



Recommendations for the Institutionalization of the Mentorship Support Program

Analysis of the Mentorship Support Practice (15 years)
– Contribution to Evidence-based Policymaking

Roma Education Fund

A STUDY ON MENTORSHIP SUPPORT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL ROMA STUDENTS – 15 YEARS OF PRACTICE

*Recommendations for the Institutionalization
of the Mentorship Program
– Contribution to Evidence-based Policymaking -*

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The views and opinions expressed in the study do not necessarily reflect the views of the REF and donors.

All terms used in this study in the masculine gender include both the masculine and feminine gender of the persons they refer to.

Being someone's support in life is a very important thing, awakening someone's security and carelessness is a great honor, directing someone's thoughts towards a beautiful future is a great temptation, and all of these are the task of a mentor!

Marina Jaćimović,
mentor from the REF program
#MeettheMentors

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Foreword

Recommendations for the Institutionalization of the Mentorship Program (hereinafter referred to as: *the Recommendations*) are an empirical study (*evidence-based policymaking*) of the Roma Education Fund (REF) of Serbia. The study has been prepared as part of the project titled *Employment Empowerment of Young Roma – Phase Two (2018-2023)*. The project is being realized with the support of the German Financial Cooperation program, implemented by the German Development Bank KfW on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Germany – the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The idea to conduct the *Recommendations* empirical study was based on the fact that the mentorship support program, intended for Roma students, had been implemented as a project activity for fifteen years – first in secondary schools in the territory of Vojvodina from the school year 2007/08 until the school year 2013/14, and then in secondary schools throughout Serbia – from the school year 2014/15 until the school year 2021/22.

The fifteen-year practice has confirmed that the program successfully addresses a series of problems of secondary school Roma students such as: a) low enrollment rate and high dropout rate, particularly during the first grade of secondary education; b) low academic achievements and irregular attendance; c) low expectations of teachers from Roma students; d) poor social interaction between Roma and other students; e) prejudice and discrimination against Roma persons; f) apparent poverty of Roma families (lack of funds to cover the costs of education, housing conditions that hinder learning and schooling); g) specific relationship and views of Roma parents and children, particularly regarding the education of female children; etc.

For the purposes of preparing the *Recommendations*, qualitative and quantitative research of primary and secondary sources was conducted, which aimed at providing a) an overview and analysis of the mentorship support practice during the previous 15 years, i.e. the degree of the previous mentorship support institutionalization, b) an overview of the state of secondary education of Roma children before and after the (project) introduction of mentorship support, c) an insight into the legal and strategic framework of reference for the institutionalization of the mentorship program, d) proposed steps for the completion of the mentorship program institutionalization process, and e) an overview of mentorship programs in the countries of the region.

The *Recommendations* study has seven parts. The first part provides an overview and the essence of mentorship support, the significance of its institutionalization, a brief reminder of the concept, stages and process of institutionalization, the *Recommendations* preparation methodology and, finally, limitations in the study

development. The second part presents the research findings – an analysis of the mentorship practice, i.e. analysis of the informal institutionalization of mentorship support in the previous 15 years. The analysis is based on the data from: a) available reports from the Vojvodina Project, b) REF's documentation and mentorship databases, c) online questionnaires for the principals of the secondary schools that participated in the program, and online questionnaires for the mentors who were involved during the past 15 years. The third part provides an analysis of data on the secondary education of Roma teenagers before and after the introduction of mentorship support, including the evaluation of impacts, outcomes and results of mentorship support. The fourth part provides an overview of the international, national and strategic framework of the mentorship support institutionalization, including the current education reform taking place within the REdiS 2030 Project. The fifth part refers to the possibilities of institutionalization of the mentorship support program. The sixth part provides an overview of the education systems in the countries of the region, through brief analytical notes, with a focus on inclusion and secondary education of Roma students. The seventh part of the study refers to the conclusion – a proposal for steps towards the institutionalization of mentorship support based on the analysis of data collected from primary and secondary sources, including insights from five consultative meetings. Appendices and literature are provided at the end of the study.

The development of the *Recommendations* lasted from 30 November 2022 until 31 May 2023.

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The team of the Roma Education Fund of Serbia, represented by its Director Redjepali Chupi and the REF Program Manager, Adi Sinani, initiated the development of the *Recommendations for the Institutionalization of the Mentorship Support Program* at the end of 2022. Ružica Dević, the coordinator of the Scholarship and Mentorship Support Program for Secondary School Roma Students (SSMP), has recently become a member of the Fund's team, and her efficacy has significantly contributed to the timely collection of data from mentors and principals and the holding of five consultative meetings.

A large number of people from the education system of the Republic of Serbia have contributed to the initiation and implementation of the Mentorship Support Program – all of them have made it possible for the mentorship support to be a continuous and active project measure of support for Roma students in the previous fifteen years of its implementation.

We express gratitude to the team of the Provincial Secretariat for Education of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, which initiated, launched and managed the mentorship support program in the period from 2007 to 2014. The team comprised Jegeš Zoltan, PhD, project manager, Jelena Kriš Piger, project coordinator, Marija Aleksandrović, project director in the period from 2007 to 2011, and Dragana Dimitrov, project director in the period from 2011 to 2014. The team included 110 employed teachers/mentors from 80 secondary schools in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Ivana Koprivica, Ibolja Gera, Sonja Miladinović, Vesna Radulović and Zlatica Jović deserved credit for the training of mentors in the Provincial Secretariat team. The team of mentors of the Provincial Secretariat who, as a significant resource of knowledge and experience in the implementation of the mentorship support, contributed to the development and preparation of modular training sessions as part of the REF, consisted of: Ana Tomić, Danijela Ovuka, Dragan Popov, Erika Rončak Petrović, Evica Vujučić, Ines Bereš, Jelena Nedić, Katica Rajkov, Ljubica Radišić, Marica Kresoja, Nataša Škrbić, Nenad Bošković, Nevenka Žeželj, Otilija Čavić, Slobodan Jovanović, Snežana Radišić, Svetlana Kalapiš, Zdenka Vojnić Tunić, Željka Kovačev, Zorica Rodić, Zorka Turtureja.

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Special gratitude to all the mentors and principals of secondary schools throughout Serbia who, over the past 15 years, have worked on the implementation of the mentorship support – it is not possible to list the names of all the mentors here. We express gratitude for the openness to participate in the online research, for the very useful inputs on the mentorship support institutionalization and the time they took to complete the questionnaires.

