SFA

The situation with the number of persons who are excluded from the labor market in the Republic of Macedonia, i.e. registered unemployed persons, indicate that the largest number of the unemployed live in Makedonski Brod and Tetovo (38%), but high rates of registered unemployment are also evident in Strumica (35.4%), Kriva Palatka (32.2%), Kicevo and Prilep (30%). The average registered unemployment rate in the Republic of Macedonia in 2011 was 17.61% which is far less than the official unemployment rate, which when measured by the Labour Force Survey in 2011/IV amounted to 31.8%.

Graph n.2: Percentage of registered unemployment per city, 2011



Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data for 2011 from the State Statistical Office on population over the age of 15 per city, according to the 2002 census, and the available data from the Employment Service Agency on registered unemployed per city in December 2011

The regional comparison of the number of beneficiaries of SFA and the registered unemployed indicates that the most vulnerable regions are the Polog region, the South-western region and the North-eastern region whereas the South-eastern region and the Pelagonija region show greater vulnerability only in respect to the registered unemployment.

Considering these conditions on a regional or a local level, the National Report on Poverty and Social Exclusion - 2011 will further on give a more specific overview of the social trends, policies, institutional competences, vulnerable groups and priorities in the field of poverty and social exclusion in eight municipalities in Macedonia, as indicative examples of the social situation in the eight statistical regions in the country.

2° Poverty and social exclusion in Veles (the Vardar region)

This section of the report focuses on the major trends in overcoming poverty in the Vardar region or the Municipality of Veles. In this regard, the analysis begins with the main indicators of the social condition of the population in this region, i.e. municipality.

2.1 Social map of the municipality

According to the data from the State Statistical Office in 2009, the Vardar region with an index of 96.9 is the closest to the average gross domestic product per capita in the Republic of Macedonia, compared to the other regions. Moreover, in 2009 the Vardar region had a share of 7.3% in the GDP of the country (SSO, 2011).

On the basis of the data from the State Statistical Office, on the area of Veles municipality, as of the end of 2010 there was a population of 39,316 persons aged 15-64, or 35,737 persons aged 20-64 (SSO, 2011, p.19).

As far as the number of registered unemployed persons in the area covered by the Center for Employment – Veles is concerned, by December 31, 2011 there were 13,088 registered unemployed persons aged 15-64 years, representing 4,65% of the total number of registered unemployed in the country (ESA, 2011). Out of the total number of registered unemployed people in this area, 6,120 are women (ESA, 2011). A total number of 12,766 persons aged 20-64 are registered as unemployed.

Taking into consideration that the data from the Veles Employment Centre include Veles, Gradsko² and Caska³ municipality, the data comparison has generated an unemployment rate of 28% for the category of persons aged 15-64, and 30.21% for the category of persons aged 20-64.

As far as the beneficiaries of social assistance in the area covered by the Center for Social Work - Veles are concerned by December 2011 there were 1,424 registered beneficiaries. If we compare the data on the unemployed with the number of social assistance beneficiaries, we can draw the conclusion that 10.88% of the unemployed are social assistance beneficiaries.

2 Up until the end of 2010, the number of the population aged 15-64 in Gradsko municipality was 2571 whereas the number of those aged 20-64 was 2305.

3 Up until the end of 2010, the number of the population aged 15-64 in Caska municipality was 4862 whereas of those aged 20-64 was 4206.

Table n.2: Selected indicators for the social map of Veles municipality

<i>Social indicators</i>	<i>% of the population in Veles</i>
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (15-64)</i>	28
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (20-64)</i>	30.21
<i>Households-beneficiaries of SFA</i>	9.64
<i>Registered unemployed – beneficiaries of SFA</i>	10.88
<i>Population covered by health insurance</i>	84.75
<i>Population over 64 receiving old-age pension</i>	61
<i>Children aged 5-14 receiving elementary education</i>	85.7

Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data for 2011 from the Employment Service Agency, Center for Social Work, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, the Health Insurance Fund and the State Statistical Office.

In addition, by this period there were 262 registered beneficiaries of permanent financial assistance, 1,265 users of financial assistance for care of a third person as 9 users of financial assistance for persons who until the age of 18 have had the status of children without parental care. Furthermore, during 2011, on the area covered by the Centre for Social Work there were also about 160 registered beneficiaries of conditional financial compensation. Moreover, it should be noted that during 2011 there was great interest for the use of the energy subsidies, and consequently, a total number of 1,140 requests throughout the year were recorded. Finally, as of December 2011 there were 319 users of parental allowance, 715 users of child allowance and 232 users of special allowance.

The analysis of the structure of the unemployed persons in the area covered by the Center for Employment - Veles indicates several tendencies. Primarily, it should be emphasized that over 60% of the unemployed are people with no education or low level of education. The percentage of unemployed persons with secondary education is relatively high and the percentage of unemployed persons with higher education is 5.89%. Unemployment is almost evenly distributed among all age categories. The fact that over 45% of unemployed persons have been waiting for employment for more than 5 years.

If we compare the data on the national structure of the unemployed with the population figures, the tentative assessment shows the following unemployment rates of the different communities in the area covered by the Veles Employment Center: Macedonians - 18.43% Albanians - 25.19%, Turks - 26.94% Roma - 29.67% and Serbs - 7.28%. This assessment is tentative only since for the sake of comparison the latest official and available data on the national structure of the population per municipality of the State Statistical Office was used

(SSO, 2011, p 34-35). Nevertheless, the high unemployment rate of the Roma population is striking which is inevitably manifested in the structure of the vulnerable groups of the municipality.

As far as the elementary education is concerned, there are 19 elementary schools in Veles municipality, which, according to the latest available data from the State Statistical Office from 2010, were attended by 4,933 students (SSO, 2011b, p.20). Considering that according to the population figures for 2010 there were 5,761 persons in the age group 5-14 in the Municipality of Veles, we can draw the conclusion that 14.3% of the population in this age group is not covered by the regular elementary education. This figure may be the result of several factors: migration of the population, decrease of the birth rate, but also a result of the actual exclusion of certain vulnerable groups from the education process (Roma street children, children with special needs, etc..).

According to the data of the Health Insurance Fund of Macedonia, as of December 2011 on the area of the Veles Regional Unit there were 56,265 insured persons (HIFM, 2011). If these data are compared with the total population covered by the Regional Unit, we can conclude that 84.75% of the population has health insurance.

Moreover, in the region of Veles there were 5183 registered retired (on the basis of age) beneficiaries at the end of 2010 (PDIF, 2011, p.16). When compared with the total number of the population over 64 years of age in the area covered by the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, we can conclude that the coverage of retired people on the basis of age is 61%.

Finally, with regard to social security in the region of Veles, we can conclude that its coverage is not universal due to the fact that about 15% of the population is not covered by health insurance, while 40% of the elderly people over the age of 64 years do not receive pension (acquired on the basis of age).

2.2 Municipal legislation related to poverty and social exclusion

Veles municipality is the first municipality in the Republic of Macedonia, which in 2006 developed an a study on social protection. Moreover, new sections on overcoming poverty and social exclusion on a local level are continuously being incorporated in the Strategy on Local Economic Development. In addition, a Local Action Plan for People with Disabilities was adopted by 2010 and a new Action plan for the period from 2011 to 2015 was adopted by the Council in October 2011. This action plan represents a major instrument for development and implementation of concrete steps leading up to an improvement of the situation of disabled people on a local level. Dis-

abled people have been involved in the development of these documents, as direct beneficiaries through the representatives of their nongovernmental organizations as well as the families of children with special educational needs and developmental problems.

In addition, the Strategy for the Elderly for the period 2011-2015 has been under preparation.

Finally, the Council of the Municipality of Veles annually adopts the Annual Program of Activities related to health and social care. The main objectives of this program are: rendering the municipality proactive to meet the needs of citizens in the area of health and social care, finding ways of taking care of the socially vulnerable groups, socialization of the marginalized groups and modernization of the educational process by placing a special emphasis on the creation of conditions and services for inclusion of disabled people.

2.3 Local institutions and their activities related to the socially vulnerable groups and their mutual cooperation

Within the preparation of the Annual Report on Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Municipality of Veles interviews were conducted with the representatives of several local institutions. In this respect, it seems that the Municipality of Veles plays the most important role in organizing and implementing activities related to the socially vulnerable groups.

Within the Annual Program of Activities in the Area of Health Care and Social Protection a number of activities are envisaged in the municipality (assistance to socially disadvantaged families and marginalized groups, creation of conditions for providing care of abandoned children and street children and innovative forms of providing assistance to poor families; providing assistance to families affected by accidents and natural disasters, promoting gender equality and care for the elderly. The funds for the implementation of the Program are provided in the municipal budget, and in order to ensure operational transparency of the whole procedure, a Book of Rules has been adopted, including criteria for allocation of funds. The funding priorities for each subsequent are defined through a public debate and in cooperation with NGOs.

Moreover, there is a special Committee for the Award of One-off Financial Assistance of Socially Vulnerable Groups (natural disasters, domestic violence etc).

It should be noted that the municipality continuously cooperates with the key stakeholders in this field on a local level, and as a result, organizes joint activities. In this regard, the organization of joint events with citizens' associations (support for victims of domestic violence,

care of elderly, disabled, etc.), the activities related to the Day of Aid for the Hungry in cooperation with the Red Cross, the cooperation with the media in the preparation of media programs for the vulnerable groups in the municipality, preparation of audio materials for the blind and provision of social packages and school materials for children without parents are quite impressive.

Moreover, the municipality has conducted several activities related to the improvement of the situation of persons with cerebral palsy and marginalized groups (persons treated for addictions, homeless people, former prisoners, etc). Although this is a program that is extremely financially limited, the municipality apparently finds a way to allocate funds for a wide range of activities.

The municipality also cooperates with other institutions on a local level. In this context, it is worth mentioning the opening of the church community kitchen in collaboration with the Center for Social Work. The Center for Social Work in Veles covers the social protection activities for the municipalities of Veles, Gradsko and Caska, including the measures for the vulnerable groups (financial benefits and social services) envisaged in the law. In 2011, 40 new applications for social assistance have been registered on a monthly average basis in the Center.

The local institutions in the municipality cooperate with the institutions on the central level. This cooperation is essential for the control of the potential misuse of the right to social assistance on the part of the beneficiaries.

Unfortunately, the participation of the private sector in the provision of support for the socially vulnerable categories of citizens in the municipality is extremely limited, and predominantly, consists in donating food and equipment to meet the needs of the community kitchen and day care center.

2.4 Description of the socially vulnerable groups

On the basis of the interviews and the principle social indicators, one may conclude that the main socially vulnerable group in the municipality is the category of people with low level of education. This category is dominant in the structure of the unemployed in the region and in the municipality. The lack of education among the people from this category affects their social situation in several ways: primarily, through the reduced employment opportunities due to their low competitiveness (especially typical of the Roma population, which makes up the biggest share in the structure of the unemployed in the municipality), secondarily, through the lack of information of the population on their rights and opportuni-

ties (in the interviews, it was evident that the Roma population as well as the female population of Caska municipality lack of information on the health care issues); thirdly, through the lack of on initiative to educate the new generations, which only deepens the vicious circle of poverty (“No money for education” is the most common explanation given) etc. As the available data has shown, a significant share of the population has not yet been included in the elementary education.

Moreover, a significant socially vulnerable group of the population are the people over the age of 50. A significant percentage of the unemployed persons in this age group are faced with the challenge of seeking new employment or retraining/requalification at a time when they should be getting ready for retirement. A significant 45% of the unemployed in the region have been waiting for employment for over 5 years.

Within the interviews, the disabled people, the single parents (especially widows and single mothers with many children) and the elderly (especially those who need home care) were identified as socially vulnerable groups.

2.5 Priorities and policy indicators for the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion

Similar as in the other municipalities/regions in the country, a key policy priority for the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion is the reduction of unemployment and the improvement of the living standard of the population. In this regard, further decisive steps shall be taken to improve the education of the population in order to further educate vulnerable groups and enable them to get retraining/requalification. It also seems that the idea of introducing mandatory pre-school education should be analyzed in greater depth.

Besides this, additional options for greater involvement of the private sector in this process should be considered, especially through the possible expansion of the existing subsidies for people with special needs to the other socially vulnerable groups.

In addition, the poor living conditions, especially of the Roma population, have a major impact on the social status of the population. Consequently, there is a pressing need for greater education of the targeted vulnerable groups on topics, such as health care and family planning, as well as for greater education of women. The provided health care for the Roma population should be also increased, especially among the chronically ill people.

Moreover, during the interviews the low social assistance benefit was invariably stressed as one of the priority problems to be tackled in the poverty alleviation efforts. The currently set amount is not sufficient to meet minimum needs of the beneficiaries.

In this regard, there is a need for a more comprehensive approach of the state bodies in the control of the social assistance beneficiaries in order to ensure provision of social assistance to those that really need it and avoid misuse. The positive example mentioned during the interviews was the control of the Public Revenue Office of the transactional accounts of the beneficiaries. A financial audit was conducted on the basis of the annual income of the social assistance beneficiaries. Thus, this approach should be further developed, primarily in the context of control of the social assistance beneficiaries' ownership of real estate and motor vehicles.

Although the continuous control of the beneficiaries is absolutely necessary to ensure that the assistance reaches the right place, it seems that the obligation of the social assistance beneficiaries to register monthly puts an additional burden on the limited human resources of the relevant institutions, but also increases the costs of the beneficiaries themselves. Moreover, it was emphasized that there is a need to create a more flexible legal framework for identifying criteria for social assistance use given the fact that there are examples in the region where the applicants who really need the assistance do not meet the set criteria.

Given the fact that there is no database of vulnerable groups in the region, there is a need to create this kind of information source in an electronic form and update it continuously. Thus, the work of the local institutions whose activities are aimed at alleviation of poverty and social exclusion will be significantly facilitated.

3°Poverty and social exclusion in Gostivar (the Polog region)

This part of the report contains a review of the major trends for overcoming poverty and social exclusion in the Polog region and in Gostivar. In this regard, the analysis begins with consideration of the main indicators of the social map of the region and the municipality.

3.1 Social map of the region/municipality

According to the data from the State Statistical Office, the Polog region with an index of 46.9, has the lowest GDP per capita compared to the national average in the country. In 2009 this region's GDP per capita was 7.2% of the overall GDP structure in the Republic of Macedonia (SSO, 2011).

On the basis of the data from the State Statistical Office, in the Gostivar area until the end of 2010 there was a population of 61,075 aged 15-64, and 53,125 aged 20-64 (DPR, 2011, p.21) .

The number of registered unemployed persons in the area covered by the Center for Employment - Gostivar at the end of 2011 was 12,781 person aged 15 -64, or 4.55% of the total number of registered unemployed in the country (ESA, 2011). As to the gender structure of the unemployed, it should be stressed that 4,093 registered persons are women (ESA, 2011). The number of the unemployed aged 20 – 64 was 12,399.

Given that the data from the Center for Employment – Gostivar covers the municipalities of Gostivar, Mavrovo - Rostuse⁴ and Vrapciste⁵, the comparison of the data generates the unemployment rate, which for the age group 15-64 was 14.73% and for the age group 20-64 - 16.45%.

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4 Up until the end of 2010, the number of the population aged 15-64 in Mavrovo Rostuse municipality was 6359 whereas the number of those aged 20-64 – 5459.

5 Up until the end of 2010, the number of the population aged 15-64 in Vrapciste municipality was 19333 whereas of those aged 20-64 was 16751.

Table n.3: Selected indicators for the social map of Gostivar municipality

<i>Social indicators</i>	<i>% of the population in Gostivar</i>
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (15-64)</i>	17.73
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (20-64)</i>	16.45
<i>Households-beneficiaries of SFA</i>	16.58
<i>Registered unemployed – beneficiaries of SFA</i>	20.8
<i>Population covered by health insurance</i>	67.38
<i>Population over 64 receiving old-age pension</i>	31.35
<i>Children aged 5-14 receiving elementary education</i>	78.44

Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data for 2011 from the Employment Service Agency, Center for Social Work, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, the Health Insurance Fund and the State Statistical Office.

