

United Nations
Forum on Minority Issues
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Statement made by
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Thank you Madam Chair,

I'm Aleksandra Bojadzieva, representing the Roma Democratic Development Association 'Sonce' from Macedonia.

I shall speak about three issues concerning Roma education in Macedonia and try to draw rather general recommendations.

First, Roma lack access to adult education, despite the fact Roma have highest illiteracy rate, particularly among women. This is because poor and overpopulated schools in Roma neighborhoods do not comply with the licensing requirements, besides that provision of adult education is not obligatory for schools. Adults with overwhelming obligations need access to education nearby.

Second, Suto Orizari – mainly Roma populated part of the capital city is maybe the only urban municipality in Macedonia without secondary school, now that it is obligatory. Not only it is urgent to establish a secondary school there, it is imperative that the type of training it provides ensures desegregation, meaning it must provide prosperous and rarely provided job qualification training which could attract pupils from elsewhere as well.

Finally, Roma pupils often come to our organization complaining they receive lower grades than others. Once I was asked by a child: "What is the difference between my strong B and his weak A"? Could anyone answer this? I can't. We have not find a way to prove this so far, but it is generally accepted that evaluation of pupils is unclear, not transparent and often biased because of the lack of standard criteria. This puts Roma in a position vulnerable to discrimination.

Refraining from listing many other shortcomings, I urge Macedonia and other countries, as well as the forum to include in the recommendations the following:

1. States to provide adult education according to the needs on the field and in a way that people, particularly minorities such as Roma really benefit from it.
2. Creation of conditions for people to comply with their obligations should precede legislation, and avoiding segregation needs to be a guiding principle.
3. Evaluation of pupils needs to be clear, transparent and based on objective criteria free from bias. Other forms of hidden discrimination should also be tracked down with cooperation with the civil society and abolished.

Thank you Madam Chair.