We express gratitude to representatives of the School Administration Offices and local self-governments of Niš, Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Vranje and Belgrade, representatives of the civil society and mentors who attended five consultative meetings and provided useful insights and observations regarding the mentorship support program – it is not possible to list the names of all the individuals who participated in these meetings here. The moderators of the consultative meetings were Tatjana Antić Savarese (Niš, Vranje and Belgrade) and Jadranka Ivković (Novi Sad and Kragujevac).

List of abbreviations

APV	Autonomous Province of Vojvodina
CEI	Central European Initiative
EC	European Commission
EU IPA	European Union Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
EU NRIS	EU National Roma Integration Strategies
FBIH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
REF	Roma Education Fund
GIZ	German Organization for International Cooperation
KEP	CEI Know-how Exchange Program (KEP)
LSU	Local self-government unit
MESS	Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of Slovenia
MoESTD	Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
NIPAC	National IPA Coordinator
NPUR	National Program of Measures for Roma of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia
NCRNM	National Council of the Roma National Minority
OECD	Organisation
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PA	Pedagogical assistant
REF	Roma Education Fund
RS	Republic of Serbia
RNM	Republic of North Macedonia
SORS	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
SSMP	Scholarship and Mentorship Program for Roma Secondary School Students
SAO	School Administration Office
TARI	TARI Project – Technical Assistance for Roma Inclusion
UNDP	United Nations Development
LFES	Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System
IIEU	Institute for the Improvement of Education and Upbringing

Executive summary

Separate file

1. Introduction

Eliminating the gap in educational outcomes between students of the Roma nationality and students of the general population is a mission to which the Roma Education Fund (REF)¹, as an international and, as of the beginning of 2019 also a national non-profit organization, has been dedicated since its establishment in 2005.

Today, 18 years later, numerous reports, analyses and studies, as well as statistical data, testify that this gap has been somewhat reduced, but that it is still quite pronounced, and that an integrated support system in the field of education is starting to be seen as a necessity.

One of the most significant REF programs was the SSMP program (*Scholarship and Mentorship Program for Roma Secondary School Students*), which had been applied continuously through various projects almost since its establishment – from 2017 until 2022. *The Scholarship and Mentorship Program for Roma Secondary School Students* (SSMP) was active through projects in several EU countries (Romania, Slovakia and Bulgaria) and non-EU countries (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro). In the meantime, the scholarship program has been taken over by the national education system in North Macedonia²; in August 2016, scholarships for Roma secondary school students were included in the Law on Students' Standard³ in this country, and the Ministry of Education took over the scholarship program in Montenegro in the school year 2018/19.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia took over the implementation of the scholarship program as of the school year 2019/2020⁴, while the REF remained responsible for the implementation of the mentorship program.

There was no mentorship support at secondary schools in Serbia before 2007 – and today (in the school year 2022/23), after 15 years of practice, it is recognized and accepted as an almost regular (project) activity and an effective response to the needs of Roma secondary school students.

1 On 30 January 2019, the Roma Education Fund (REF) was registered in Serbia as Fondacija za obrazovanje Roma (FOR) – a non-profit organization. Available at: <https://search.bisnode.rs/rs/1183848/fondacija-za-obrazovanje-roma/> Given that before this date it operated as REF, and after this date as FOR – both names can be found in this study, depending on the period in question.

2 Available at: <https://mon.gov.mk/content/?id=4826>

3 Law on Students' Standard, CONSOLIDATED WORDING, ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", Nos. 52/2005, 117/2008, 17/2011, 135/2011, 15/2013, 41/2014, 146/2015, and 30/16). Available at: https://ener.gov.mk/files/propisi_files/doc1/

4 Available at: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Report-on-the-Realization-of-the-Action-Plan-for-the-Implementation-of-the-Strategy-for-the-Development-of-Education-in-Serbia-Until-2020-for-2019..pdf> ; <https://romaworld.rs/obuke-za-mentore-u-organizaciji-ref-abolji-rezultati-romske-dece-u-obrazovanju/> ; <https://romi-obrazovanjem-do-posla.org.rs/mpntr-preuzima-vodjenje-programa-stipendiranja-srednjoskolaca-romske-nacionalnosti/>

In August 2021/22, after 15 years of continuity, the Roma Education Fund (REF) suspended the mentorship support program for students of the Roma nationality.

At the end of 2022, the REF team initiated the preparation of the *Recommendations for the Institutionalization of the Mentorship Support Program*, based on which it plans to intensify the process of formal institutionalization of this program. The issue of sustainability and institutionalization of the mentorship support is a topic that the REF team has been continuously addressing for years through the interaction with numerous international and national stakeholders.

The secondary education of a large number of Roma teenagers who need mentorship support now depends on how long the institutionalization process will last, but also on the open possibility that the mentorship support will not be officially introduced into the secondary school system at all.

Bearing in mind the benefits and significance of mentorship support for secondary school students of the Roma nationality, the initiation of the process of formal institutionalization of the mentorship support program should have started at least one school year before the termination of the program – in order to avoid negative consequences for the secondary education of students from this ethnic group. Unless the institutionalization process is implemented efficiently and the soonest possible, the negative consequences of the mentorship support termination will be increasingly visible in the coming years. It is to be expected that the consequences of the program termination will result in a continuous decrease in the number of students who enroll, regularly attend and graduate from secondary schools, and a decreasing number of those who continue their education and enroll in faculties – from this or the next few generations of Roma teenagers.

Secondary education is considered a bare minimum for improving the social position by ensuring stable earnings (Čekić Marković, 2016). Without completing secondary education, there is no chance of finding a job, no opportunity for employment, no further education, no opportunity for advancement – one remains within the generational cycle of poverty and social exclusion. Statistics further show that people without secondary education have a hard time earning enough money to support themselves, and are three times more likely to be unemployed and twice more likely to be below the poverty line (Čekić Marković, 2016). Affirmative measures and scholarships for students without mentorship support are not a strong enough encouragement for one to complete secondary education. Scholarships are low and sometimes irregular, and secondary school students, instead of going to school, will be forced to find a job that will provide them with a relatively regular income needed for their everyday, basic life needs.

It is not uncommon to hear that no-one prevents Roma families from enrolling their children in school – this often leaves out of sight the fact that lack of financial

resources prevents Roma children from attending school. Therefore, although in principle every child has the right to education, a large number of Roma children do not have the opportunity to exercise this right. The causes that encourage and maintain the gap in almost all areas of the Roma social life are still present – due to the generational reproduction of poverty, social exclusion, problems in the availability of education, living conditions and living standard, and discrimination.⁵

The obstacles (UNICEF, 2011) that Roma children still face in exercising their rights to education have remained unsurmountable: acute structural poverty, inadequate housing, xenophobia and prejudice, social exclusion, learning in an unknown language, biased grades, insufficiently adapted curriculum, inadequate teaching and chronically insufficient financial support.⁶

The area that simultaneously efficiently affects both the causes and the consequences of such a position of the Roma is education, and the results of work within this area are the most important for achieving long-term and sustainable positive changes in the position of the Roma. The work on the educational inclusion of the Roma implies long-term engagement and systematic, continuous work and investments in order to ensure that generations of the Roma are able, due to education, to have vertical mobility within society as accessible to them as it is to other citizens.