As far as the social assistance beneficiaries are concerned, in the area covered by the Center for Social Work - Gostivar until the end of December 2011 there were 2580 registered social assistance beneficiaries. If we compare these data with the population figures in the abovementioned area, we come to the conclusion that the rate of social assistance beneficiaries above the age of 19 is 3.42%. Moreover, if these data are compared with the number of the unemployed, we can conclude that 20.8% of the unemployed are social assistance beneficiaries.

In addition, by this time there were 52 registered beneficiaries of permanent financial assistance and 554 beneficiaries of financial assistance and reimbursement for care from a third party. In addition, during 2011, in the area covered by the Centre for Social Work there were 573 beneficiaries of conditional financial allowance. Moreover, it should be noted that during 2011 there was a great interest among beneficiaries for the energy subsidies offered. The number of submitted applications varied throughout the year (from 59 to 794 applications per month level, and in December 2011 a total number of 192 submitted applications). Finally, until the end of December 2011, there were 408 registered beneficiaries of parental allowance, 375 beneficiaries of child allowance and 222 beneficiaries of special allowance.

The analysis of the unemployment data on a local level indicates several different trends. Over two thirds of the unemployed are people without education or with low level of education. The percentage of the unemployed with higher education is 5.65%. Most of the unemployed have been waiting for employment for up to 2 years. At the same time there is a high percentage of people (40%) who have been waiting for employment for over 5 years. Thus, we are coming back to the conclusion that unemployment is almost evenly distributed among all age groups.

If we compare the data on the nationality of the unemployed in the area covered by the Employment Center in Gostivar with the population figures in the municipality, we come to the indicative estimate of the following shares of the different communities in the overall unemployment structure: Macedonian community 25.53% of the total number of the unemployed; Albanian community 54.9%; Turkish community 8%; Roma community 4.83% and the Serbian community 0.12%. When comparing the number of registered unemployed by ethnicity as a share of each respective ethnic community, we come to the conclusion that out of the total number of Roma living on the territory of Gostivar municipality, 27.5% are registered as unemployed, out of the total number of Macedonians living on the territory of Gostivar municipality, 13.3% are registered as unemployed, compared to 9.15% of registered unemployed of the ethnic Albanian community and 7.40% of the Turkish ethnic community. Regarding the analysis of these data, it should be said that they are only indicative in nature since the latest official and available State Statistical Office data on the national structure of the population per municipality were used for comparison (SSO, 2011, p.34-35). At the same time one should take into account the fact that a large portion of the population in this area is temporarily working abroad, and consequently, the actual unemployment rate is lower. Although these data do not reflect the real situation on the ground due to the abovementioned factors, still we can conclude that the employment rate of the Roma and Macedonian community is relatively lower.

As far as the elementary education is concerned, in the area of the Municipality of Gostivar there are 29 elementary schools in which, according to the latest available data from the State Statistical Office from 2010, there are 8382 students (SSO, 2011b, p.19). Taking into consideration that, according to the available statistical data, the population figures in the age group of 5-14 in Gostivar municipality in 2010 was 10,687, we can draw the conclusion that 21.56% of the population in this age group has not been covered in the regular elementary education. According to the data from Gostivar municipality, there are 86 registered children with special needs on the territory of the municipality.

According to the Macedonian Health Insurance Fund, until the end of December 2011, 80,313 insured persons, or 67.38% of the population (HIFM, 2011) were registered at the Regional Unit in Gostivar. Again, this statistical data is assumed to contain also those who are temporarily working abroad, but what's more significant is that it may reflect a large percentage of people working on the black market, who do not have their benefits paid, and thus do not have health insurance.

Moreover, on the territory covered by the Gostivar Regional Unit of the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of Macedonia, at the end of 2010, there were 2982 registered beneficiaries of old-age pension. When comparing this figure with the number of people over 64 years of age, we can conclude that the coverage of the old-age pension in this area is only

30.35% (PDIF, 2011, p.16). The low percentage of people covered by old-age pension is potentially indicates that the large share of the black market economy and especially the inactivity of the female population of certain ethnic communities (Albanian, Turkish) on the labor market are the possible causes for their exclusion from the pension insurance system. Although a part of the elderly people may also be covered by disability insurance, it is a fact that a fairly low percentage of the elderly population in Gostivar municipality officially receives an old-age pension.

3.2 Municipal legislation related to poverty and social exclusion

The Municipality of Gostivar has not adopted a separate strategy aimed at overcoming poverty and social exclusion. However, other acts of the municipality include related elements from this area. Moreover, the Municipal Council from 2008 onwards has regularly adopted an Annual Program for Social Assistance and Health Care.

The representatives of the NGOs have been regularly included in the priority setting for allocation of funds. The program is funded from own municipal revenues and donations. Initially, the Program was aimed at providing one-off social protection assistance and health care (disinfection, deratization, etc).

Considering the high unemployment rate, the large number of social assistance beneficiaries and the fact that according to the GDP figures, the Polog region is one of the least developed regions in the country, the municipality should be further encouraged to develop local social assistance programs aimed at the improvement of the status of the vulnerable population groups.

3.3 Local institutions and their activities related to the socially vulnerable groups and their mutual cooperation

Gostivar municipality has been implementing a number of activities related to the overcoming of poverty and social exclusion in the municipality. These activities have been focused on several socially vulnerable groups. In this context, Gostivar municipality invested about 500.000 Euro or 30% of the capital investments of the municipality in 2011 in the area of the elementary and secondary education. Moreover, the municipality undertook intensive activities to improve the living conditions of the population (construction of local roads, supply of garbage trucks, construction of a waste water collection system, etc).

Within the municipality, there is a separate Unit for Local Economic Development and Implementation of Projects. During 2011, this municipal unit has, in cooperation with the NGO

sector, conducted activities related to the participatory budgeting. In addition, the Municipal Council adopted a decision to cover part of the living and food expenses for the Roma children within the project “Inclusion of the Roma Children in the Pre-school Institutions in the Republic of Macedonia.” The municipality had a cooperation also with the Association of the Blind People “Realities” to support the local projects aimed at the improvement of the inter-ethnic relations, and provided Christmas sweets’ and candy packs for the children with special needs.

However, it must be emphasized that due to funds available to the municipality for the implementation of these activities, they are extremely limited in nature.

Besides the Municipality of Gostivar, there is also the Center for Social Work – Gostivar, which covers the municipalities of Gostivar, Mavrovo - Rostuse and Vrapciste. It seems that on a municipal level there is no effective cooperation between the local government and the Centre for Social Work. The attempt to open a community kitchen in the municipality with the assistance of these two institutions failed. At the same time, there is a pressing need to foster the cooperation between these two institutions, especially in reference to the functioning of the day care center.

As for cooperation with the social institutions on a central level, the main challenge is the need for greater coordination of the state and local authorities in the implementation of activities aimed at the improvement of the social protection of the population. Moreover, within the interviews, the need for digitization of data and their exchange in an electronic format was underlined as an additional challenge for the efficient functioning of the institutions.

With the exception of the participation in certain educational events, the Center for Social Work does not have an intensive cooperation with the civil sector. On the other hand, there are many examples of successful cooperation of the local government with the citizens’ associations. The municipality participates in these projects as a partner.

The situation with the participation of the private sector in the support of the socially vulnerable categories of citizens is similar. As a result of the economic situation in the municipality and the absence of major industrial facilities, the participation of the private sector in these activities is quite limited. It is mostly reduced to individual activities in the form of donations of funds and products.

Within the interviews, the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach of the institutions in controlling the social assistance beneficiaries was emphasized. The successful example shared again was the control of the transactional accounts of beneficiaries conducted by the Public Revenue Office in 2011. As a result, it should be emphasized that the number

of social assistance beneficiaries in the municipality has decreased in 2011 primarily due to the continuous controls on the part of the state authorities aimed at detecting potential abuses.

3.4 Description of the socially vulnerable groups

Within the interviews, the interviewed unanimously shared the opinion that the Roma population is the main socially vulnerable group in the municipality. This view is also based on the statistical data presented in this report, which shows the high unemployment rate of this community. As already discussed, this is a category of the population which has no education or a very low level of education, lives in extremely difficult conditions and has no income. At the same time, the poor social status limits the educational opportunities of the population, especially of the younger generations, and limits the health care coverage. Moreover, the relatively high unemployment rate of the Macedonian community in relation to the other communities, is a specific feature of this region.

The other most important socially vulnerable group were the disabled children. As noted, the number of disabled children in the municipality is over 80 and they are facing many challenges, primarily in terms of the needed aids and appliances for the purposes of education and transportation. In relation to this vulnerable group, it is evident that comprehensive solutions are needed to improve the status of this category, i.e. solutions that involve both the central government and the local government are needed. The occasional new engagement of experts does not change the position of this group in the medium and long run. In other words, as the one of the survey participants said, “The employment of a speech therapist is not a solution.”

Moreover, there are traditionally socially vulnerable groups in the region and the municipality, such as the elderly and single parents. Finally, within the interviews, it was also noted that there are a lot of homeless people.

3.5 Policy priorities and indicators for alleviation of poverty and social exclusion

As in other regions/municipalities in the country, the main policy priorities for overcoming poverty include reducing the unemployment and improvement of the educational level of the population. Given that the majority of the beneficiaries of social assistance do not have any education, the focus of the policy for overcoming poverty and social exclusion should be on the measures for further training and retraining/requalification of the vulnerable groups with the objective of enabling them to acquire the skills needed on the labour

market. However, taking into consideration the major economic parameters of the municipality as well as the general economic situation in the country, one cannot expect visible results in this field in the short term. These trends have resulted in the idea of employing the social assistance beneficiaries as seasonal workers in order to improve the services provided in the utility sector, hygiene maintenance and public space maintenance/decoration.

Moreover, as a positive example in relation to the educational improvements, one has to mention the effects of the introduction of the conditional financial allowance, which has had a great impact on the increase of student attendance in secondary schools. However, in certain cases, as a result of the categorization in terms of regular attendance (the threshold of 22/24 justified/ unjustified absences from school), part of the students in case of serious health problems and longer absences lose the right to conditional financial allowance.

The main priorities for the improvement of the situation of the vulnerable groups in the municipality include the expansion of the health care coverage in the municipality and the education of the population.

The conducted interviews have demonstrated an additional priority - the need to render citizens more informed of the protection and social assistance provided by the state.

In this regard, the extremely bureaucratic procedure for realization of this right was underlined, but also the absence of an effective system for informing the population about the occurring changes (as a result of the frequent changes in laws, often even the authorities themselves are not duly informed). In addition, it should be noted that the socially vulnerable groups are facing the challenge of having to submit extensive documentation, the provision of which sometimes costs a lot, in order to realize the right to social assistance.

Additionally, the priority for adopting a comprehensive approach on the part of the state authorities, especially on the part of the Labor Inspectorate, in the control of the social assistance beneficiaries was also mentioned. Moreover, within the interviews, the challenges faced by some institutions in their work were underlined (for ex., the limited human resources, the fact that the employed persons do not have adequate educational qualifications, etc). In this regard, it should be emphasized that the Center also faces a lack of functional vehicles required for

4•Poverty and social exclusion in Stip (the Eastern region)

The Municipality of Stip is the center of the Eastern planning region and is bordered by seven other municipalities in the eastern part of the Republic of Macedonia. It covers an area of 893 km², has 71 populated area and a total number of 48 599 inhabitants in the whole municipality.

On the territory of Stip municipality, the most developed industry is the textile industry and the textile business is one of the basic sources of subsistence for many families. Other dominant sectors in the municipality are leather and food processing industry, then the transportation industry and the wholesale and retail trade industry. The GDP per capita in the Eastern region is 30,683 million denar or 170,486 Denar per capita.

4.1 Social map of the municipality

In terms of the unemployment, in the Municipality of Stip until the end of 2011 there were 5,528 unemployed persons, i.e. the unemployment rate in the municipality was 11.4%. The data on the unemployment rate in comparison with the structure of the working age population show that in the age group 15-64 this rate is 15.7% whereas for the working age population of 20-64 it is 17.1% throughout the municipality. From the presented data, one can conclude that the lowest unemployment rate (of only 1.8%) is in the youngest age group 15-19, whereas in the age group 55-59 the unemployment rate is 18.7%. In this light of the situation, one should take into account that in Stip the secondary school attendance rate of young people aged 15-19 is high. On the other hand, if we conduct an analysis of population of 50 years of age and above, we can conclude that the unemployment rate of this age group is 46.5%, which makes this middle-aged labour force particularly vulnerable on the labor market.

Of the total registered unemployed population in Macedonia, the registered unemployed people from Stip municipality represent 1.96%. An important feature of the unemployment problem is the distinction between rural and urban areas, i.e. there is a big perceptual difference between the unemployed people living in the urban and rural areas. A high percentage, or 94.6% of the total number of the unemployed in the municipality live in urban areas and only 5.4% live in rural areas. In terms of the gender structure, 39% or 2,158 of the unemployed are women, which means that there are more unemployed men than women, i.e. the demand for female labour force is greater in Stip.

In terms of the waiting period, the unemployed in Stip municipality wait for employment for a relatively short period of time, namely from 1 to 5 months, or remain unemployed in the long term and wait for employment for 8 years or more.

In terms of the ethnic structure of the population, the Bosniak ethnic community has the best performance on the labour market since there are no unemployed members of this ethnic community. From the other communities, the highest proportion of the unemployed are Albanian (25%), and immediately after them comes the Turkish community (24.2%) and the Roma community (20.5%). The number of registered unemployed among the Macedonian ethnic community is 11% .

The analysis of the educational profile of the unemployed in Stip municipality until the end of 2011 shows that most of the unemployed are unskilled workers (43.5%), which is directly reflected on their ability to adapt to the labour market. The analysis of the data related to the educational structure shows that people with the highest educational level- PhD studies, have the greatest employment opportunities and there are no registered unemployed people from this category.

The number of children attending elementary school in 2011 was 4,204 children, whereas the total number of children in the age group 5-14 is 5,019 or 83.8% of the children involved in the educational process. Only 16.3% of the children do not attend elementary school. The number of children with special needs who attend special classes within the elementary education on the territory of the Municipality of Stip is 31.

From the presented data, it can be concluded that the youngest population in the municipality is largely involved in the educational process, but the interview conducted with a representative from the Municipality of Stip, on April 6, 2012 showed that: “There is a problem with the children from the Roma community who at the beginning of the school year enroll in the elementary schools, but they do not attend school regularly or drop out during the school year.”⁶

The number of registered users of social financial assistance (SFA) for December 2011 is 520. The percentage of households beneficiaries of SFA in the municipality is 4.04%. However, the large number of beneficiaries of the assistance-and –care- by- another person allowance is a characteristic feature of Stip municipality, namely there are 723 such beneficiaries. Three Roma nationals in 2011 used the training and retraining/requalification to gain employment skills in some of the scarce occupations. In this context, it should be noted that the interest of other beneficiaries of SFA for the use of the active employment measures is insignificant⁷.

6 Interview with Vanja Dzambazova, a representative of Stip municipality, 06.04.2012.

7 Interview conducted with Natalija Panova – Director of CSW Stip, 04.04.2012.

Table n.4: Selected indicators for the social map of Stip municipality

<i>Social indicators</i>	<i>% of the population in Stip</i>
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (15-64)</i>	15.7
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (20-64)</i>	17.1
<i>Households-beneficiaries of SFA</i>	4.04
<i>Registered unemployed – beneficiaries of SFA</i>	9.4
<i>Children aged 5-14 receiving elementary education</i>	83.8

Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data for 2011 from the Employment Service Agency, Center for Social Work in Veles and the State Statistical Office.

The elderly population rate of people over the age of 65 is 12%. In the municipality there are 6,087 users of old-age pension. Compared to the number of persons over the age of 60, the old-age pension user coverage is 100% and compared to the number of persons over the age of 65, the old-age pension user coverage is 70%. This suggests that the right of to an old-age pension is being realized to a great extent, according to the law.

In terms of the health insurance, the data available demonstrates that there is a great coverage, or a total of 52,789 insured persons. Given that the Regional Unit of the Health Insurance Fund also covers the neighboring Municipality of Karbinci, the abovementioned figure comprises also the insured people/insurance policy holders from Karbinci. The total number of insured people is greater than the number of inhabitants in both municipalities, which is explained by the fact that a number of teachers employed at the University are not native Stip inhabitants, but according to the status of insured persons belong to the municipality of Stip. Also, significant share of the insured people comes from the professional soldiers (also inhabitants of other municipalities), so the total number of insured people is much bigger than the number of the inhabitants of Stip municipality. Thus, it can be concluded that in Stip municipality there is a high percentage of coverage of the population with health insurance which enables the realization of the rights to health care.

Generally speaking, although the unemployment rate shows a low proportion with the number of the population of working capacity, the fact that most of the employed population generates its existing income from the textile industry is a sufficient indicator that the main employment sector is a sector of low profitability.

4.2 Legislative acts for addressing social exclusion on a local level

In addition to the already existing programs, in the Municipality of Stip in 2011 other programs and plans were adopted as well, including activities aimed at the alleviation of

poverty and social exclusion. A document of certain relevance for this issue is the Program for the Realization of Social Assistance, Child Care and Health Care in 2011, as well as the developed adequate Local Action Plan (LAP).

The following local action plans adopted have been adopted in recent years:

- *Local Action Plan for Social Protection for the period 2007-2012 which has been further elaborated in several action plans and is focused on six target groups: street children, elderly and sick people, people with intellectual or physical disability over 18 years of age, victims of addictions (alcohol, drugs and nicotine), victims of domestic violence and victims of human trafficking.*
- *Local Action Plan for Children's Rights for 2009-2014*
- *Local Action Plan for Disabled People*
- *Local Action Plan for Housing, Health Care, Education and Employment of Roma*
- *Local Action Plan for the Protection of the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young People in Stip municipality for 2011/2012*
- *Local Action Plan for Prevention of Any Kind of Discrimination for the Period 2011/2012.*

In the municipality there is a Strategic Plan prepared by the United Nations Development Program, on the basis of which the other action plans are also prepared. For most of these programs and local action plans detailed budgets and precise activity implementation deadlines are envisaged. There is a coordination body, whose members are representatives of the Municipal Council and persons directly involved in the implementation of the local action plans. Each year a report of implemented activities is developed. This is the monitoring and evaluation phase of the action plans, but the challenge of maintaining continuity of monitoring activities on the part of the Council representatives upon the expiry of their term remains since after their term expires, they do not participate in the coordinative body.

The Center for Social Work in Stip implements its work and program activities on the basis of the strategic and program documents adopted by the MLSP, primarily, the National Strategy for Alleviation of Poverty and Social Exclusion for the period 2010-2020.

In terms of development of programs and local action plans, in the Municipality of Stip there is a wide range of target groups, but the lack of development programs for the specific and changing needs of citizens in the municipality is evident. A key document that is missing is a program for social inclusion of the vulnerable groups, such as for example the homeless people, the people living with HIV/AIDS and others.

4.3 Institutional competences for addressing social exclusion on a local level

The main actor responsible for the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion in the Municipality of Stip is primarily the Center for Social Work, but also the Employment Center in the municipality and local government; the latter yet to a lesser extent and not as a part of its original competence. The important role of NGOs and the private sector must be mentioned here, whose social responsibility must be clearly presented to the most vulnerable groups of citizens.⁸

CSW holds competence for the territory of both municipalities - Stip and Karbinci, and serves approximately 56,000 citizens. Most common rights being used which are part of the social financial security are the social financial assistance (SFA) and the assistance and care by another person, whereas all other rights are used to a lesser extent. For example, there are only 20-30 applications for one-off financial assistance on a monthly basis. In terms of the ethnic structure, the Roma population usually applies for SFA, and these are predominantly male, whereas the small percentage of female Roma applicants most often applies for SFA and one-off financial assistance in cases of separate extramarital communities or single parents. In relation to other gender-specific groups, in 2010/2011 there were two cases of juvenile prostitution in which two Macedonian minors were involved. In terms of the professional work, the most common cases are cases of juvenile marriages, extramarital communities, divorces and separations where the biggest problem is placement of the children and the obtaining of personal documents.

Between CSW-Stip and the local government of Stip municipality there is very tight and close cooperation. The representatives from the CSW- Stip have underlined the professional and informal assistance they have received from the mayors of the municipalities of Stip and Karbinci in meeting their transportation needs and providing a vehicle to be used for the needs of the beneficiaries. There are coordination bodies for clients who call in the CSW, the local self government and the other institutions in the municipality. There is also a co-operation in the submission of lists of clients to the local self government, who are further employed in the utilities sector for a specific period of time. The same principle is applied also in the functioning of the community kitchen. The CSW has launched an initiative to open a Regional Unit in the rural Karbinci municipality.

Mutual cooperation exists also with other institutions from the social domain which operate on a local level, and in this context, the informal and efficient communication is being stressed (no official requests and only one phone call away from a meeting). It is in the interest of the clients to foster good cooperation with NGOs, especially with most of the Roma organizations, the organization "Echo", "Synergy", the Youth Club and others. The coop-

eration with the local Employment Centre has also been a positive experience, whereby:
“The Center for Social Work in collaboration with the Employment Service Agency stimulate people of working capacity, and at the same time, the beneficiaries of the social financial assistance, to engage in the active employment measures, but the turnout of the above-mentioned groups is very small. In order to help them succeed on the labor market and help them acquire the necessary competences, the CSW has offered to ten people to attend the trainings. As a result of their denial of such an opportunity and inactivity in seeking employment, the CSW abolished their right to SFA.”⁹

The cooperation with the private sector mainly takes place through the support of the Day Care Center for children with special needs (which operates within the CSW), but this cooperation is not continuous nor comprehensive. The private sector is involved mostly in donating funds for humanitarian purposes, but has not demonstrated great interest in the provision of services in the employment sphere.

In its scope of work, Stip municipality has defined a number of services and measures offered to the most vulnerable groups of citizens, which are implemented by the municipal services. Through the project “Support for the Implementation of the Strategy for the Roma”, the Roma Information Center, in which the employees of the Roma community, has been working for five years in row. This service is actually the link in the establishment of better and more direct contacts between the Roma community and the state authorities. In the municipality, the Centre was singled out as a key factor in informing the Roma community, providing support, advocacy and direct assistance in the preparation of applications and appeals, and directly communicating with the local services and institutions. The one-off financial assistance is one of the services offered by the municipality to physical persons and families at health or social risk.

A big part of the activities include organization of cultural and entertainment events, educational workshops, lectures and surveys in order to increase the competitiveness in the labor market. Free foreign language courses are also organized. The municipality has applied for a project for construction of a home for the elderly, which is expected to operate according to the principle of public-private partnership. A project on equal opportunities and elimination of discrimination against women has also been realized, promoting the labour relations rights of women employed in the textile industry. Through the UNICEF program “Early Child Development”, the municipality enabled pre-school children from rural areas to get involved in preschool education. The project for inclusion of Roma children in preschool education has also been implemented, and in 2011 a total number of 19 children were involved in it. The “Community Kitchen” project covered 85 people. Upon a request of the Mayor, all public institutions were required to make access ramps for persons with special

9 Excerpt from the interview conducted with the Director of CSW Stip, 04.04.2012.

needs. The municipality has a day care center for people with disabilities - the local government has provided the facilities and provides assistance for its operation. The municipality has taken advantage of the opportunity to hire SFA beneficiaries of working capacity to perform activities of public interest; subsequently, about 100 people were engaged to perform communal activities¹⁰.

From the other educational institutions, in the municipality there are: 4 elementary and 2 regional schools, 5 secondary schools, including the “Iskra” CSSOV the State Music School Center and the “Goce Delcev” University. Within the “Vanko Prke” School in Stip there is a special class for children with autism; 4 children are in it.

From the health institutions in the municipality there are: a health care centre (within which there is an emergency service) and a clinical hospital, which is a regional medical center for the Eastern region. In the municipality there is also a retirement home operating within the Stip Association of Retired People.

4.4 Identification of vulnerable groups in the Municipality of Stip

In Stip there are no established mechanisms for the identification of socially vulnerable groups, and thus, institutions do not have a precise official figure on the vulnerable groups.

The institutions that mainly provide assistance and social services for the citizens in the municipality single out the Roma community as the most vulnerable one. This ethnic minority is the most disadvantaged in terms of education, health care, employment and housing. The Roma have low educational level, live mostly in ghettos of illegally constructed facilities, and many of their children are not vaccinated nor registered in competent institutions. Stip municipality is facing a problem with the housing of certain vulnerable groups, such as part of the Roma population. The process of legalization of illegal buildings or dislocation of this vulnerable group does not permanently solve the problem of housing and housing issues of this vulnerable group. The challenge for the municipality and the central government is finding an acceptable and lasting solution for these citizens.

According to the CSW, the Roma are often beneficiaries of financial assistance, mostly of social financial assistance.

The Roma women, an especially vulnerable group, are single parents, upon the break up of the extramarital community and receiving custody of the children. At CSW indicate that 90% of the Roma women do not speak the Macedonian language, which makes their communication and cooperation with the institutions in the system impossible.

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Source of data: Interview with Vanja Dzambazova, a representative of Stip municipality, 06.04.2012.

The Juruks are a specific ethnic community for the Stip region – these are mainly old people living in mountainous areas. They often come to the municipality or the CSW to apply for some kind of assistance due to illness or working incapacity.

The elderly are a vulnerable group which has been identified by the Municipality of Stip through cooperation with the Association of Retired People and through the joint projects for this category of citizens. Although most of the elderly receive old-age pension, those with small pension are singled out as a vulnerable group due to the fact that they cannot satisfy their basic living needs. In many families in which several generations live together, very often the pension is the only source of income for all members. The necessity to open a home for the elderly has been indicated by the elderly people themselves, and as such, has been recognized by the local authorities, but the lack of funds hinders the realization of this idea. There are non-institutional forms of protection for the elderly and sick people in the municipality which are a result of the cooperation of the elderly and sick people and the municipality. In this context a project for the revival of the so-called functional services for the sick and disabled people is planned, offering services in the homes those people and their families.

The people with special needs, as a particularly vulnerable group, are well organized and they exercise their rights and receive the necessary support mainly informally through a civil association. The persons with physical disabilities, the associations of the blind and the children with special needs realize their rights and promote the process of socialization in society through different civil associations.

In the municipality there is a Day Care Centre for Persons with Special Needs, but it targets only people up to the age of 26, which indicates that there is a need for integrating the other persons with special needs over this age limit.

In reference to the celebration of important events for the people with special needs, the Municipality of Stip always provides financial support and assistance for the organization of various cultural, social and educational activities, and on special holidays donations are also given from the municipal budget. Although the Mayor of Stip submitted initiatives to the public institutions in the city to install elevators, design paths with access ramps, adapt sidewalks and pedestrian crossings to meet the needs of the people with disabilities, set up traffic lights with sound signalization at frequent junctions, mark parking spaces for the disabled in front of public institutions in the central city area, these are still only initiatives since Stip municipality does not have the necessary resources and competencies to implement independently these activities.

According to the statement of a representative of the Municipality of Stip:

“In 2011 the Municipality of Stip envisaged the opening of a Club of Treated Alcoholics, for people who have had a drinking problem to help them keep up the abstinence. The budget and the facilities for this club have been provided, the facilities were adequately repaired by the Municipality whereas the provision of equipment and the start of the operation of the Club has been envisaged for the beginning of 2012.”¹¹

In the Municipality of Stip there are separate classes for children with special needs in one of the elementary schools in the city, where there are adequate learning conditions. According to estimates of CSW on the basis of all the cases they have analyzed in order to determine the right to conditional financial allowance, about 300 children aged 15-18 years are entitled to that right.

However, the results of this analysis show that only 23 children exercise the right to conditional financial allowance and other 270 children are not even receiving elementary education, which means that they are illiterate, and thus fail to meet the requirements for exercising this right.¹² Most frequently, the parents themselves abuse their child(ren)’s labor by involving them children in juvenile delinquency and thefts in order to gain basic means of subsistence. The begging and the growing number of street children indicate there is a need to open a Day Care Centre for Street Children in order to provide these children with care and education.

Although women are not highlighted as particularly vulnerable category, the Committee for Gender Equality and the various women’s associations in the Stip municipality have had a positively influence on the awareness raising about women’s rights in the family, the workplace and society. Women -victims of domestic violence are singled out as a group that has not yet been sufficiently recognized by the institutions. The low awareness in recognizing violence, the mobbing at the work place, the prejudices and stereotypes of women, are all factors which have rendered women socially vulnerable. The activities targeting young people indicate that this group is recognized as particularly vulnerable and exposed to social risks. For this purpose, prevention-related educational events have been organized within and outside the informal educational process.

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11 Excerpt from the interview with Vanja Dzambazova, a representative of Stip municipality, 06.04.2012.

12 Excerpt from the interview conducted with Natalija Panova – Director of CSW Stip, 04.04.2012.

4.5 Priorities for addressing social exclusion in the Municipality of Stip

In the Municipality of Stip there is no database and no mechanism for identification of people at social risk. Subsequently, there are no established indicators for monitoring local policy implementation. Citizens are directly turn to the responsible services in the municipality and on the basis of the identified needs and problems, local action plans are created to alleviate poverty and increase social inclusion. The municipality has identified partial priorities for each of the vulnerable groups in the different domains of social life, but they are not representative since they do not reflect in an objective and realistic way the needs and problems of the whole group.

In order to meet those needs and offer a wider scope of services, the Municipality of Stip has defined its main goal: to get more funds from the central government and from the international institutions and foundations. This implies strengthening of the capacities of the municipal administration through trainings and upgrading of the existing knowledge with the objective of applying for and getting domestic and international projects.

The municipality should adopt social inclusion programs, which would follow a method of integrated, multisectoral and coordinative planning of social development with adequate institutional and non-institutional factors on a local level.

Stip municipality could, by means of an extensive and detailed research, map also the other vulnerable groups that have not been covered by any program or activity so far. Social inclusion of the most vulnerable groups has been emphasized as a priority objective in the further work of the Centre for Social Work in Stip. The focus is certainly on the Roma community as the most vulnerable group, but continuity should be ensured in the planning and implementation of activities for the other target groups, as well – such as the people with special needs, the elderly, children and women.

The measurability of the set objectives in each social domain could be achieved only by determining precise indicators. However, the municipal institutions have not defined a monitoring and evaluation system within their current projects. The Center for Social Work-Stip operates and implements activities mainly under the competence and guidelines provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, whereas in Stip municipality there is a coordinative body which prepares annual reports on implemented activities from the existing local action plans. The municipality should create an adequate monitoring and evaluation framework for all planned activities from the programs and action plans. A developmental framework should be created for defining, planning, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the social activities in the short, medium and long term. For some of them, the municipality has planned necessary funds, but the adoption of a detailed budget

is very important for the design and implementation of all other activities. Municipalities should make a better use of the public-private partnership approach while planning, financing and implementing capital projects.

In terms of the priorities for the different target groups, both Stip municipality and the CSW-Stip have identified the low educational level and the low literacy of the Roma community as the most important indicators for the social inclusion of this vulnerable group. For this purpose, the municipal administration began researching the problem and made efforts to register the detected Roma people without personal identity documents in order to help them secure these documents. Taking into consideration the abovementioned problem, it is necessary to intensify the process of introducing an inter-ministerial networking of the CSW and the other institutions, and facilitate the provision of the necessary documentation for the beneficiaries of the social services. The problem of employment of the Roma community has also been stressed as one of the most important challenges for Stip municipality. However, the cooperation developed so far with ESA-Stip has demonstrated that there is very little interest for the inclusion of the Roma population in the active employment measures. The latest mappings have also demonstrated that children are increasingly becoming the new vulnerable group – these are usually Roma children involved in begging or street children. The opening of a day care center for about 25 street children is a planned priority activity.