Work on education does not give instant results – work in this area requires multi-year continuity and any, even the shortest cancellation of necessary support services within a single level of education, has a negative impact on the following one.

Mentorship support program – a brief retrospective

A brief description of the historical development of mentorship support, from its introduction until today, is indicative for gaining insight and understanding the purpose, scope and significance of this project measure of support for socially excluded students who are at risk of early school leaving.

The mentorship support program lasted for 15 years, from the school year 2007/2008 until the school year 2021/2022, and in that period it had two phases and three carriers.

The first phase lasted for seven years, from the school year 2007/2008 to the school year 2013/2014. The Provincial Secretariat for Education of the Autonomous

5 *Dostupnost usluga i mera podrške za decu romske nacionalnosti na lokalnom nivou [Availability of services and support measures for Roma children at the local level]*, Jelena Marković. Available at: https://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Dostupnost_usluga_i_mera_podske_za_decu_romske_nacionalnosti_na_lokalnom_nivou.pdf

6 UNICEF The Right of Roma Children to Education, Status Report, Switzerland 2011, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/eca/media/1566/file/Roma%20education%20postition%20paper.pdf>

Province of Vojvodina⁷ (hereinafter referred to as: the Provincial Secretariat) was the first to introduce mentorship support in secondary schools in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. At the same time, the Provincial Secretariat was the initiator, carrier and implementer of the mentorship support program for Roma students in the first seven years.⁸ **Mentorship support was then introduced for the first time in the educational process as an active project measure available to Roma students only in secondary schools located in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.** Mentoring work in this form was unknown in the educational process in secondary schools before the school year 2007/2008.

Mentorship support was introduced as part of the project titled *Inclusion of Roma Students in Secondary Schools in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina*, which was subsequently renamed to *Inclusion of Children of the Roma Nationality in Secondary Schools in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina*. The Project had the financial support of the Roma Education Fund (REF), the Belgrade Open Society Foundation, and at the very beginning it was co-financed by the Provincial Secretariat. The main objective of the Project was to increase the number of Roma students who enroll in and graduate from regular secondary education in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The project tasks were to provide financial and mentorship support for Roma students, to motivate them to complete secondary education with the best possible grades, and to guide them to continue their education by enrolling in academic studies. In cooperation with partners from civil society, the Project also sought to motivate elementary school students and their parents for enrolling in secondary schools, and guide them to enroll in occupational profiles that are most in demand on the labor market or occupations requiring four-year education. The team of the Provincial Secretariat designed an almost holistic package of support for students of the Roma nationality, and with scholarships and mentorship support, as stated in the 2014 Project Implementation Report, the Project⁹ provided funds for one-time assistance for the purchase of school supplies at the beginning of each school year, funds for the reimbursement of all or part of the travel expenses for students who do not live in the place of education, and other accompanying project activities – e.g. reward trips for the most successful scholarship holders, a reward in the form of a laptop computer for students who completed their secondary education with an average grade of 5.00, a summer camp for girls, foreign language courses, tuition fees for students who, after three years of education, wanted to

7 Full name - Provincial Secretariat for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities – National Communities. Available at: <http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/>

8 For more information refer to the report on the project titled *Inclusion of Children of the Roma Nationality in Secondary Schools in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (2007–2014) Project Implementation Report – Results*. Available at: http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/dokumenti/_obrazovanje/Inkluzija/Izvestaj_inkluzija.pdf

9 Report on the project titled *Inclusion of Children of the Roma Nationality in Secondary Schools in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (2007–2014) Project Implementation Report – Results*. Available at: http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/dokumenti/_obrazovanje/Inkluzija/Izvestaj_inkluzija.pdf

complete the fourth year of secondary education, visits to the University in Novi Sad and some vocational colleges for getting acquainted with the conditions and possibilities of enrollment and continuation of education, education of mentor teachers for mentorship work, etc. This support package was implemented every school year in the period from 2007/08 until 2013/14.

Partners in the Project of the Provincial Secretariat were the Council for Roma Integration in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, the Association of Roma Students, the Union of Roma Students and the Vojvodina Roma Center for Democracy.

The 2014 Project Implementation Report reads that the mentor's role was to provide students with individual assistance and support in the development of learning skills (pedagogical role), to work on the optimal integration of students into the close and broader environment (social role), as well as to exchange information, advise and get to know the student and his/her personal problems (psychological role), and to provide supplemental teaching content, as necessary. Mentoring work with students within the education system implied the provision of additional individual assistance, supplemental teaching content, the development of learning skills, solving personal or school problems, and supporting optimal integration into the teaching and social life of the school.

Mandatory mentorship support for students was provided by selected and educated teachers or professional associates of secondary schools, for whom additional training was organized. The mentors received assistance and support from the *Monitoring and Evaluation Team* and the *Education Promotion Team*. And for the student support to be complete, the mentors also cooperated with the teaching staff, as well as with the students' parents. The eleven-member Monitoring and Evaluation Team had the task of monitoring the professional aspect of the mentors' work, the students' progress in learning, the level of social integration at school, as well as the cooperation between the mentors and the students' parents. *The Education Promotion Team*, which comprised successful students, members of the Roma national community, had the task of informing Roma students and their parents about the implementation of affirmative action measures for education, current student scholarship competitions, and primarily of popularizing education in Roma families. *The Provincial Office for Roma Inclusion* had provided significant support to the *Education Promotion Team* since the launch of the Project.