The Action Plan for Prevention of All Kinds of Discrimination contains activities which are part of the priority efforts to improve the situation of women in the Municipality of Stip. In addition, the municipality also takes into consideration the measures for employment and encouragement of women to use the new subsidizing opportunities for female entrepreneurs. Given that women are especially vulnerable to domestic violence and mobbing, the state should provide housing and economic security for women-victims of certain types of violence, which would enable proper socialization of these women and would drastically reduce other similar risks. Specific indicators for the achievement of these objectives have not been envisaged.

The priority needs of the elderly been identified for several years, but they have not been met due to the lack of funds. This vulnerable group is entitled to social protection, but the institutional and non-institutionalized services are not developed at all. The municipality should, in cooperation with the social institutions, find ways to accommodate and provide care for the elderly, especially for those with low income. Despite the planned functional services, day care centers for the elderly should also be established. The public-private partnership model would be a good model that would serve the interest of these beneficiaries and encompass the functioning of the various types of services.

A small number of people with disabilities appear as users of permanent financial assistance. It is necessary to increase the amount of the financial allowances according to the needs of

the people with disabilities. The priority actions for this vulnerable group specifically include provision of care and socialization of the people with disabilities over 26 years of age.

The Municipality of Stip in cooperation with the civil sector and the Center for Social Work puts special emphasis on children and young people as a vulnerable group. There are specific services for children with disabilities, by means of which adequate conditions for education and upbringing of these children are provided. However, there are other subcategories of children for whom no programs or action plans have been developed. These undoubtedly include children-victims of domestic violence, abused children, street children, children without parental care, children and young people using alcohol and drugs and others.

The setting of priorities and clear, precise indicators for the achievement of the objectives would enable development of new programs and would ensure that other specific needs of the different vulnerable groups in the municipality are adequately met.

5•Poverty and social exclusion in Struga (the South-Western region)

Struga municipality covers an area of 5073 ha or 1/3 of the Ohrid Lake coast line; it constitutes half of the total area of the valley. According to the data from the population estimates of the State Statistical Office for 2010, there are 64,543 inhabitants in Struga municipality. In the City of Struga there are 16,559 inhabitants. According to 2002 census, there is a mixed ethnic structure in the municipality, composed of: Albanians - 36,029, Macedonians - 20336, Turks - 3628, Roma - 116, Serbs - 106, Vlachs - 656 and others 2402.

According to the State Statistical Office (2009), the GDP in the southwest part of the country is 7.6% whereas the GDP per capita is 70.0%. Given these indicators, greater economic development of the municipality is needed in order to open new jobs and increase the revenues and opportunities of the municipality of Struga.

5.1 Social map of Struga municipality

The total number of registered unemployed people in December 2011 in Struga municipality was 7,716; most specifically, the rate of registered unemployed aged 15-64 was 16.3% and the rate of registered unemployed aged 20-64 was 18.8%. The unemployment in Struga municipality is 2.74% of total registered unemployment in the Republic of Macedonia. In Struga municipality, the unemployment of the rural population is dominant, representing 64.4% of the total number of registered unemployed in the municipality.

According to the gender structure, the total number of unemployed men is 4,816 (63.58%) whereas the total number of unemployed women is 2,900 (38.41%). According to the age of the unemployed, the total number of unemployed people aged 20-24 is 1064 (14.21%), the total number of unemployed people aged 25 - 29 was 945 (13.88%), the unemployed people aged 30-34 represented 10.3%, the total number of unemployed people aged 35-39 was 854 (12.93%), the total number of unemployed people aged 40-44 was 800 (11.63), the total number of unemployed people aged 45-49 was 864 (12.80%), the total number of unemployed people aged 50-54 was 851 (12, 79%), the total number of unemployed people aged 55-59 was 770 (10.2%) and the total number of unemployed people at the age of 60 and over was 539 (7.01%).

The comparison of the number of registered unemployed by ethnicity and the data on their participation in each of the ethnic communities indicates that the Roma population has the

highest rate of registered unemployment, i.e. 51% of the Roma in the municipality of Struga are registered as unemployed. Second largest unemployed ethnic group are the Macedonians, i.e. 17.1% of the total number of Macedonians in the municipality are registered as unemployed, compared with 8.2% of the ethnic Albanian community and 4.16% of the Turkish ethnic community.

In terms of the level of education, the largest number of unemployed are people without/with incomplete elementary education 3960 (52.67%), followed by PKV and NSO 719 (10.68%), KV 897 (12.37%), secondary vocational education 1420 (19.59%), post-secondary/2 year college 103 (2.66%), higher education 609 (8.10%), Masters education 8 (0.11%) and people with PhD degrees – 0.

According to the waiting time for employment, most of the unemployed wait for employment for several years. A total number of 1,897 people (25.41%) have been waiting for more than 8 years, 989 people (13.18%) have been waiting from 5-7 years and 902 people (31.12%) have been waiting for 2 years.

Table n.5: Selected indicators for the social map of Struga municipality

<i>Social indicators</i>	<i>% of the population in Struga</i>
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (15-64)</i>	16.3
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (20-64)</i>	18.8
<i>Households-beneficiaries of SFA</i>	4.29
<i>Registered unemployed – beneficiaries of SFA</i>	6.72
<i>Population over 65 receiving old-age pension</i>	43.36
<i>Population covered by health insurance</i>	76.18
<i>Children aged 5-14 receiving elementary education</i>	78.04

Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data for 2011 from the Employment Service Agency, Center for Social Work, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, the Health Insurance Fund and the State Statistical Office.

The total number of social financial assistance beneficiaries in 2011 amounted to 519 persons. The coverage of registered unemployed people with social financial assistance is quite low - 6.72, indicating a weak financial protection of the unemployed through the social security system.

According to the PDIF, the total number of registered beneficiaries of old-age pension in 2010 was 2,346, representing 43.4% of the population over the age of 65 in the municipality. This is a rather low coverage, which could potentially point to a high percentage of unde-

clared (black market) work, which results in an inability to use the social transfers based on contributions.

According to the PDIF records (2011) in Struga municipality there are 49,169 people with health insurance. Compared to the number of inhabitants in this municipality, this figure shows that the health insurance is not universal, i.e. there is no full coverage.

Out of the total number of 8865 registered children aged 5-14 years, 6911 children (78.04%) are involved in the educational process. This indicator shows that 22.06% of children aged 5-14 are excluded from the educational system, so the municipal authorities and the other relevant entities in the state need to implement active measures and programs for inclusion of these children in the regular education process.

5.2 Legislative acts for addressing social exclusion on a local level

Struga municipality has adopted a Strategy for Sustainable Development 2006-2011, and a Program for Social Protection (2011), which determines the areas of activity of the municipality in ensuring social protection of the population. Through the Program on Social Protection (2011) the municipality provides direct assistance to the socially vulnerable population groups (socially disadvantaged people, families, people with disabilities, homeless people and families affected by natural disasters, etc).

In terms of the use of the active labour market programs and measures from the the Operational Plan 2011, the largest number of registered unemployed people have used the following active labour market measures and programs offered by the Struga Employment Center:

- *Employment subsidies (children without parents, single parents, couples with more than 3 children, elderly people (aged 55 - 62), young people up to the age of 27 and disabled people);*
- *Program for Self-employment (Program for Employment with Loans, Program for Employment with Grants) and*
- *Internship Program. In 2011 it included a total number of 8 persons, working mostly in the tourism sector.*

5.3 Institutional competences for addressing social exclusion on a local level

Within the Municipality of Struga there is a Department for Social Protection, Child Care and Health Care and a Committee for Social Protection, Child Care and Health Care. In the Department for Social Protection, Child Care and Health Care there is no employed social worker.

The Municipality of Struga through the Program for Social Protection (2011) provides direct assistance to the socially vulnerable population groups (socially disadvantaged people, families, people with disabilities, homeless people, individuals and families affected by natural disasters, etc) through granting of one-off financial assistance in accordance with the projected annual budget of the municipality for that purpose.

The same program enables allocation of funds through a public call for support of the civil society in the realization of social protection activities.

The municipality has, since 2007, participated in the co-financing of the operation of the Day Care Center for People with Intellectual Disabilities over the age of 18, which is functioning within the NGO “Poraka Nova”.

In 2011 the municipality has been actively involved in the provision of architectural accessibility for disabled people to a great number of social, health care, educational and cultural institutions in the city by setting access ramps.

The public institution Intermunicipal Center for Social Work-Struga is the only institution in the municipality that provides social protection for the population of Struga and Vevcani municipality.

In the Day Care Center for People with Intellectual Disability “Poraka Nova” there are 16 people over the age of 18.

The health care on the area of Struga municipality is provided through 4 public health care institutions (the Health Care Center, the General Hospital, Institute of Nephrology and the Vevcani Health Care Center). There are private primary health care practices, specialized private health care clinics and private dental clinics.

In the Municipality of Struga there are the following educational institutions: two pre-school facilities, two central elementary schools and 24 disseminated classes, one state secondary school, two private high schools and one private higher education institution.

Within the “Braka Miladinovci“ Elementary School in Struga there is a separate class of 10 students with mild and moderate disabilities. In the central kindergarten “Peperutka/Butterfly” in Struga there is a pilot project covering 9 children with disabilities.

In Struga municipality there are regional offices of the Health Insurance Fund and the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Macedonia. There is an excellent co-operation and coordination among the institutions in the provision of assistance to socially vulnerable groups.

5.4 Identification of the vulnerable groups in the municipality

On the basis of the abovementioned statistical indicators, the most vulnerable social groups in terms of unemployment are: the unemployed people aged 20-24, 1064 people or 14.21% of the registered unemployed people in Struga municipality. In terms of gender, 4816 (63.58%) are male. 3960 (52.67%) are with low qualifications. In terms of the period of waiting for employment, 25.41% or 1897 unemployed people have been waiting for employment for more than 8 years.

According to the representative of the CSW, from the social protection point of view, the following are considered to be specific categories of people: the elderly who are financially unprovided for or incapable of working, people without family care and juvenile criminal offenders. A special category here are also the children with special needs as special allowance beneficiaries, which they receive through their parents.

In Struga there is a community kitchen used by 70-90 people. These include: socially disadvantaged families, sick people and people with disabilities.

At the Center for Social Work Struga, in 2011 there were 26 drug and psychotropic substance registered addicts who were receiving methadone treatment in the Methadone Center in Ohrid. At the day care center for people with intellectual disability "Poraka Nova" there are 16 people over the age of 18.

The number of people beggars is rapidly expanding, especially in the summer season. There a whole street in the city, near the Struga Medical Center, predominantly populated by Roma (declared in the census as Egyptians), who live in substandard conditions and need assistance in securing social housing.

5.5 Priorities for addressing social exclusion in the municipality

According to the representative of Struga municipality, the municipality needs certain institutional and non-institutional forms and social protection services for certain socially vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, women-victims of domestic violence, the homeless, users of drugs and other psychotropic substances. The idea would be to build day care centers for the abovementioned target groups, but due to unresolved ownership status of the already existing facilities in the municipality and the strictly limited municipal budget and human resources, the municipality is unable to implement these initiatives.

More funds are needed in the municipal budget for the allocation of one-off financial assistance to the socially vulnerable groups in the municipality in order to provide them with the necessary assistance.

There is a need of a Methadone Center for people who use drugs and other psychotropic substances, so that they would not have to go to Ohrid.

The municipality should provide assistance in the improvement of the living conditions of the Roma (Egyptians), who live in substandard conditions in a separate part of the city, or alternatively provide them with adequate social housing.

The CSW should be moved since at the moment it is on an upper floor of a building and is hardly accessible to beneficiaries with special needs or the elderly beneficiaries.

The representative of the CSW has expressed uncertainty as to whether there is a need of certain forms of institutional and non-institutional social protection for the population, such as establishment of a social institution for care of the elderly or day care center for the homeless since they fear possible low interest on the part of the potential beneficiaries. Until these centers are established, one cannot determine with certainty the need of having them in the municipality.

There should be a patronage service in the city to help the elderly and sick people.

The civil sector in the municipality of Struga has to be more active in the implementation of various projects in the area of social protection. Furthermore, civil society organizations should receive further training, should develop a more intensive mutual cooperation and attract financial support from the domestic/foreign foundations and organizations.

According to the representative of the Struga Employment Center, socially vulnerable groups covered in the 2012 Operational Plan demonstrate great interest for the use of the active employment measures and programs, so these measures and programs should not be limited (in terms of maximum number of recipients) by the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia.

6°Poverty and social exclusion in Kumanovo (the North-eastern region)

The City of Kumanovo is located in the north-eastern part of the Republic of Macedonia. In accordance with the territorial division from August 2004, Kumanovo is the largest municipality in the Republic of Macedonia with 509,4 km². The population structure is heterogeneous, not only in the city but also in most of the rural areas. This includes population from different ethnic groups, different educational, age and gender structure, with different customs, religions and habits, different occupations and other characteristics. The natural resources in Kumanovo are diverse. There are several mineral water springs and there is also a diversity of fertile soils, plant life and sites rich with ferrous and non-ferrous ores. The most famous ferrous site is the antimony–arsenic site near the village of Lojane, and the prominent non-ferrous sites are the basalt and clay reserves near the village of Mlado Nagoricane. The travertine is used near the village of Lipkovo and there are sites rich with opal breccia near the village of Beljakovce as well as marble near Vuksan.

6.1 Social map of the municipality

According to the GDP per capita (compared to the national average in Macedonia), the North-Eastern region has the smallest contribution – only 4,5 %.

The total number of registered unemployed people in Kumanovo Municipality is 23.111 people, most of them male (55,83%). The official unemployment rate among the population aged 15-64 is 30.56% and the official unemployment rate among the population of working capacity aged 20-64 is 34,18%. The Municipality of Kumanovo participates with 8,22% in the total registered unemployment rate in the Republic of Macedonia total of 50,27% of the unemployed people in Kumanovo are Macedonians, 41,4% are Albanians, 0,22% are Turks and 3,14% Roma. The unemployment is the largest among the Albanian ethnic group which is the second largest ethnic group in this Municipality. The total number of Albanians in the municipality is 27.290 - 35,09% of which are unemployed, compared to 18,9% unemployed among the Macedonians, 17,08% among the Roma and 17,8% among the Turks.

According to the educational structure, most of the unemployment are people with low qualifications and skills (12.130 people - 54, 48%), followed by the people with secondary vocational education (5.806 people - 25,12%), qualified (3.242 people - 14,02%), 1.021 (4,41%) are people with higher education, PKV and NSO is common for 674 people (2,91% and 230 people (0,92%) have higher education.

Most of the unemployed are in the age group of 20-24– 2.882 (12,47%), followed by the people aged 25-29 – 2.809 (12,15%), which shows that in Kumanovo it is not easy to find a job after graduating from secondary or higher education. 2.793 (12,08%) of the unemployed people are aged 35-39, 2.636 (11,4%) of the unemployed are aged 30-34 , 2.742(11,78%) are aged 40-44, 2.617 (11,32%) are aged 45-49, 2.315 (10,02%) are aged 50-54, 2.149 (9,29%) are aged 55-59 and 1.616 (6,99%) of the unemployed are 60 or over.

According to the data from the National Employment Agency, most of the unemployed (30,17% - 6.973 people) wait 8 or more years for employment, 14,64% (3.384) wait between 5-7 years for employment, 10% (2.312) wait for 2 years, 9,7% (2.245) wait between 1 to 5 months, 7,56% (1.748) wait for 3 years, 7,51% (1.737) wait between 6 and 11 months, 6,94% (1.604) wait for 4 years, 6,52% (1.507) wait between 12 to 17 months, 4,91% (1.136) wait between 18 to 23 months and 2,01% (465) of the unemployed wait for employment less than 1 month. The results clearly show that the job seeking in Kumanovo lasts several years.