Over the seven-year duration of the Project, a total of 1,643 scholarships were provided for students from over 90 schools based in Vojvodina. A total of 110 teachers/expert associates who provided mentoring assistance were involved. Out of a total of 121 regular secondary schools in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, more than 90 secondary schools were involved in the Project.¹⁰

10 For more information refer to the report on the project titled *Inclusion of Children of the Roma Nationality in Secondary Schools in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (2007–2014) Project Implementation Report – Results*. Available at: http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/dokumenti/_obrazovanje/Inkluzija/Izvestaj_inkluzija.pdf

"What distinguishes this Project from the others is the existence of mentors as pedagogical, social and psychological support to scholarship holders. The programs previously supported by the Provincial Secretariat for the purpose of improving the position of the Roma in the society were mainly oriented towards providing financial resources. This project started from the assumption that it was very important to work on changing the awareness and views of education, of both students and their parents, as well as the entire Roma community, and here the role of mentors was of crucial significance. The mentor was there to monitor the work and progress of scholarship-holding students, and to encourage them when their school problems seemed insurmountable. For the student, the mentor represented a person who was the link between the school and the family, a person whose role was smaller than that of parents, but greater than that of the homeroom teacher. Of course, we were also aware of all the challenges and concerns related to mentoring work as this was a complete novelty in our education system, starting with whether the teachers would accept this new role, what kind of training they needed, and whether each mentor would manage to provide his/her mentee with optimal assistance." Jelena Kriš Piger, Project Coordinator.¹¹

The second phase lasted for eight years, from the school year 2014/2015 to the school year 2021/2022. The key characteristic of this phase was that **the Mentorship Support Program, together with scholarships, was extended to secondary schools throughout Serbia, which made mentorship support available to all secondary school students of the Roma nationality in the territory of Serbia.**

From 2014 until the end of 2016, the Mentorship Support Program was implemented within the TARI¹² project *We Are Here Together – European Support to Roma Inclusion* (EU IPA 2012). The implementer of scholarship and mentorship support in this period was the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, with direct support from the REF and technical and financial support from the OSCE Mission in Serbia.¹³

11 *Inclusion of Children of the Roma Nationality in Secondary Schools in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (2007–2014) Project Implementation Report – Results.* Available at: http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/dokumenti/_obrazovanje/Inkluzija/Izvestaj_inkluzija.pdf

12 *Technical Assistance for Roma Inclusion – EU IPA 2012 Social Development Program.* The project implementer was the OSCE Mission in Serbia. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/sr/serbia/235636>. The project was implemented in the period from June 2013 to April 2017, when it was closed. The project "We Are Here Together – European Support to Roma Inclusion" supports the implementation of the Strategy for Improving the Position of Roma in the Republic of Serbia in selected areas such as access to basic rights, civic participation, education, health and social protection, adequate housing and the creation of new jobs. The project implementer was the OSCE Mission in Serbia. The most important project partners were the Office for Human and Minority Rights, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, NGO Praxis, the Roma Education Fund, the Government of the Republic of Serbia European Integration Office, and the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team. Available at: <https://europa.rs/ovde-smo-zajedno-evropska-podrska-za-inkluziju-roma/>

13 Available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/d/119495.pdf>

At the very beginning, the MoESTD appointed an interministerial Working Group for the development of criteria and procedures for awarding scholarships to Roma students and employing mentors. Criteria were defined for the selection of mentors who would monitor the success of scholarship-holding students. A teacher and expert associate applying for the position of a mentor of scholarship-holding Roma students had to meet, as stated in the job announcement, the following general conditions: a) to be employed with a secondary school in the territory of the Republic of Serbia that is attended by scholarship-holding Roma students; b) to have passed the license exam or state exam for a teacher or expert associate; c) to have at least seven years of work experience in education; and d) to have a recommendation issued by the School Board for their involvement in the mentoring tasks for scholarship-holding Roma students. Bearing in mind the tasks specified in the mentor's job description, in the selection of mentors the preference was given to candidates: a) who had experience working with Roma students, b) who had experience working with Roma families, and c) who participated in training sessions, projects, initiatives and actions supporting the educational and social inclusion of the Roma.

In August 2014, the MoESTD, in cooperation with the OSCE Mission in Serbia, announced **the first competition for the selection of teachers and professional associates for the role of mentors** of Roma students attending secondary school and receiving scholarship in the school year 2014/15. In the same year, the MoESTD, also as part of the TARI Project, announced **the first Competition for awarding scholarships to Roma students attending three- and four-year secondary schools** in the school year 2014/15. A student may participate in the competition for awarding scholarships from the funds of the TARI Project if he/she meets the following conditions: a) he/she is a citizen of the Republic of Serbia; b) he/she is a member of the Roma national minority; c) he/she is not a beneficiary of scholarships and loans from other institutions, or scholarships awarded by organizations that are direct and indirect beneficiaries of the budget of the Republic of Serbia; d) in the school year 2014/15, he/she is enrolled for the first time as a regular student in the first, second, third or fourth grade of a three- or four-year secondary school (high school, vocational or mixed school) founded by the Republic of Serbia or an autonomous province; and e) he/she has completed the previous grade with the overall achievement, i.e. an average grade of 2.50 to 3.50, and a grade in governance of at least *good* (3).¹⁴

From mid-2017 until August 2022, the Mentorship Support Program, together with scholarships until 2019, was implemented as part of the project titled *Employment Empowerment of Young Roma – Phase One (2016–2018) and Phase Two (2018–2023)*. The project is being realized with the support of the German Financial

14 Competition for the selection of secondary school Roma students for awarding scholarships in the school year of 2014/15, Published on 21/08/2014
Available at: <https://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/rs/konkurs-za-izbor-srednjoskolaca-romske-nacionalnosti-za-dodelu-stipendija-za-skolsku-201415-rok-15-9-2014/>

Cooperation program, implemented by the German Development Bank KfW on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Germany – the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

During these eight years, a total of 2,954 scholarships were provided for students from over 216 secondary schools in the territory of Serbia. More than 373 teachers/expert associates who provided mentorship assistance were involved. Out of a total of 454 state secondary schools in Serbia, more than 216 secondary schools were included in the mentorship support program.

In order to improve the quality of mentorship support and the effects of mentorship, the REF has designed and accredited training sessions for the teachers and expert associates selected to work as mentors,¹⁵ which include three two-day modules: **Module 1 – Introduction to the Role of a Mentor**, **Module 2 – Mentorship Practice** and **Module 3 – Mentorship Support to Secondary School Roma Students for Acquiring 21st Century Competencies**.¹⁶ These modular training sessions have become an integral part of the mentorship program, not only for the school team members appointed as mentors in Serbia, but also for teachers - future mentors in some countries of the Decade, i.e. countries where the REF is operational.¹⁷

The creation of modular training sessions is primarily based on the experience of mentors from the Vojvodina Project, the experience of mentored students, but also the experience of the mentors involved in the ongoing REF projects. (Further information can be found in Appendices 2, 3 and 4)

In addition, for the purpose of training preparation, the *Report on the Analysis of Mentor Training Needs*¹⁸ was prepared in 2014 – the report was created based on data from interviews with mentors from the Vojvodina Project and focus groups with the then scholarship holders and their parents, and an analysis of the project documentation.

The first training sessions in Serbia, as part of Module 1, were held in May 2015, and the last, as part of Module 3, were held in August 2022. A total of 28 training sessions (i.e. 31 days of training) were realized in Serbia for all the three Modules

15 Accredited by the Minister of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, Accreditation number: 5094 (151-00-0001/2015-06/1); Accreditation can be found on the following website: <http://www.mpn.gov.rs/prosveta/strucno-usavrsavanje/973-dopuna-liste-programa-strucnog-usavrsavanja-koju-donosi-ministar>

16 Available at: <https://romi-obrazovanjem-do-posla.org.rs/akreditovane-obuke-za-mentore-odobrene-od-strane-ministra-prosvete/>; <https://romaworld.rs/obuke-za-mentore-u-organizaciji-ref-abolji-rezultati-romske-dece-u-obrazovanju/>

17 Available at: <https://romi-obrazovanjem-do-posla.org.rs/akreditovane-obuke-za-mentore-odobrene-od-strane-ministra-prosvete/>

18 *Report on the Analysis of Mentor Training Needs*, author: Aleksandra Pejatović, Belgrade, September 2014. The analysis was carried out as part of the TARI Project – “Technical Support to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development in Establishing and Strengthening the Dropout Prevention Program for Roma Secondary School Students”, a sub-component of the Project “Technical Assistance for Roma Inclusion” – IPA 2012 Social Development Program. Source: REF documentation.

– for Module 1 (11 training sessions): 8 two-day and 4 one-day training sessions; for Module 2 (9 training sessions): 3 two-day and 6 one-day training sessions; and for Module 3: eight two-day training sessions.

In the period from May 2015 to the end of August 2022, a total of 49 days of training were realized, of which 31 days of training for mentors in Serbia and 18 days of training for mentors and tutors in the region. A total of 1,021 participants took part in the training, of whom 711 participants were in Serbia and 310 participants were from the region – Module 1: a total of 508 participants, of whom 289 participants were in Serbia and 219 from the region, Module 2: a total of 265 participants, of whom 174 were in Serbia and 91 were from the region, and Module 3: a total of 248 participants in Serbia. (Appendix 4)

Working on the expansion of the Mentorship Support Program in the countries of the Decade, i.e. in the countries where the REF is operational, the REF team organized a two-day training of trainers (ToT) for representatives of REF Hungary, REF Slovakia and REF Romania. The training was held in the REF Serbia office in Belgrade, on 10–11/12/2018. The ToT participants, a total of 9 of them, were appointed to train secondary school teachers in each of the said countries to work as mentors as part of the Velux project *Shaping Academic and Employment Skills for Young Roma in Hungary and Slovakia (SHAPYR)*.¹⁹ As part of this project, students of secondary vocational schools were mentored, as well as young adult Roma enrolled in secondary vocational schools.

Furthermore, in cooperation with the CEI KEP²⁰, the REF organized a two-day international conference titled *Professional Intergovernmental Know-how Exchange on the Implementation of Large-Scale Secondary School Scholarship and Mentoring Program for Roma Students*.²¹ The conference was held on 27–28/09/2017 in Podgorica, with a total of 64 participants from: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo*²², Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovakia. The conference was attended by representatives of ministries and representatives of other relevant government institutions and non-governmental organizations, including REF coordinators from the participating countries. The objectives of the Conference were a) strengthening the capacity of the teams responsible for managing projects as part of the Scholarship and Mentorship Program at Secondary Schools in partnership with the REF, and b) exchanging experiences in the implementation of projects from this Program. The teams responsible for the implementation of the Program

19 Available at: <https://www.romaeducationfund.org/careers/call-to-develop-an-online-platform-under-refs-shapyr-project/>

20 Central European Initiative - Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP) Available at: <https://www.cei.int/KEP>

21 "Professional Intergovernmental Know-how Exchange on the Implementation of Large-Scale Secondary School Scholarship and Mentoring Program for Roma Students", Available at: <https://www.romaeducationfund.org/ref-montenegro-hosts-the-second-professional-intergovernmental-know-how-exchange-on-secondary-school-scholarships-and-mentoring-for-roma-students/>

22 Without prejudice to any views of the status and in accordance with Resolution 1244 and the opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

consisted of 24 staff members from ministries and members of government teams, from different participating countries, in charge of a more effective management of the REF Scholarship and Mentorship Program at Secondary Schools. The aim of this activity was to strengthen the capacity of 24 staff members of the ministries and project implementers for a more efficient management of the Scholarship and Mentorship Program at Secondary Schools supported by the REF.

Finally, in 2019, the REF Team prepared and distributed to secondary schools the *Manual for Mentors*, created on the basis of the experiences of mentors and modular training sessions and, therefore, a multi-useful tool necessary for the work of mentors.

The essence and characteristics of the Mentorship Support Program

The purpose and characteristics of the Mentorship Support Program are presented here based on the REF documentation, the content of modular training sessions, the experience of mentors, the REF *Manual for Mentors* and the personal experience of the author of these *Recommendations*, who was involved in almost all phases and levels of the mentorship program in the period from 2014/15 until 2020.

The purpose of mentorship support. Mentorship support was introduced as a project measure intended as a response to the problems of secondary school students of the Roma nationality, who belong to the largest group of socially excluded students. The problems of this group of secondary school students include: a) typically low enrollment rates and high early school leaving rates, particularly during the first year of secondary education; b) pronounced irregularity of attendance and low academic achievement rates; c) noticeably low expectations of teachers from Roma students; d) poor social interaction between Roma and general population students; e) visible discrimination and prejudice against Roma; f) apparent extreme poverty of families and lack of funds to cover the costs of education, poorer housing conditions that hinder learning and schooling; g) specific relationship and views of Roma parents and children, particularly regarding the education of female children; etc.

The essence of mentorship support. Mentorship support is aimed at the personal development of individual students, ensuring regular attendance, strengthening self-confidence, motivation for learning and continuing education, developing competencies and achieving the desired educational outcomes. A mentoring relationship rests on four pillars: trust, confidentiality, communication and empowerment. Each interaction between mentors and students provides an opportunity to build (or undermine) the mentoring relationship. Built on mutual respect, trust and the exchange of ideas and experiences, mentorship plays a key role in the development

of students. The decisive elements and principles of mentorship support include a) clear understanding of the roles of both parties (the mentor and the student), b) mutual trust, c) joint planning of (short-term and long-term) goals and desired outcomes, d) regular joint monitoring of progress, and e) equal, continuous dedication of the mentor and the student.