Table n.6: Selected indicators for the social map of Kumanovo municipality

<i>Social indicators</i>	<i>% of the population in Kumanovo</i>
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (15-64)</i>	30.56
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (20-64)</i>	34.18
<i>Households-beneficiaries of SFA</i>	17.21
<i>Registered unemployed – beneficiaries of SFA</i>	17.78
<i>Population over 64 receiving old-age pension</i>	67.29
<i>Children aged 5-14 receiving elementary education</i>	86.83

Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data for 2011 from the Employment Service Agency, Center for Social Work, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund and the State Statistical Office.

The number of beneficiaries of the social financial assistance in 2011 was 4.111 (households), which is 17.21% of the total number of households in the Municipality. From the total number of unemployed registered persons, only 17,8% have used social financial assistance in 2011.

The total number of people with health insurance in 2011 is 114.111. The number of the insured persons and the additionally insured persons is greater than the total population in the municipality (105.484). This shows that the city has quite high health insurance coverage as well as that some of the insured people are not citizens of the municipality but exercise the health insurance through the Fund in Kumanovo.

According to the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, a total of 7.805 people were beneficiaries of age pension in 2011 which is 67.29% of the population over 65 years of age in the municipality.

The total number of children ages 5-14 years in Kumanovo is 14.036 and the number of children included in the educational process in the elementary education is 12.188 which means that 86,83% of the children are included in the educational process i.e. 13,16% of the children are not covered by this system in Kumanovo municipality.

6.2 Legislative acts for addressing social exclusion

The Municipality of Kumanovo adopted the Program for Social Protection for 2011 which determines the activities and areas for the municipality regarding the social protection of the population. The Program directly assists the socially vulnerable groups of people (socially vulnerable individuals, families, people with disabilities, homeless people, individuals and families who suffered natural disaster, etc.) Furthermore, there is a Strategy for Development of Education 2011-2016 as well as Local Strategy for Youth 2008-2013. The Municipality also adopted an Action Plan for Prevention of HIV/ AIDS among the youth exposed to largest risk.

6.3 Institutional competences for addressing social exclusion on a local level

The Municipality of Kumanovo includes a Department for Social Protection, Child Care and Health Care and a Commission for Social Protection, Child Care and Health Care.

There is no social worker in the Department for Social Protection, Child Care and Health Care.

The Municipality of Kumanovo, through the Program for Social Protection 2011 includes assistance to the socially vulnerable groups and families, by providing one-off financial assistance in the amount from 5.000 to 10.000 denars for the socially vulnerable people, families, people with disabilities, people that need treatment and rehabilitation in the country and abroad. For implementation of this Program the Municipality allocated 700.000 denars from its Budget in 2011.

The Municipality also provides funds for the inclusion of the Roma children in the kindergartens thus supporting the social inclusion process and actively participating in it. Most of them originate from socially vulnerable families. For this purpose 180.000 denars were allocated from the Municipal Budget in 2011.

During 2011 a number of programs were implemented through the Employment Agency for assistance and support of the employment of the socially vulnerable people as part of the Operational Plan – Active Employment Measures 2011.

The greatest interest was shown for the following programs:

- ***Subsidizing of the self-employment*** (*subsidizing of the self-employment with grant money, subsidizing of the self-employment with loan, subsidizing of the self-employment for the people with disabilities*).
- ***Internship Program*** – *the unemployed people ages up to 27 years with higher educational background have shown greater interest for this program.*
- ***Program for Economic Empowerment of Women – Victims of Domestic Violence.*** *Only one woman-victim of family violence was included on the labor market. For this reason greater cooperation is needed with the Center for Social Work and the employers in order to use this Program even more.*

In 2011 the “Drom” NGO implemented a project in Kumanovo municipality: “Prevention of the Illegal Migration Through Improvement of the Decentralized Labor and Promotion of the Vulnerable Groups”. The key purpose of the project was to improve the opportunities for employment of the young Roma by providing vocational training, on-job-training, courses in specific companies, employment mediation i.e. establishment of links with the beneficiaries of the services, the Employment Agency in order to provide for their self-employment.

The educational process in Kumanovo municipality is taking place in 21 schools – 17 elementary and 4 secondary schools. There is a bilingual kindergarten in the city which implements the “Mosaic” program in Macedonian and Albanian language.

The social protection in the city of Kumanovo is implemented through the following institutions: JU Inter-municipal Center for Social Work, Home for Elderly People “Zafir Sajto”, Day Care Center for Children with Disabilities up to 18 years of age (which operates under the umbrella of the JU Inter-municipal Center for Social Work), Day Care Center for People with Disabilities through the “Poraka Nasha” NGO for people ages 18 years and above and Day Care Center for People that Use i.e. Abuse Drugs and Other Psychotropic Substances.

The Roma NGOs assist in the implementation of the rights related to social protection, especially in the efforts aiming to resolve the administrative formalities for particular socially vulnerable groups who were otherwise unable to exercise those rights: assistance in filling in the requests and forms necessary for exercising specific social protection rights, assistance in obtaining personal identification documents, etc.

The health care in Kumanovo municipality is implemented through 3 public health organizations: General Hospital, Center for Public Health, the Health Home and around 90 private general practitioner and specialized offices.

There is a Day Care Center for Methadone Therapy within the General Hospital for users of drugs and other psychoactive substances.

The NGO sector in Kumanovo, assisted by the Center for Health, is active in the area of health education for prevention, intended for particular socially vulnerable groups such as the Roma, single mothers, people with disabilities and children exposed to specific social risk.

The City of Kumanovo also covers the citizens from other populated areas and municipalities in the vicinity of Kumanovo. This is implemented through the current health institutions, especially regarding tertiary health care and includes the following municipalities: Kratovo, Staro Nagorichani and Mlado Nagorichani, and Kriva Palanka.

There are local offices of both the Health Insurance Fund and the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of the Republic of Macedonia in the Municipality of Kumanovo. There is excellent cooperation and coordination between the institutions in the city regarding the assistance for the socially vulnerable groups.

6.4 Identification of the vulnerable groups

On the basis of the statistical data that show the social picture in Kumanovo municipality, the most vulnerable social groups (regarding unemployment) are the following: ages 20-24 years 2.882 people (12,47%) from the total number of officially registered unemployed people in Kumanovo. This number includes male population of 12.901 (55,82%). According to the educational background, most of the unemployed are people with low or no qualifications – 12.130 (54,48%) and most of the unemployed (30,17% - 6.973 people) wait 8 or more years for employment.

There is a community kitchen in the city which provides daily meals for 192 beneficiaries (beneficiaries of social financial assistance, sick people, people with disabilities and socially vulnerable families). There is large interest and demands for expansion of the kitchen capacity in order to provide service for a greater number of people.

The CSW awards one-off financial assistance (for the coverage of travel expenses) to the registered beneficiaries of social assistance and permanent financial assistance to people treated at the Center for Methadone Therapy within the Kumanovo General Hospital.

The problems of homelessness and domestic violence have become increasingly bitter, especially in certain populated areas in the city. Such incidents/occurrences have not been registered in the CSW in 2011 due to the specific multiethnic, cultural and traditional features of the communities in question. Namely, they are neither reported nor treated by the professional teams in the CSW. Therefore, it is necessary to raise the awareness of the citizens about these problems with the overall objective of making citizens report these problems in a timely manner and finding certain non-institutional forms of providing social protection for the people in question.

In 2011 in the CSW – Kumanovo, a total number of 17 women-victims of domestic violence, 17 street children and one homeless person have been reported.

The Roma NGOs in Kumanovo municipality provide assistance to the beneficiaries in the realization of their social rights. More specifically, they assist them in getting personal identification documents, provide legal counselling, help them to fill in different forms, provide support in lodging appeals upon negative legal decisions, etc.

6.5 Priorities for addressing social exclusion in Kumanovo municipality

For 2012, Kumanovo municipality has been preparing a social package for the coverage of the monthly water and garbage bills for the socially disadvantaged families. Kumanovo municipality should allocate funds for the support of the civil sector in the implementation of social protection projects for the socially vulnerable groups in the municipality.

Taking into consideration the legal obligation of each parent to enrol their child in the local elementary school, new additional facilities should be provided, especially in the elementary schools in the city.

There is a need of ***new elementary schools in Kumanovo due to the increased number of students***. In one school building in the center of the city there are two elementary schools actually functioning together, resulting in a neglect of the basic technical formalities for the successful realization of the educational process. It is evident that a new elementary school should be built in the central city area. Most of the problems faced by the schools are infrastructural (problems related to the underground infrastructure, infrastructural facilities, architectural accessibility and sports facilities).

The unresolved ownership status of certain facilities in the municipality should be addressed. This is necessary for the realization of projects related to the reconstruction or repair of existing facilities. Greater financial support on the part of the Ministry of Education is needed for the current operation of elementary schools and employment of professional staff: speech therapists, social workers, psychologists and pedagogues.

Due to the increased population figures in the city, the number of children has also drastically increased, resulting in an urgent need to build new kindergartens in the city or reconstruct/repair existing facilities. About 40% of children are waiting to get enrolled in kindergartens due to their limited facilities and limited capacity.

Within the existing kindergartens, there are children with disabilities who are socially integrated with other children, due to which it becomes necessary to employ speech therapists and other support staff. The representatives of the municipality and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy have already been informed of this. Another burning issue is the need for social housing for the socially disadvantaged individuals and families, single parents etc.

The CSW should be moved since at the moment it occupies an upper floor of a building and is hardly accessible for beneficiaries, such as people with disabilities and the elderly people. There is a lack of professional staff at the Center for Social Work, who would work on programs aimed at preventing and reducing the socio-pathological phenomena.

According to the representative of the CSW, the problems of homelessness and domestic violence have become increasingly bitter, especially in certain populated areas in the city. Such incidents/occurrences have not been registered in the CSW in 2011 due to the specific multiethnic, cultural and traditional features of the communities in question. Namely, they are neither reported nor treated by the professional teams in the CSW. Therefore, it is necessary to raise the local population's awareness about the problems of domestic violence and homelessness through campaigns, debates, etc. with the overall objective of making citizens report these problems at the CSW for further treatment/resolution and application of adequate measures and forms of social protection. The professional staff experiences lack of working supplies on a daily basis which hampers their current work.

Trainings are needed to motivate the beneficiaries of social financial assistance to use the active employment measures, which they have so far avoided out of fear that they will lose the right to SFA, the right to receive subsidies to cover the electricity bills and the right to conditional financial allowances for families with high school students.

The following centers shall be established/initiatives launched in the city:

- A shelter center for victims of domestic violence. Three years ago this center was shut down, but there is a real need for such a facility since at the moment victims are accommodated in the shelter centers in Skopje and Sveti Nikole.
- Day care center and clubs for the adult and elderly people;
- Center for the homeless;
- Day care center for street children;

Within the General Hospital, there is a Daily Center for Methadone Therapy for users of drugs and other psychoactive substances. There are repeated complaints of citizens of the vicinity of this center to an elementary school and a kindergarten, so it should be moved to another location. *The population should be subjected to continuous preventive medical check ups. There should be more pediatricians in the primary health care.*

There is a need of a patronage service that would provide long term care for the elderly and sick people in the city as well as of a palliative service for people suffering from malignant diseases. In the city there is a need for a center for short-term accommodation of elderly people.

As a result of the drastic increase in the number of patients and the reduced number of health personnel at the General Hospital, in their daily work the employees are facing a series of problems related to the execution of their duties and the provision of quality health care for citizens. Additional medical personnel should be employed in this health care institution.

7•Poverty and social exclusion in Prilep (the Pelagonia region)

Prilep municipality is located in the northern part of the Republic of Macedonia, in the Pelagonia region; it actually, includes the populated areas of Prilep, Topolcani and Vitolste. Municipality of Prilep covers an area of 1.194,44 km², has 59 populated areas and is the biggest municipality in Macedonia. The administrative center of the municipality is the City of Prilep.

According to the 2002 census in Prilep there are 76,768 inhabitants with the following ethnic structure: Macedonians - 70,878 (92.33%), Roma - 4433 (5.77%), Turks - 917 (1.19%), Serbs - 172 (0.22%), Bosniaks - 86 (0.11%), Albanians - 22 (0.03%), Vlachs - 17 (0.02%) and other - 243 (0.32%). Out of the total number of inhabitants 38,525 (50.2%) are male and 38,243 (49.8%) are female¹. In Prilep municipality, there have been significant changes in the population growth and its structural features. Namely, in the inter-census period from 1994-2002, the population increased only by 602 persons or 0.8%. Prilep is a municipality with mainly urban population, which is on the increase. Changes in the age structure of the population in the municipality are under the influence of the great birth rate drop and dominant internal and external migrations. Migration itself is a reason for the decrease in the number of young people up to the age of 20 and those in the age group from 20-40, whereas there is a significant population growth in the age group over 60.

The Pelagonia region, including Prilep municipality, with a GDP share of 12.5% is the second largest in the Republic of Macedonia. Only the Skopje and the Pelagonia region have bigger gross domestic product per capita than the average in the country (the Pelagonia region has an index of 109.7). All other regions have a GDP below the average in the Republic of Macedonia². If we take GDP as an indicator of the standard of living, we can conclude that the Pelagonia region on a national level is one of the better standing regions in Macedonia.

The local economic development of Prilep is characterized by a developed food industry, metallod industry, textile industry, metal industry, electrical industry and a developed graphic design, printing and packaging industry. The tobacco industry shall be particularly mentioned in this regard. It is a traditional economic activity in this municipality and it covers great part of the labor force. The population also generates income from agriculture,

1 According to the data on the population figures, number of households and residences in 2002 from the last census, State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia, 2002.

2 Source: State Statistical Office.

where the tobacco, wheat and vegetable crop production is most common. Livestock breeding is relatively common, as well.

7.1 Social map of Prilep municipality and the Pelagonia region

As far as unemployment is concerned, the number of registered unemployed at the Employment Service Agency in Prilep in 2011 was 18,910, out of which 10,074 (53.3%) were male and 8,836 (46.7%) female. The number of unemployed in the Municipality of Prilep is 6.72% of the total number of registered unemployed in Macedonia. The registered unemployment rate in the municipality compared to the population of working capacity, aged 15-64 is 35.36%, whereas compared to the population of working capacity aged 20-64 it is 38.95%³.

Out of the total number of unemployed, 2,086 or 11.03% are registered at the Centre for Social Work in Prilep, as beneficiaries of social assistance. Hence, it follows that every ninth person is unemployed beneficiary of social assistance. The question of how do the remaining 16,824 (88.9%) of unemployed people in the municipality of Prilep survive and how do they meet their living needs.

The analysis of the statistical data obtained from ESA shows that in terms of education the number of people with secondary education is the greatest - 4929 (26.06%). Among the registered unemployed in Prilep municipality, 20 (0.10%) have MA degrees, whereas 3 (0.02%) hold PhD degrees.

The survey conducted by the Employment Centre -Prilep in several companies (with more than 10 employees), in reference to the requirements for specific knowledge and skills, shows that in addition to the primary occupation of people with completed secondary and higher education, most necessary is the knowledge of a foreign language (usually English) and knowledge in the area of information technology (computer literacy). Despite high quality education, new workers are required to have practical work skills (due to this, employers have suggested more practical lessons in the educational process), communication skills, and in many cases, a driving license. The same survey conducted by the Employment Centre – Prilep has demonstrated a need for professionals of certain higher education profiles, including: IT/automatics engineers, geodetics engineers, civil engineers, architects, pharmacists, foreign language teachers and mathematic teachers⁴. The significant redundancy of some profiles and lack of others leads us to the conclusion that there is a mismatch of the labour force demand and supply, which, in turn, results in high unemployment rates.

3 Source: Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia

4 Local Action Plan for Employment (2009-2010), Prilep municipality, April 2009.

Table n.7: Selected indicators for the social map of Prilep municipality

<i>Social indicators</i>	<i>% of the population in Prilep</i>
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (15-64)</i>	35.36
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (20-64)</i>	38.95
<i>Households-beneficiaries of SFA</i>	9.90
<i>Registered unemployed – beneficiaries of SFA</i>	11.03
<i>Population over 64 receiving old-age pension</i>	75.7
<i>Children aged 5-14 receiving elementary education</i>	86.5

Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data for 2011 from the Employment Service Agency, Center for Social Work, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund and the State Statistical Office.