The concept of the Mentorship Support Program. Mentorship support is an innovative approach in working with secondary school students of the Roma nationality, designed to be a catalyst for their quality education. Mentorship is a dynamic process aimed at developing the individual potential of students of Roma origin in order to empower them and help them overcome obstacles, build resilience and fully realize their personal potential. Mentorship support provides additional individual assistance for Roma students in the form of supplementary curriculum, development of study skills, solving personal and school problems, and it ensures optimal integration into the academic and social life of the school. The mentorship program is structured so as to enable students to have positive school and educational experiences that will inform them about the way they think about themselves and their relationships with others. The Mentorship Support Program includes a set of related activities aimed at meeting the individual needs of students, realizing their potential and academic aspirations. Mentorship support focuses on the individual needs of students.

Key features of mentorship. The most important features of mentorship support are the following: a) it takes place within the school, b) it is driven by pre-planned results, and c) it is implemented through an individual approach to the student. Mentorship support is **school-based**, i.e. it takes place within the school, and the entire school is involved in the mentorship program, not only selected members of the school team – future mentors. The support of the school team, professional associates and the principal is of crucial importance for successful mentorship. Mentorship support relies on a **results-driven approach and a goal-oriented concept** – which means that it is guided by predetermined, achievable results and outcomes tailored to the needs of individual students. The mentor and the student work together, through conversation, to plan the expected results and outcomes that are achievable for the individual student. The aim of this approach and concept is to provide a coherent framework for the effective short- and long-term planning based on learning and accountability. The introduction of the results-driven approach aims to improve the effectiveness of mentor-student cooperation and the responsibility of both parties for defining realistic expected results (short-term and long-term), monitoring progress towards achieving expected results and integrating lessons learned into any subsequent planning. This approach and concept of mentorship is based on four pillars: a) defining personal strategic goals that provide a focus for each subsequent action; b) the specification of the expected results that contribute to these goals and the alignment of the necessary resources behind

them; c) continuous monitoring and evaluation of performance and integration of lessons learned into future planning; d) increased responsibility, based on constant feedback on the achieved performance – each step forward gives encouragement for the next one. Motivated by small step-by-step achievements, the student develops persistence to complete subsequent tasks and assigned duties, and constantly looks for ways and means to improve their performance, and even in the face of difficulties, they remain optimistic and persistent, showing a strong commitment to learning and achieving better results. The primary responsibilities of mentorship are to make students attend classes regularly, to reduce the school leaving rate, to increase the regularity of attendance, and to achieve better academic performance. Mentorship support is characterized by **an individual approach and individualized work** with students. Mentorship covers all areas – from support in learning to support in choosing a future profession and entering the world of work. However, not all types of support that a mentor can provide for a particular student are equally needed by all students – in other words, not all students need all the types of support that a single mentor can provide. That is why an individual approach and individualized work with the student are important. Mentorship depends on the mentor, the mentored student, their relationship and the specific needs of the student. A personalized mentor approach, based on the needs of the student, promotes and encourages the student's thinking about their personal growth and thus transfers to them a significant part of the responsibility for improving their own development and managing their own progress. Individualized mentoring work includes the following: a) joint setting of clear and precise goals for students, b) selection of goals that are realistic, achievable and challenging, c) regular joint revision and updating of goals – to see how far one has come in achieving them, d) encouraging students to monitor their own progress, and e) involvement of parents.

Who are mentors – competencies for active mentorship. Mentors are mostly secondary school teachers selected/appointed to be mentors primarily because of the competencies necessary for performing the role of a mentor. Teachers have been chosen to be mentors having in mind the standard of competencies for the teaching profession, which particularly comes to the fore when teachers find themselves in the role of a mentor. A teacher in the role of a mentor has an opportunity, through individualized work with the student, to further enrich their teaching competencies, particularly those related to C2 – teaching and learning competencies, C3 – competencies for supporting the student's personality development, and C4 – communication and cooperation competencies. These competencies are additionally strengthened through modular training sessions intended for future and current mentors. Competencies and skills that are particularly important for developing an effective mentorship process are: a) understanding and empathy, b) guiding and providing feedback, c) joint problem solving, d) mutual (mentor-student) fairness, consistency, persistence, patience and correctness, e) advisory and educational work, f) finding out the needs and concerns of students – assessing the

needs of students and responding to those needs, g) communication skills, h) good organization, and i) humanity and sincere concern for the well-being of students. A good mentor knows how to take care of and support the student in the manner that suits the student the most. The experience of mentors confirms that mentorship is a multi-layered process that is mutually beneficial – it mostly benefits the student, but also the mentor and the school as a whole. Through the work of mentors at school, the competencies of all employees for individualized work with all students are strengthened, and a climate of teacher and peer support, good communication and cooperation with parents and representatives of other relevant stakeholders from a broader environment is developed.

The mentor's scope of work is twofold. The mentor a) provides the student with direct support and b) advocates for the student's interests. Direct support to the student refers to regular communication with the student, giving advice, motivating and encouraging the student, teaching, guiding, helping them to solve problems, and also includes regular communication with the student's parents. Advocacy for the student's interests refers to the representation of their interests within the school, in cooperation with other teaching and non-teaching staff, at the level of the peer group, and at the level of local organizations, institutions and the local community as a whole.

Three primary and eight operational mentor roles. In a nutshell, the three primary roles of a mentor are to provide students with individual assistance and support in the development of learning skills and styles (pedagogical role), to work on the optimal integration of students into the close and broader environment (social role), as well as to exchange information, advise and get to know the student and his/her personal problems (psychological role), and to provide supplemental teaching content and involve the student in extracurricular activities, as necessary. The mentor's pedagogical role – to encourage students to develop the skills they need to be successful at school; to transmit knowledge about learning methods and styles and an individual learning plan; to motivate the student for learning and continuing education; to help in setting clear learning goals, growth and personal development; to encourage the development of transversal skills; to serve as a resource of knowledge and information; etc. The mentor's social role – to develop social competencies and communication skills; to encourage students to practice their communication and social skills; to encourage the socialization of students inside and outside school; to create opportunities for involvement in extracurricular activities; to establish contacts with students' parents, informing them about all relevant topics; to advise and share professional knowledge, experience and wisdom; to foster open and equal communication with students and parents, and encourage and develop empathy – thereby positively influencing the socialization of students; etc. The mentor's psychological role – to get to know the student's needs, concerns and interests; to encourage the student to freely express their interests;