The analysis of the data on the registered unemployed by age points to the conclusion that the age group of persons from 25-29 comes first, with 13.3% of the total number of unemployed, followed by the age group of persons from 30-34 years, with 11.9%, and those from 55-59 with 11.23%.

If we analyze the waiting period of the registered unemployed in the municipality of Prilep, we come to the conclusion that most, or 6,385 (33.76%), are have been seeking employment and continuously registering at the Employment Service Agency for more than 8 years. Parallel to this, 2,406, or 12.71%, of the unemployed strive to find work within 5-7 years.

The analysis of the unemployment data in Prilep by ethnicity shows that most or 15,841 (83.77%) of the registered unemployed are Macedonians, followed by the Roma with 1576 (8.33%), Turks with 599 (3.16%), Albanians with 438 (2.26%), Bosniaks - 119 (0.63%), Serbs - 9 (0.05%), Vlachs - 0 and other nationalities - 338 (1.79%). It must be noted that the comparison between the total number of registered unemployed by ethnicity and the figures for the total population belonging to a particular ethnic group, according to the census of 2002, shows some disparities. For example, the number of registered unemployed Albanians in the Prilep Center is 438, far more than the number of registered Albanians during the last census, i.e. 22 people.

In addition to these unemployment analyzes and statistics, in the creation of the social picture of Prilep municipality we can use the number of registered children attending elementary school. According to the State Statistical Office, in the public elementary schools in Prilep municipality there are 7,020 students, or 86.5% of total 8119 registered children aged

5-14⁵. Hence, we come to the conclusion that 13.5% of the children in the municipality are not receiving mandatory elementary education.

The number of registered insured people in the Regional Unit of the Health Insurance Fund in Prilep for 2011 was 85,606 people. Considering the fact that the number of insured and additionally insured people in the municipality is greater than the total number of the population (due to the number of insured people that come from other municipalities and fall under the competence of the Regional Unit of the Fund - Prilep) we can conclude that in this municipality there is generally a high coverage of the population with health insurance.

According to the Report on the Work of the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of Macedonia (2010), the number of beneficiaries of old age pension in Prilep was 8,044. This category of insured people comprises 53% of the total number of registered people over the age of 60 years and 75.7% of the number of people over the age of 65.

7.2 Legislative acts for addressing poverty and social exclusion on a local level

The Municipality of Prilep, as the main institution engaged in the fight against poverty and social exclusion on its territory, has adopted several strategic documents. One of these is the Local Action Plan for Employment, which was developed within the CARDS Project – Employment Policy III, supported and funded by the European Union and implemented by the European Agency for Development. The preparation of this document required a partnership among the Municipality of Prilep, the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of Macedonia – Employment Center Prilep, the Regional Development Agency of Pelagonia, the Regional Chamber of Commerce - Prilep, the Confederation of Employers of Macedonia, the food producer “Donia, the Foundation for Support and Development (NGO), the Center for Civic Initiative (NGO) and “Prerodba” (NGO), the Federation of Farmers of Macedonia, the Municipal Labour Union-Prilep and the Intermunicipal Center for Social Work-Prilep. Each of the parties involved made their own contribution in the provision of the required information, identification of the conditions on a local level and giving the recommendations and guidance for solving specific problems and overcoming the existing conditions in order to reduce unemployment in the Municipality of Prilep⁶. The plan covers the period 2009- 2010 and the Municipality of Prilep is the implementing entity. Due to the unavailability of the local municipal authorities during the expert interviews, it was not possible to obtain information on whether in 2011 this Action Plan has been extended, renewed or an entirely new document has been adopted.

5 Sources: Elementary and secondary schools at the end of the school year 2009/2010, State Statistical Office of Macedonia, July 2011 and Assessments of the population on 30.06.2010 and 31.12. 2010 according to gender and age per municipality and statistical region, SSO, August 2011.

6 Local Action Plan for Employment, Prilep municipality, April 2009

Another strategic document for alleviation of poverty and inclusion of the socially excluded groups adopted by the Municipality of Prilep is the Action Plan for Employment of Roma. This plan has been developed upon the initiative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Macedonia, and its development required the active collaboration of representatives of the Local Self Government Unit of Prilep, representatives of state institutions that have had direct or indirect influence on making improvements in the employment area in the Republic of Macedonia and representatives of citizens' associations on a municipal level, who have had previous experience in the preparation of action plans for employment of Roma on a local level.

The Local Action Plan for Employment of Roma in Prilep municipality is based on two public policies targeting Roma population, which are being implemented in Macedonia: Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015), as a regional public policy and the National Strategy for Roma, as state public policy.

The overall objective of this Action Plan is to increase the employment of the Roma population in Prilep municipality to 10% for the period 2011-2012⁷.

With the Law on Local Self-Government (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia 5/2002) and the process of decentralization, a lot of central level competences were transferred to local or municipal level. Part of those competences are related to social protection and protection of children. Municipalities have an obligation to provide conditions for the promotion, realization and protection of children's rights, which, in turn derives from the obligations of the Republic of Macedonia after the ratification of the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights and the other signed and ratified documents from the area of human rights and freedoms. For this purpose, the Committee for Social Activities and Children's Rights, which is a standing committee within the Council of the Municipality of Prilep, has adopted a Local Action Plan for Children's Rights. This Local Action Plan, which covers a 5 year - period (2009-2013), envisages implementation of the Convention on the Children's Right on a local level and provides guidelines for the creation of a child-friendly municipality⁸.

7.3 Institutional competences for addressing poverty and social exclusion on a local level

According to the local level competences given by the decentralization, the Municipality of Prilep has the competence to create and implement local activities in the field of social protection. Due to unavailability of municipal representatives during the expert interviews

7 Action Plan for Employment of Roma in Prilep municipality

8 Local Action Plan on Children's Rights in Prilep municipality (2009-2013), January 2009

in Prilep, part of their activities can be seen through the indicated legislative acts, adopted on a local level.

The Center for Social Work is one of the institutions in Prilep which focuses on the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion. In fighting poverty, the Center each year adopts and follows a Program of Activities, which is approved by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. In addition to this strategic document, CSW - Prilep in 2011 signed a Protocol for Action Taking in Cases of Domestic Violence, a Memorandum for Cooperation with the Center for Civic Initiative, a Memorandum for Cooperation with the social services for the elderly, a Memorandum for Cooperation with the Association “Romska solza (Roma Tear)” and a Cooperation Agreement with the Association for Protection of Children with Special Needs “FICE - Macedonia”.

The Center for Social Work in the provision of social financial assistance covers several categories of people: people of working capacity who need social assistance, people over the age of 65 who are taken care of by another person, persons who are temporarily or permanently prevented from performing work duties and persons without parental care. Furthermore, the Center pays civil disability benefits, parental allowance for a third child, one-off financial assistance for a first child, child allowance, foster families, special allowance for children and persons up to the age of 26 with physical, mental or combined disability (374 people have been in registered in 2011), energy subsidies (subsidies for electrical energy of socially vulnerable families) and conditional financial allowance for high school children. Prilep is one of the leading cities in the state which offers foster families as a form of social assistance.

All activities of the Centre are carried out by several departments; despite the fact that these are separate departments with special competences, still they supplement each other and cooperate.

“Within the Center for Social Work - Prilep, there are the following departments: the Department for Immediate Financial Allowances (currently the biggest one), the Department for Marriage and Family, the Department for Custody and Juvenile Justice. Besides the direct and personal registration of those who need social assistance, we furthermore detect new cases by direct ground work “ said Zoran Malkoski, Head of the Department for Social and Child Protection⁹.

The cases that remain undetected by the Center can be reported by citizens at the toll-free 24 hour telephone line. However, in the provision of social services and fight against poverty, the Centre for Social Work in Prilep, faces certain problems and challenges. The Director of

9
Excerpt from the interview with Zoran Malkoski, Head of the Department for Social and Child Protection, Center for Social Work – Prilep, 16.05.2012

the Center, and some employees, single out the lack of human resources, i.e. the insufficient staffing, as the biggest problem in the operation of the Center.

“On a local level, resources are missing to meet fully the needs of the citizens . Human resources, money and facilities are missing, so that we can react immediately and not wait for approval and transfer to Skopje. Several employees will soon retire. We need whole teams. And not just social workers, but other experts, such as pedagogues, lawyers, etc “: – say at the Center for Social Work in Prilep¹⁰.

The Prilep Unit of the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund of Macedonia is another institution that targets the poor and vulnerable social groups. On a local level, the Unit’s activities are mainly based on the instructions and guidelines received from the Central Office in Skopje. The Prilep Unit implements activities related to the direct realization of the pension and disability insurance, activities related to the registry records, actives for completing the pension requests (requests for the realization of the right to a pension), control of the calculation and payment of the pension/disability benefit, etc. Besides these tasks, in the Unit, the decisions on insured people’s rights to pension and disability insurance in the first degree are being prepared and controlled.

Prilep municipality has competence for 16 schools, 11 of which are elementary and 5 secondary. In the last few years there has been a trend of continuous decrease of newly registered students in the elementary education, which is considered to be a result of the lower birth rate of the population. According to the Annual Report on the Work of Prilep Municipality, in 2011 the municipality has been actively involved in all school-related activities which are within its competence. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and other donors, investments have been made in several schools in line with the detected situation and set priorities. The IPA Project (funded by the European Union) for changing the windows and doors of 7 schools with a total number of 10 school buildings is considered to be a major implemented project. ¹¹

The “Kiro Krsteski - Pltanik” Home for the Elderly in Prilep is a public municipal institution in the field of social protection, whose main activities include providing accommodation, food, assistance and care, health care, cultural and social activities, work and recreational activities, social services and other services to the elderly, depending on the needs, physical and mental abilities and requirements of the users. In addition to these core activities, during the year the home provides reception and temporary accommodation of persons, who due to various reasons, have found themselves outside their place of residence, have no sustenance means and no permanent accommodation, until they return to their family or are accommodated in another social institution. The home is funded by means of municipal subsidiary

10 Excerpt from the interview with representatives of the CSW – Prilep, 16.05.2012
11 Annual Report of Prilep municipality for 2011, Prilep, February 2012.

budget grants and fundraising. It has the capacity of 147 beds, and in 2011 a total number of 140 people from 21 municipality in Macedonia were accommodated in it.

The poor and socially vulnerable categories of citizens of Prilep receive assistance and support from several NGOs. One of them is the Association for Assistance of the Socially Excluded Groups and Groups at Risk “Scorpion,” which is quite active in the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Their activities, among other things, consist also in organization of trainings for protection against domestic violence, juvenile delinquency, as well as self-help trainings, delivery of presentations on legal regulations from the area of social protection and family law, and offering advisory services and legal advice, thus enabling people to realize their social and other rights through a toll-free telephone line.

7.4 Socially vulnerable groups in the Municipality of Prilep

Following the interviews with a number of representatives from several state institutions and NGO organizations, the purpose of which is alleviation of poverty and the social exclusion on local level, we notice several socially vulnerable categories of citizens in the Municipality of Prilep. However, the most vulnerable group is the Roma population that lives in separate neighborhoods in the city (Drizla 1 and Drizla 2). According to the Census in 2002 in Prilep there are 4.433 Roma – 5,77% of the total population which makes them second largest ethnic community in Prilep Municipality. Due to the low level of education and high level of illiteracy among this ethnic group, there are a large number of people who, in need of social assistance, are facing difficulties in collecting the documentation required to file requests for social assistance to the Center for Social Works. Additional problem they face is the lack of money which prevents them from obtaining citizenships and birth certificates. Due to the above reasons the Center for Social Works in Prilep actively cooperates with two Roma NGOs – “Romska solza” and “Roma SOS” and they jointly implement activities for securing personal I.D. documents, provision of documents for the Roma refugees from Kosovo, securing funds for surgical operations, gynecological examinations and other type of assistance that will contribute towards resolution or reduction of the obstacles and challenges this vulnerable group is facing.

The local office of the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund in Prilep emphasizes the need for greater inclusion of this ethnic community, better cooperation and information of the Roma population about the benefits from enrolling their children in school as well as their vaccination.

The users of drugs and psychotropic substances are another vulnerable category. Most of the drug addicts originate from socially disadvantaged families but additional problem here

is the lack of daily center that would provide assistance to these people in Prilep so they are forced to travel to Bitola for daily treatment.

*“Presently, Prilep does not have a Center for Drug Addicts and Psychotropic Substances. I am doing my best to open this type of Center and we will keep on pushing till we succeed in our intention”, says Mr.Zoran Malkoski, Head of the Department for Social and Child Protection in the Center for Social Work - Prilep.*¹²

The only assistance the addicts are getting is the one provided by the Red Cross – clean accessories and provides free Hepatitis test.

The need for opening of daily center for drug addicts in the city is also emphasized by the NGO sector. In their words, the reason why Prilep is still missing a daily center for drug addicts is the insufficient readiness of the municipal authorities to identify and provide location where such center would be built. This is due to the opposition by majority of the citizens in Prilep.

The people with physical disabilities are vulnerable category in Prilep facing daily problems such as inability to enter the institutions and access the counters as well as problems when moving in the city. Most of the institutions in Prilep are making efforts to facilitate the access for this category of people but there are also institutions where these people are unable to come in person and request specific services since it is impossible to move inside these institutions in a wheelchair.

The Director of the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund in Prilep emphasized the need to meet the requirements of the deaf-mute people as well. They communicate using sign language so it is necessary to employ in the institutions people that are using this language which will communicate with this category. By doing so, these people will not be discriminated anymore and will not be prevented from exercising their rights and from obtaining the services they need from the public institutions.

The Center for Social Work also emphasized that the homeless people are special category they are working with. Unfortunately, there is still no center that would shelter these homeless people on local (municipal) level. The three homeless families from Prilep are accommodated in the Chichino Selo and Ljubanci centers – both in Skopje. According to the Law on Local Self-government, Prilep should have such center but nothing has been set nor announced for its construction.

The challenge the social assistance beneficiaries in Prilep are faced with is the difficult access to the city in winter time, including periods in the year when they are completely cut-off from the city. This goes especially for the people from Mariovo region. The social

12 Extract from the interview with Mr. Zoran Malkoski, Head of the Department for Social and Child Protection, Center for Social Work – Prilep, interviewed on 16.05.2012.

assistance beneficiaries are obliged, each month (from 1st till the 15th) to come in person to sign and confirm their status of unemployed. However, the Center for Social Work shows understanding for this situation so it accommodates itself to the needs of the beneficiaries – in winter and during extraordinary events they communicate via telephone with those social assistance beneficiaries who are unable to come in person.

7.5. Priorities and indicators related to the poverty and social exclusion in the Municipality of Prilep

All parties that have been interviewed in the frames of this survey agree that the key priority in the fight against poverty and social exclusion in Prilep should be the opening of new jobs and reduction of the unemployment. This will help the Center for Social Work to dedicate its resources to other problems and priorities, in addition to the provision of social financial assistance to the work-capable population. On the other side, this will alleviate the strain on the state Budget.

The unemployment rate can be reduced by implementing the following activities: implementation of the Local Employment Strategy, training for the unemployed in acquiring entrepreneurship skills (delivery of trainings, forums, seminars that will be free of charge for the unemployed), implementation of new business ideas in the following areas: agriculture, tourism, transportation, etc., use of the natural wealth of the Pelagonia region, incentives and motivation for educational programs intended to produce profiles demanded by the labor market. As we already mentioned at the beginning of this Chapter, the high level of unemployment in Prilep is, inter alia, due to the mismatch between the offer and demand for labor force, with regards to specific profiles of workers. Therefore, measures are necessary that will expand the possibilities for re-training and further-training of the workforce that would cover the young unemployed people and the people that are long-term job seekers who have low level of education. Furthermore, due to the large surplus of particular profiles, it is important to pay attention to the harmonization of the educational profiles with the labor force demand, as well as professional guidance for the pupils and students.

When it comes to the NGO sector, in addition to the need for opening of new jobs, they also emphasized the need for increase of the living standard since there are many people that are employed but still live in poverty and face problems in that regard.