to show willingness to provide support and maintain a friendly relationship; indirectly, and sometimes directly, to advise students how to choose their own path, solve a certain problem or overcome an obstacle that may seem insurmountable to the student; to strengthen the student's self-confidence and motivation; to help the student to complete a certain task by pointing out new possible ways of thinking about themselves and others; to indicate various learning styles, etc. The mentor identifies the needs and concerns of the student by creating the student's psychological and pedagogical profile. The student's profile includes the following elements: the student's social and emotional status, the student's strengths, the assessment of the motivation for learning, acceptance by peers, acceptance by teachers, family support, the priority area in which support is needed by the mentor and other stakeholders (inside and outside school), etc. Mentorship is a) a creative act in which irrational moments, feelings, intuition and empathy play a significant role, in addition to knowledge; b) a constantly developing process in which the goal is not only to monitor the educational changes, but also to create and manage them; c) a mechanism for transmitting creativity and a framework for the development of an individual's action competence, and d) a well-designed communication by the mentor that is reflected on the development of the student's social competencies. In addition to the primary roles, the mentor also has eight operational roles: 1) the mentor's educational role with the encouragement of the student's personal development, 2) a role in encouraging the student's professional and career development, 3) a role in educating, teaching and training of the student, 4) a role in monitoring and raising the level of the student's academic performance, 5) a role in the establishment and development of a mentorship relationship with the student, 6) a role in preventing the student's early school leaving and abandoning further education, 7) a role in representing the student, and 8) the mentor's role in providing the student with social support for satisfying various life needs. (Appendix 3)

The functions of mentorship support imply that the mentor supports and encourages: a) the student's personal growth and development (advises, provides emotional support, has empathy and encourages growth and development), b) the student's academic achievement focused on independently choosing the directions of their educational and professional development, and c) professional development in accordance with the student's personal preferences, providing information and introducing them to various occupations, expanding their knowledge of skills and competencies needed for the labor market and employment. (Appendix 3)

Tasks and job description of the mentor. In short, the task of the mentor, as a competent and good interlocutor, is to be a guide through the student's personal and professional development, a support in challenging situations, and to provide the student with assistance and support so that they can manage their learning and thus maximize their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be. The task of a mentor is to ensure support for

students in their regular attendance at classes and extracurricular activities, provide assistance in learning, monitor their achievement, facilitate the socialization process, assist in solving personal, family or schooling problems, provide support in the process of their integration into the academic and social life. In this context, a continuous and comprehensive mentorship support implies that the tasks of a mentor are to: a) have regular meetings with the student – once a week; b) get to know the student's capacity and the areas at which they are particularly good – what skills and abilities they have for achieving their goals; c) develop the student's feeling that they can completely trust their mentor; d) encourage the student to regularly attend classes; e) encourage the student to freely express their opinion and ideas, and help them to elaborate these; f) invite the student to particular events or projects that in the mentor's opinion would be of interest for the student and would contribute to their development; g) assist the student in selecting optional subjects by providing explanations about the significance of particular areas; h) give the student honest answers to their questions; i) be able to be critical towards the student; j) have high expectations and set sufficiently high standards, as this is the only way to ensure the student's progress; k) assist the student in becoming independent and encourage them to take the initiative and perform certain tasks without the control of their mentor. The mentor's job description is provided in Appendix 3.

The mentor's work methods. The mentor's support is provided for all Roma students. One teacher-mentor can work with up to five students during one school year. Mentors are selected at schools where the students are enrolled, and the number of mentors within a school varies depending on the number of students who need support. The mentor's work method largely depends on the needs of the individual mentored student – and one of the important mentor's work methods are regular meetings between the mentor and the student, which are held once a week. The agenda of the mentor's meeting with the student depends on whether it is a) the initial phase, the phase in which the mentor and the student get to know each other, b) the planning and S.M.A.R.T. goals definition phase, c) the phase of implementing the plans and achieving set short-term goals, or d) the final phase in which the achieved outcomes are reviewed and the achieved results are evaluated. **In the initial phase**, which lasts two to three weeks, the mentor and the student get to know each other and work on building the relationship and trust. During these first meetings, the rules of cooperation are established and joint procedures are agreed upon, and the overall expectations from mentorship, the dynamics and topics of the subsequent meetings and the student's needs are discussed. During this phase, it is important to build a solid trust and to agree on the rules and practical ways of working together between the mentor and the student. During this phase, the mentor will probably meet the student's family. **In the second phase**, which lasts one to two months, the mentor and the student work at meetings to determine the direction and define S.M.A.R.T. goals for the student; clarify what they want to achieve during the mentoring relationship and discuss how this could be done;

jointly plan short-term and long-term goals for the school year; consider priorities, time frames and ways in which they will work to achieve individual goals. Some of the goals may evolve as the mentoring relationship progresses, and new goals often emerge during the process, and what they originally thought they wanted to work on may change. Achieving smaller, short-term goals provides a stimulus to achieve the subsequent ones. In this phase, a list of activities and a learning plan are made, and a time frame is made for the achievement of individual goals. **In the third phase**, which lasts six to seven months, the mentor and the student regularly discuss at meetings how the student is progressing in achieving the planned short-term goals and implementing what has been agreed; solve current issues and challenges; evaluate and monitor the progress; agree on how to ensure the student's performance; agree on the progress towards long-term goals, and consider whether there are any other things the student wants to work on. In this phase, they establish whether everything agreed has been achieved and start to discuss how the mentoring relationship will be concluded. **The fourth phase**, which lasts one to two weeks, implies summarizing and evaluating the outcomes and results, and concluding the mentorship mandate in a positive spirit. This phase includes reviewing what has been achieved and reporting on performance, evaluating the mentor and the student, reporting on the planned and achieved goals – which speaks of the student's performance and mentorship support. Regardless of the phase, each meeting between the mentor and the student ends with a summary of what was discussed and the agreements reached, and setting the date and agenda of the following meeting. The summary from the previous meeting always serves as an introductory recapitulation at the following meeting – this ensures continuity, joint monitoring of what has been agreed and what has been achieved, addressing challenges on the fly, encouraging and developing the student's sense of responsibility, organization and time management, as well as their thinking about themselves and their future.

The expected outcomes of the mentorship support program are to eliminate or reduce the reasons for which it was introduced, to ensure that students of Roma origin have equal access to quality education, school facilities, including free access to adults who support them, members of the school team and collaborators in the broader community. Mentorship support results in the achievement of the desired outcomes related to: a) improved individual learning styles and clear learning goals, b) reduced dropping out and absenteeism from classes, increased regularity of class attendance, c) improved learning outcomes, d) increased self-confidence and self-esteem, and increased aspirations, e) improved social and communication skills, f) improved transversal skills, g) increased work readiness (punctuality, responsibility, behavior in a group, etc.), h) defined learning and career goals, etc. Fifteen years of practice have shown that mentorship support is necessary for Roma secondary school students – since its introduction, an increasing number of students have enrolled, successfully graduated from secondary school and continued their education.