The poverty in Prilep could be also alleviated with greater social responsibility of the private sector. In 2011 several private companies donated new Christmas sweets and candy packages for the children with special needs and the children accommodated in foster families. However, the people from the Center for Social Work think that these donations can be

greater and more frequent if the private companies are better informed about the activities of the Center.

General assessment of the NGOs in Prilep is that the private sector does not have the appropriate level of social responsibility. In addition to the insufficient donations, another fact that makes this picture worse is the information that the people with physical disabilities employed in some companies are abused instead of being protected.

Regarding the socially vulnerable groups, greater attention needs to be paid to the Roma. Actions must be undertaken in order to integrate them not only in the education but in the business community as well. Also very important is the education of the young Roma regarding protection of the sexual and reproductive health and family planning matters.

The drug addicts and users of psychotropic substances would be less excluded from the society and less discriminated if daily center is opened in the municipality that would service their needs.

Another important vulnerable category that should not be neglected is the people with physical disabilities. It is necessary to provide easy access for these people to the important institutions in the city so they can exercise their rights and interest. The hiring of people in the public institutions that know the sign language would help the deaf and hard of hearing people.

The implementation of the Law on Local Self-government - opening of a Center for Homeless People in the Municipality of Prilep will provide opportunity for this vulnerable category to stay in their home city and it will not be necessary to send them to Skopje or other cities, which are new and unknown environments for them.

In the fight against poverty, the NGO sector emphasizes the need to establish local Social-Economic Council (under the umbrella of the Municipality) that would be separate from the municipal Commission on Social Activities. The National Economic and Social Council would vest this Council with the relevant mandate.

Essential in the fight against poverty and social exclusion on local level is the employment of additional people in the Center for Social Work in Prilep. The Center says that, in order to operate with normal capacity, it has a large need for human resources – not only social workers but other profiles as well as such as pedagogues, lawyers, etc. The staffing of the Center for Social Work would provide multiple benefit. On one side it will improve the quality of the social services provided by the Center and, on the other side, it will reduce the number of unemployed people.

8•Poverty and social exclusion in Strumica (South-Eastern Region)

The Municipality of Strumica is the largest and very important municipality in the South-Eastern region of Macedonia. This Municipality includes the city of Strumica as well as 24 populated areas. It has 56.013 people – 27.985 male and 28.118 female. According to the State Statistical Office, 92% are Macedonians, 6,9% Turks, 0,34% Serbs, 0,27% Roma and 0,005% Albanians and Vlach, respectively. There is also 0,6% of other population. A total of 24,2% of the people in the municipality is below the age of 20, 59,4% are able to work (ages 20 to 60 years) and 16,4% is elderly population over 60 years of age. In 2009 the GDP structure in the South-Eastern Region is 8.0 and the GDP per capita is 94,6. The gross investments in basic assets in 2009 is 5,4.

Most of the population in the municipality (38%) has secondary education, 27% has elementary education, 4% is with high and 7% with higher education; 19% dropped out from elementary education and 5% have no education whatsoever. According to the Census in 2002, the number of active population in the South-Eastern Region of Macedonia was 77.056 people – this includes 26.497 employed and 50.559 unemployed. Together with the populated areas, Strumica has 14.793 employed people – this includes 3.064 individual farmers i.e. 17.857 people generate income from work.

The key providers of the employment in the Municipality of Strumica are the industrial factories. The textile industry is very common (production of light and heavy garment). The metal-processing and electrical industries are both on continuous rise and there are many small production capacities in the wood industry for primary and final processing and finishing of wood, production of furniture and joinery.

8.1 Social Map of the Municipality of Strumica

There are 15.574 officially registered unemployed people which is 5,5% of the total unemployed people registered in the country.

The number of unemployed people is smaller in the urban areas (36,02%) and much larger in the rural areas (64%).

Concerning the age structure of the unemployed – the young people ages up to 29 years make 29% (4.552 people) and the people ages 30-60 years make 66% (10.272 people) of the total number of the unemployed people.

The official unemployment rate in the Municipality of Strumica is 38,9%. According to the level of education, 62% (9.712 people) of the officially registered unemployed people in the Municipality of Strumica are people with no qualifications or some qualifications, while 5% (854 people) are people with higher or post-higher education. According to the time duration as job seeker, 6,7% (1.059 people) of the unemployed people in the Municipality of Strumica wait 12-17 months for employment while 39% (6.073 people) wait more than 8 years for employment. In 2011 (for all 12 months of 2011), the number of beneficiaries of the social financial assistance in Strumica was 14.072; 1.700 beneficiaries received permanent financial assistance and 162 beneficiaries acquired the right to one-off financial assistance. Forty four people exercised the right to financial assistance for a person up to 18 years of age that had a status of orphan child or child without parental care, 11.168 people received financial allowance for care and assistance from another person, 40 beneficiaries received financial assistance for social housing, 1.689 people exercised the right to health protection through the Center for Social Work, civil disability allowance was received by 147 people, right to accommodation in foster family was exercised by 139 people, 833 beneficiaries visited the community kitchen, conditional financial allowances for secondary education were received by 298 people. The comparison between the registry of unemployed and the number of SFA beneficiaries shows that only 6,9% of the registered unemployed people are covered by the social financial assistance.

The comparison between the total number of households in Strumica and the total number of households-beneficiaries of social financial assistance shows that 7,3% of the households in Strumica are SFA beneficiaries.

Table n.8: Selected indicators for the social map of Strumica municipality

<i>Social indicators</i>	<i>% of the population in Prilep</i>
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (15-64)</i>	38.86
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (20-64)</i>	39.53
<i>Households-beneficiaries of SFA</i>	7.37
<i>Registered unemployed – beneficiaries of SFA</i>	6.88
<i>Children aged 5-14 receiving elementary education</i>	89.27

Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data for 2011 from the Employment Service Agency, Center for Social Work, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund and the State Statistical Office.

According to data from the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, in Strumica municipality there are 16.055 insured people and 11.155 are receiving pension, out of which 6.493 old age pension, 1.135 disability pension and 3.527 family pension.

The total number of insured people in the Strumica Unit of the PDIF for 2011 is 83.187 people.

From 2002 onwards the municipality is in the phase of demographic aging. But, taking into consideration the relatively slower process of population aging and the specific age structure, in the upcoming years the municipality will continue to face a relatively big inflow of new generations of working capacity, as a demographic frame within which labour force will be recruited.

The data from the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund indicate that in 2008 on the territory of Strumica (comprising of the following municipalities: Strumica, Novo Selo, Bosilovo and Vasilevo) there were 3259 companies employing 15904 people. Out of them, 51.3% are employed in small companies (with over 25 employees). Besides the incomparability of data from the abovementioned sources, we can undoubtedly conclude that in the last years there has not been a significant increase in the employment rate in Strumica municipality.

8.2 Legislative acts for addressing social exclusion on a local level

In Strumica municipality, the following local policy documents have been adopted in order to address social exclusion:

- *Local Action Plan for Employment 2009-2011*
- *Local Development Platform 2007-2015*
- *Official Social Protection Program*
- *Local Strategy for Fight against Domestic Violence*

8.3 Institutional competences for addressing the social exclusion on a local level

There is a number of educational-upbringing institutions in the municipality: kindergartens, elementary schools, secondary schools, Faculty for Economy, Informatics, Agriculture and Food and Floriculture.

The elementary education in the Municipality of Strumica in 2011 was attended by 5.711 pupils. The teaching process in the elementary education has been taking place in 23 elementary schools. The secondary school was attended by 4.029 students and is taking place in 3 secondary schools.

In all elementary schools the teaching process is delivered in Macedonian language. There are also 3 classes where the teaching process is delivered in Turkish language. In addition to

the regular elementary education we also have the elementary musical education, attended by around 500 children.

A special class was opened in the Municipality of Strumica for children with autism, there is also a School for Elementary Education of Children with Light and Moderate Impairment in the Psycho-Physical Development “St.Naum Ohridski” in Novo Selo, Strumica.

The Municipality of Strumica has the following institutions and services available for social and children protection: Center for Social Work; community kitchen; kindergarten JOUDG “Detska radost” which includes 6 operational units (5 in the city and 1 in Novo Selo); the public institution – Institution for Protection and Rehabilitation “Bansko Spa”; the Club for children and youth with intellectual impairment, managed by RCPLIP – PORAKA; SOS Hotline for domestic violence victims; therapeutic community POKROV managed by the NGO “Izbor”; Center for HIV prevention between the LGBT population managed by 3G EGAL.

The map of health institutions that have signed agreement with the Health Insurance Fund in Strumica and which are available to the people with health insurance in Strumica municipality includes: 108 general primary offices for health protection; 105 primary dental offices; 6 primary gynecological offices; 1 general hospital; 1 mental health Center; 1 Center for public health; 41 pharmacies and 1 spa.

The Municipality of Strumica is exceptionally active in cooperating with the NGO sector. The municipality includes over 200 registered NGOs that cover a wide range of different areas, including: environmental and mountaineering associations: “Planetum”, “Edelvajs”, “Entuzijast” and others; the municipal Red Cross organizations; the Association for Physical Education and Sports and Recreation “Partizan”; Association of Women; Association of Craftsmen; Association and Home of Pensioners; Home of Deaf-mute People; Center for Support of the NGOs; the “Prodolzen Zivot” humanitarian association (fighting against domestic violence).

8.4 Identification of the vulnerable groups in the Municipality

According to a statement given by an employee in the Center for Social Work in Strumica, the most vulnerable categories of citizens in the Municipality are the elderly and decrepit persons who do not have material security.

The review of the local policies shows that the number of poor people in the Municipality of Strumica is on continuous increase and their participation in the public life of the com-

munity is on continuous decline. This tendency is especially common for the people coming from the communities that are less represented, including the Roma and the Turks. These two communities belong to the group of socially most vulnerable, especially in the area of health, infrastructure and education. The rural areas are less developed and they feature relatively high rate of illiteracy and low educational level among the population, which is especially the case with the Turkish community in Strumica. The women are discriminated more than men, in all levels and areas of social life. This goes especially for the single mothers and divorced women which are exposed to greater social risk which is also impacting the gender dimension of the poverty. Furthermore, the women victims of domestic violence, the street children and the people with impairments are targeted as socially excluded groups living in poverty or face the risk of poverty and additional activities must be implemented for them in order to improve their situation.

The statistics also show that almost one third of the youth is unemployed and faced with poverty risk, including the risk of social exclusion.

The municipality is lacking policies for inclusion of the risky groups such as sexual workers, homeless people and the LGBT population.

8.5 Priorities for dealing with the social exclusion in the municipality

Considering the very unfavorable educational structure of the unemployed people, it is necessary to expand the opportunities for re-training, further-training, acquisition of skills and new knowledge for the labor force i.e. capacity building for the active job seekers.

According to Center for Social Work representative in Strumica, many of the vulnerable categories of people are unable to exercise their social rights due to the lack of information, from which we recommended to develop programs for information and empowering of the socially excluded people regarding the opportunities to exercise their rights.

The social protection infrastructure is missing services for the homeless people, street children, elderly and victims of domestic violence. These categories of people are emphasized by the Center for Social Work as the most vulnerable. The municipality is aware about the needs of these categories of citizens and is in a process of opening of shelter centers for women-victims of domestic violence as well as daily center for street children and children on the streets.

Although the number of vulnerable categories of people is increasing, still the human resources in the Center for Social Work remain the same and they are unable to respond to the needs of the citizens.

Priority need of the municipality is to provide working engagement for the socially excluded groups of citizens and empower and agricultural and cattle breeding sector which will increase the employment in the municipality.

9•Poverty and social exclusion in the Municipality of Kisela Voda (Skopje Region)

The Municipality of KiselaVoda is located in the Skopje region of Macedonia. This is the most developed region in the Republic of Macedonia which contributes with 47% to the GDP in Macedonia. The territorial management of KiselaVoda municipality is organized in 14 community self-governments – 9 of which are urban and 5 are urban communities. The Municipality has 58.216 inhabitants. From the total population, 91,2% are Macedonians, 0,86% Turks, 2,62% Serbs, 1,34% Roma, 0,47% Albanians, 0,8% Bosnians and 1,53% others. A total of 28,6% of the municipal population is under the age of 20, 31,3% is able to work (ages 20 to 60 years) and 10,1% is elderly population over 60 years of age.

The number of economic entities, broken down by sectors, on the territory of KiselaVoda municipality is as follows: 1.910 are engaged in production; 908 in construction; 490 in hotels and restaurants; 1.492 economic entities are engaged in transportation; 24 in finances; 1.092 in real estate; 26 are engaged in the public administration. The most important economic sectors in the municipality are the chemical industry, transport and forwarding, construction, food industry and production of nonalcoholic beverages, the trade and service sector, including communications.

9.1 Social map of the Municipality of KiselaVoda

The total number of employed people in the municipality is 18.582 – this includes 10.344 male and 8.238 female. The number of unemployed people in the municipality is 6.486 – this includes 3.308 male and 3.178 female. The comparison between the population able to work over the age of 15 in the municipality and the number of officially registered unemployed people in the municipality shows that the official registered unemployment rate is 13.73%. The Municipality of KiselaVoda participates with 2,30% in the total unemployment rate in Macedonia.

From the aspect of the social financial assistance beneficiaries we can conclude that the municipality has a small number of households that are beneficiaries of the social financial assistance (4,28%) compared to other municipalities analyzed in this Report. We need to point out that, from the total number of households analyzed, we took into account the SFA beneficiaries from the following populated areas: KiselaVoda (215 beneficiaries); Zele-

nikovo(46 beneficiaries); Studenichani (753 beneficiaries) and Sopsishte(128 beneficiaries). The coverage of the registered unemployed people in the municipality with social financial assistance is 15,63% which is high percentage compared to other municipalities included in this Report but still insufficient from the aspect of material coverage of the unemployed people in the municipality.

Table n.9: Selected indicators for the social map of Kisela Voda municipality

<i>Social indicators</i>	<i>% of the population in Prilep</i>
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (15-64)</i>	16.23
<i>Rate of registered unemployment (20-64)</i>	17.98
<i>Households-beneficiaries of SFA</i>	4.28
<i>Registered unemployed – beneficiaries of SFA</i>	15.63
<i>Coverage of people over the age of 65 old-age pension (for the City of Skopje)</i>	92.95

Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data for 2011 from the Employment Service Agency, Center for Social Work, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund and the State Statistical Office.

Analyses from the aspect of social insurance coverage in the municipality are impossible due to the lack of statistics on the insured people per each municipality in Skopje. In general, for the City of Skopje, the comparison between the population estimates for ages over 65 years in 2010 (57.478 people ages over 65) and the number of beneficiaries of elderly pension in 2011 (52.429) shows the high coverage with material insurance of elderly people, which is uncommon for the other municipalities i.e. regions analyzed in this Report. The comparison of the number of total population in the city (506.926¹) with the number of insured persons and additionally insured persons in the Health Insurance Fund in Skopje in 2011 points out to a number of additionally insured persons that is greater (630.414) than the number of population. This is an indicator that large number of people that are additionally insured persons live in other cities/ municipalities but are beneficiaries of the Health Insurance Fund services in Skopje.

9.2 Legal framework for dealing with the social exclusion on a local level

The following local documents have been adopted by the Municipality of Kisela Voda in order to deal with the social exclusion:

- *Rulebook on Awarding of One-Off Financial or In-Kind Assistance*
- *Local Strategy for the People with Special Needs*

1 Statistics from the State Statistical Office for population estimates from 2010.

- *Local Youth Strategy*

*In development is the Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Associations.

None of these documents was available on the Internet nor was provided by the relevant persons from the Municipality.

9.3 Institutional competences for dealing with the social exclusion on local level

There are 8 elementary schools in the municipality, the largest secondary school in Macedonia "Vasil Antevski Dren" with legal and economic departments and with a capacity of around 1.000 students. There is also the secondary veterinary school "Braka Miladinovci" and the secondary theological school in Drachevo. There are two kindergartens: "8mi Mart" and "Veseli cvetovi" in a total of 8 buildings; special school for upbringing and education of children with special needs ages 7-15 years "Dr. Zlaten Sremac" and the Institute for Rehabilitation takes care for the needs of children and youth with damaged hearing, eyesight and special needs.

The Municipality of Kisela Voda has 2 kindergartens (in 8 buildings) and two schools for the children with special needs. The municipality is mostly urban, with appropriate access to the schools, except the road connecting Pripor district with "Kruma Kepeski" elementary school. There is also a Center for Social Work and community kitchen, including Center for Treatment of Drug Addicts.

Almost entire population of the municipality has health insurance. There is one health center, 4 ambulances and 4 pharmacies. There is no hospital or clinic and this needs to be changed if we judge by the needs of the citizens and the intentions of the local government.

The Municipality of Kisela Voda actively cooperates and supports the activities of the NGOs such as: the Organization of Women on Gender Equality OZ-RER-ROZA; the Citizens Association for children with malign diseases "Peperutka"; the Citizens Association for Children and Youth with Special Needs "Lastovica" and several environmental NGOs.

9.4 Identification of the vulnerable groups in the municipality

From the discussions in the Municipality we can conclude that the most vulnerable category are the people with physical and mental disabilities. It is necessary to improve the situation for their benefit or open new direct services for protection. The same goes for the categories of elderly persons and drug users.

The review of the local policies shows that the Municipality of KiselaVoda treats the young people as special target group that needs to be worked with in order to prevent social exclusion and the poverty risk.

The municipality has no policies for inclusion of the risky groups such as sexual workers, homeless persons and LGBT population.

9.5 Priorities for dealing with the social exclusion in the municipality

In accordance with the recommendations of the local self-government for easier realization of particular social rights or easier access to specific social services, it is necessary to provide the following:

- *Educational information (service) center for the people with special needs;*
- *Day care center for elderly people;*
- *Center for prevention of vices and other deviant behavior among youth;*
- *Provision of access to all institutions and dwelling buildings for all people with physical disability;*
- *Reconstruction of the sound signalization for people with damaged eyesight.*

Although the private sector is involved and already provides important contribution in the employment of people with disability (and it can also provide other type of assistance if necessary), still there is a lack of organized social responsibility system of the business sector.

In order to improve the social services more financial and human resources are necessary – these are determined in the national budget and planning.

In accordance with the standpoints of the local self-government, the following is necessary in order to achieve alleviation of the poverty and social exclusion:

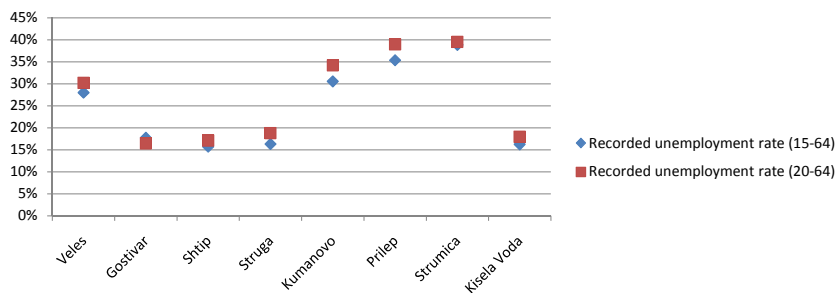
- *Hire more professional staff (improved communications, assistance and professional care for the socially excluded people);*
- *Improvement of the social protection system infrastructure;*
- *Improved access to information and buildings;*
- *Re-training and further-training of the people able to work;*
- *Improved communication and cooperation with the institutions in the social area and the NGO sector.*

10•Regional cohesion or a regional gap: conclusions and recommendations

The studies conducted in the eight municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia, i.e. in the eight statistical regions in the country, indicate certain trends and specific features concerning poverty and social exclusion.

The social map of the municipalities, which has been created on the basis of few selected indicators (unemployment, social protection, pension insurance, health insurance and elementary education coverage) indicates that there is a great regional gap. Namely, while the registered unemployment rates (calculated according to data from administrative sources) in Strumica and Prilep municipality are quite high, i.e. about 39% (for people aged 20-64), the same rates are twice lower in Kisela Voda and Struga municipality – 18%.

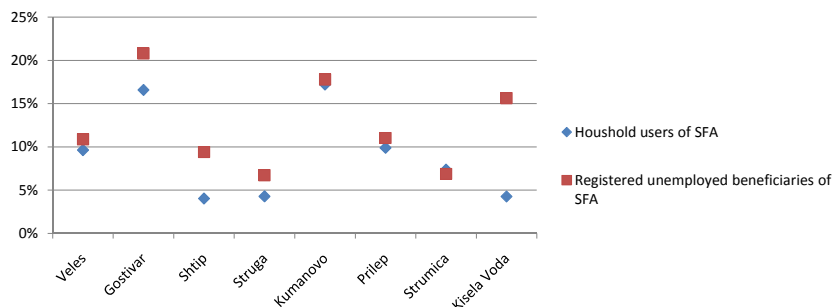
Graph n.3: Rates of registered (administrative) unemployment in the eight selected municipalities (regions)



Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data from the State Statistical Office on the assessment of the population per age group as of December 31, 2010 and the data from the Employment Service Agency on registered unemployed per city in December 2011

Similar trends can be seen also in the number of households – beneficiaries of social financial assistance in the country. The percentage of coverage of the households with SFA varies from low coverage (4%) in Kisela Voda, Stip and Struga, medium coverage (7-9%) in Strumica, Veles and Prilep, up to high coverage (17%) in Gostivar and Kumanovo. The coverage of the unemployed persons who receive social financial assistance is quite low in the whole country, with the exception of Gostivar, Kumanovo and Kisela Voda, where 15%-20% of the unemployed are covered with SFA. The low social assistance coverage of the unemployed in the country is a potential indicator of increased rigidity of the social protection system, which renders more difficult the access to the system.

Graph n.4: SFA beneficiaries, households and registered unemployed in the eight selected municipalities (regions)

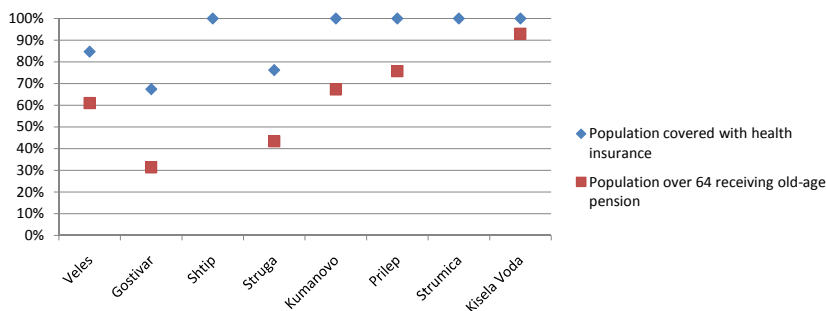


Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data on the number of households per city according to the 2001 census, conducted by the State Statistical Office, data from the Employment Service Agency on registered unemployed per city in December 2011 and data from the centers for social work on number of households – SFA beneficiaries.

The coverage of the population with social insurance (pension and health insurance) in the state indicates some concerning trends. Namely, while in some municipalities, i.e. regions, there is almost an universal access to health insurance - Stip, Kumanovo, Strumica, Kisela Voda, in others there is a lesser coverage Veles (85%), Struga (76%) and Gostivar (67%) .

The access to old-age pension of the population over the age of 65 also indicates a certain exclusion in almost all municipalities (with the exception of Kisela Voda), because about 61%-75% of persons over the age of 65 are beneficiaries of old-age pension. The situation is most dramatic in the Polog and the Southwest region (i.e. in Gostivar and Struga), where only 31% and 43% of the elderly over the age of 65 (respectively) are covered by old-age pension. This trend indicates an exclusion from the social security system, which is based on contributions. These conditions most probably resulting from the high rate of informal or black market activity in the abovementioned municipalities / regions.

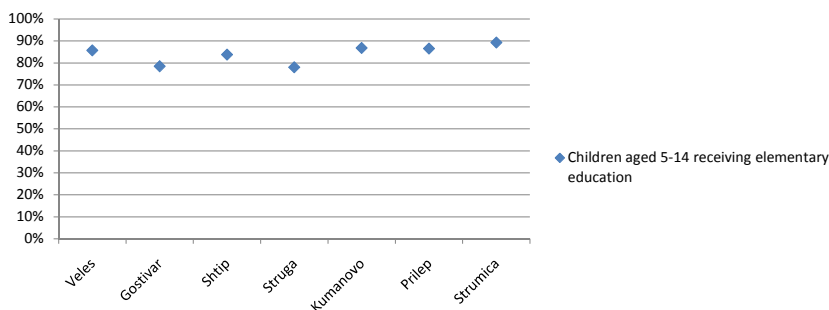
Graph n.5: Social insurance coverage in the eight selected municipalities (regions)



Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data from the Health Insurance Fund on insured people and additionally insured people for 2011 and data from the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund on the number of beneficiaries of old-age pension for 2010 .

Finally, in terms of the coverage with the mandatory elementary education, it can be noted that almost in all municipalities/regions the coverage of children aged 5 -14 is not complete. Although in some municipalities there is a high coverage of 90%- 92% (Strumica, Kiselova), the coverage in the municipalities of Gostivar and Struga is concerning, where only 78% of children aged 5 to 14 are involved in the educational process. Although these low figures can result from a situation in which children attend elementary school in another place rather than in the place where they are registered as residents, it is still necessary to make additional estimates as to how much other factors, such as migration abroad, temporary work abroad life on the street, begging and etc. contribute to the situation.

Graph n.6: Coverage of the children aged 5-14 with mandatory elementary education



Source: Author's calculations on the basis of the available data from the State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia on elementary and secondary schools at the end of 2009/2010 and data from the State Statistical Office on the assessment of population per age groups as of December 31, 2010

Note: There is no calculation for the Municipality of Kisela Voda since for all other municipalities the calculation has been made on the basis of 2010 population estimates whereas for the Municipality of Kisela Voda the population estimates have been given in a summary form with the other Skopje municipalities.

The analysis of the local strategies, programs and plans for addressing poverty and social exclusion shows that none of the selected municipalities has developed a local strategy for alleviation of poverty and social exclusion. The lack of such a strategic document on a local level is probably an indicator of insufficient funds for its development and implementation.

However, in each of the analyzed municipalities, there is an Annual Program for Social Protection, Health Care and Child Care, which actually constitutes a framework for identifying and specifying vulnerable groups and their needs. Another feature of all communities are the local action plans for employment, which are developed by the local employment centres. In some municipalities (Veles, Stip, Prilep, Strumica, Kisela Voda) local programs for specific vulnerable population categories are developed, such as: Action Plan for People with Disabilities, Action plan for Children's Rights, Action Plan for the Protection of Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young People, Action Plan for Employment of the Roma Community, Local Youth Strategy and etc.

The analysis of the institutional capacities in the field of poverty and social exclusion in the eight municipalities shows that in all of them there is a wide range of public (state) and civil society organizations that implement activities and programs for the socially vulnerable population. In all municipalities, it is evident that private initiatives related to the support of the poor and socially excluded people are inexistant or simply symbolic. The key state actors in the social domain on a local level include: the municipality, the centers for social work and the employment centers. The analysis shows that in some of them (in the municipalities) there is a lack of skilled staff (for ex., social workers) that would work on the identification of vulnerable groups and their inclusion in the local social programs. There is also a need for greater horizontal and vertical cooperation/coordination of the institutions both on a central and on a local level.

The identification of the vulnerable groups by municipalities has been made in line with the analyzed statistical data and in line with the suggestions of the experts from the local institutions, interviewed during the research. The analysis of the vulnerable groups demonstrates a lot of similarities. Namely, in most municipalities, the Roma have been the most vulnerable population group (Gostivar, Stip, Struga, Prilep and Strumica), followed by the elderly (Veles, Stip, Struga, Strumica and Kisela Voda), the children with special needs (Veles, Gostivar, Stip, Struga, Strumica and Kisela Voda), the beggars (including children beggars), street people/children and homeless people/children (Gostivar, Stip, Struga, Kumanovo and Strumica) and the single parents (Veles, Gostivar, Stip and Strumica).

Table n. 10/1: Identified socially vulnerable categories

<i>Veles</i>	<i>Gostivar</i>	<i>Stip</i>	<i>Struga</i>
People with low level of education	Roma community	Roma community	Unemployed people aged 20-24
Unemployed people over the age of 50	Disabled children	Roma women, single mothers	People without elementary education
Long-term unemployed people	Elderly people	Juruks	Long-term nemployed people
	Single parents	Elderly people	Elderly people who are financially unprovided for or are incapable of working
People with special needs	Homeless people	People with special needs' people	People without family care
Single parents		Street children	Juvenile criminal offenders
Elderly people		Women – victims of domestic violence	Children with special needs
			Children-beggars
			Roma (Egyptian) community

In addition to these dominant vulnerable categories, a general characteristic group for all regions and municipalities are the unemployed, especially the unemployed with a low level of education, as well as the long-term unemployed.

Specific identified vulnerable groups in the municipalities are: the Yuruks (Stip), juvenile criminal offenders (Struga) and drug users (Prilep, Kisela Voda). Another challenge related to the vulnerable population groups is the lack of information and access to services for sex workers, homeless people and LGBT population. A concerning trend is the increasing number of women-victims of domestic violence in some municipalities (Stip, Kumanovo, Strumica)

Table n.10/2: Identified socially vulnerable categories

<i>Kumanovo</i>	<i>Prilep</i>	<i>Strumica</i>	<i>Kisela Voda</i>
Unemployed without elementary education	Roma community	Elderly and sick people who have not been financially provided for	People with physical and intellectual disability
Long-term unemployed people	Drug users and users of other psychotropic substances	Roma and Turkish community	Elderly people
Street children	Physically disabled people	Rural population	Drug users
Victims of domestic violence	Homeless people	Single mothers	
		Women – victims of domestic violence	
		Street children	
		Disabled people	
		Young unemployed population	
		Lack of information and services for sexual workers, homeless people and LGBT population	

The identification of the vulnerable population shows some similarities among municipalities/regions, but also some specific vulnerable groups who should be subjected to a more detailed analysis and assessment.

Based on the analysis of trends, policies, institutional competences and vulnerable population, more specifically related to poverty and social exclusion on a local level in the Republic of Macedonia, it can be concluded that there is a lack of social cohesion both on a municipal level and among municipalities/regions in the country. For this purpose, the Report on Poverty and Social Exclusion - 2011, based on the set priorities in each of the analyzed municipalities, proposes a series of recommendations that should be translated into the local social policies in the forthcoming period:

Recommendations on the activities targeting vulnerable groups:

To improve the education of the population in order to enable vulnerable groups to get further education and retraining with the overall objective of reducing the unemployment rate and improving the living standard of the population;

To increase the health care coverage of the Roma population, especially of the chronically ill;
To enable prioritization and increase of the coverage of the socially vulnerable groups with the active labour market measures and employment programs;

To increase the preschool education capacities in order to increase the coverage of children;

To promote more intensively the services and measures contained in the Law on Social Protection (especially in reference to the permanent financial assistance) among people with disabilities.

Recommendations for the local actors and their activities in the field of poverty and social exclusion:

To introduce a mechanism for identifying persons at social risk and to create a database on socially vulnerable people on a local level, thus allowing easier integration of the different types of assistance targeting this category of people; within these activities, attention should be paid to the inclusion of groups at risk, such as sex workers, homeless people and LGBT population;

To enable easy physical access to the institutions on a local level (municipalities, centers for social work, employment centres, etc.), especially for the people with physical disabilities;

To increase the professional staff in the municipalities in order to strengthen the capacity for development of local policies and programs aimed at alleviation of poverty and social exclusion;

To create more flexible (local) legal framework for criteria setting for the use of social assistance, given the fact that there are examples in the region of applicants that do not meet the criteria and yet need social assistance;

To involve the private sector more actively in the strategies and plans for alleviation of poverty and social exclusion on a local level.

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