The importance of (the institutionalization of) mentorship support

The significance of mentorship support for students of the Roma nationality is demonstrated by a) the reasons for which this project measure was introduced fifteen years ago and b) the outcomes and results of its implementation so far.

Data from numerous international and national surveys conducted in the past few years show how relevant these reasons are even today.

Data from the Regional Survey on the Position of Roma Men and Women in the Western Balkans (UNDP and World Bank, 2017)²³ show that Roma continue to face limited access to opportunities in all aspects of human development, from basic rights to health, education, housing, employment and living standards – in all countries of the Western Balkans. Data from this survey show that in Serbia there is a big gap between the Roma population and the general population when it comes to the education system. One out of six Roma children is still outside the primary education system, 17% of Roma children attend pre-school institutions, and only 1% reach a university degree. There is some progress – there has been an increase in the number of Roma who have enrolled in elementary schools, and currently it amounts to 84% of the enrolled. However, while almost all members of the general population have completed elementary school, more than one third of marginalized Roma aged 18 to 21 do not have elementary education. Roma aged 18–24 are almost half as likely to be involved in employment, education or training (27%), compared to 58% of non-Roma youth. This has lifelong implications, as it blocks further opportunities for decent employment. Roma aged 15–64 are almost half as likely to be employed compared to their neighbors from the general population. When it comes to university education, the gap in relation to the non-Roma population in Serbia is the largest compared to all other countries of the Western Balkans.²⁴

The World Bank's survey titled *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*²⁵ (World Bank, 2019) demonstrates that throughout the region the

23 A regional survey on the socio-economic position of marginalized Roma in the Western Balkans was conducted in 2017 with the support of the European Commission Directorate-General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations, in cooperation with the World Bank, and in consultation with the Agency for Fundamental Rights of the European Union and other United Nations agencies. Available at: <https://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/rs/predstavljeno-regionalno-istrazivanje-o-polozaju-roma-i-romkinja-na-zapadnom-balkanu/> ; <https://www.undp.org/sr/serbia/news/te%C5%BEak-polo%C5%BEaj-roma-na-zapadnom-balkanu>

24 Sources: UNDP, available at: <https://www.undp.org/eurasia/publications/regional-roma-survey-2017-country-fact-sheets> ; Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction. Available at: <https://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/rs/predstavljeno-regionalno-istrazivanje-o-polozaju-roma-i-romkinja-na-zapadnom-balkanu/> ; Daily newspaper "Danas", 8 December 2019 Roma Education in Serbia: A Difficult Path from Discrimination to Integration, available at: <https://www.danas.rs/vesti/drustvo/obrazovanje-roma-u-srbiji-tezak-put-od-diskriminacije-do-integracije/> ;

25 Source: *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*, March 2019, available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/642861552321695392/pdf/Breaking-the-Cycle-of-Roma-Exclusion-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>

educational coverage among Roma is low and the ethnic gap is wide. Although there was some improvement in the period 2011–2017, the gap between the Roma and their non-Roma neighbors remains significant, particularly in upper secondary and tertiary education. The survey states that the Roma are mostly socially excluded; they do not have access to services and economic opportunities compared to the majority of the rest of the population, even the non-Roma living nearby. Addressing social exclusion and discrimination is not only a moral imperative; it also implies unexplored economic opportunities and forgotten fiscal gains, as stated in this survey. Low employment rates, high rates of *undeclared work* and low wages among the Roma result in lower fiscal revenues.

Recent research for a World Bank's study on Serbia shows that, on average, the Roma in Serbia pay half as much as the general population for income and payroll taxes, and only one fifth for social welfare income, excluding pension and family assistance benefits (World Bank – 2015). This means that Roma exclusion results in a loss of fiscal revenues. Furthermore, there are significant potential revenues through increased productivity, which further contributes to the economic opportunities that could be realized through a better inclusion of Roma in the labor market.

The research also points out that the extensive exclusion of Roma from society is indefensible from the perspective of social justice and human rights, and that the current cost of Roma exclusion in Serbia is high. First, the exclusion of Roma workforce from the labor market means expensive losses in productivity. The World Bank's research on the total economic losses due to the social exclusion of Roma in Serbia reveals that, if the Roma population of working age had the same employment rates and salaries as the general population, the total gains from increased productivity alone could range from EUR 314 million to EUR 1.28 billion a year, or from 0.9 percent to 3.5 percent of Serbia's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017. Second, the exclusion of Roma means fiscal losses through lost tax revenues and increased spending on social assistance. In Serbia, the associated fiscal benefits arising from increased tax revenues and lower social assistance spending could range from EUR 78.1 million to EUR 317.0 million (ranging from 0.5 percent to 2.1 percent of government expenditures in 2017) (World Bank 2015). Roma inclusion would therefore be a smart economic policy in the Western Balkans, concludes this World Bank's research.

The World Bank in this research points out that a concerted, holistic effort is necessary to narrow these gaps, including fight against prejudice and discrimination. The pay-off will last for generations. The education and skills agenda is perhaps the most important change among the Roma in the long term. Highlighting education as the most significant agenda that could change the position of the Roma in the long term, in its 2019 analysis the World Bank identified eight policy measures that could help reduce ethnic disparities in education in the Western Balkans. These are

the following policy measures: (1) promoting the early inclusion of Roma children through affordable and quality preschool education, (2) providing additional educational support for Roma children and introducing collaborative teaching techniques for diverse classes, (3) providing financial incentives to promote enrollment; **(4) providing mentorship support and role models for students in transition to higher education**, (5) changing mindsets and social-emotional skills to improve academic performance, (6) promoting the use of Roma mediators at all levels of education, (7) ensuring that schools attended by Roma and other vulnerable children receive adequate funding, and (8) addressing segregation and promoting non-discriminatory practices in schools.²⁶

Objectives of the institutionalization of the mentorship support program

The mentorship support program institutionalization process began at the moment when the problem of Roma secondary school students was recognized (low enrollment in secondary schools, low educational outcomes, low graduation rate, etc.) and when an innovative project measure (mentorship support together with scholarships), which should begin to solve and eliminate that problem, was created and implemented.

This shows that the institutionalization process is multi-stage and has several phases: a) early phase – recognizing/defining problems and designing appropriate support measures as a response to the problems, b) mentorship support practical implementation and internalization phase, and c) final phase – regular systemic implementation and standardization.

Mentorship support at secondary schools in Serbia did not exist before 2007 – and today, after 15 years of its implementation, it is recognized as a regular and accepted (project) measure and an effective response to the needs of secondary school students of the Roma nationality, as well as other students who have similar or the same socio-economic living conditions.

The need to complete the mentorship support institutionalization process and to legally regulate and officially introduce this project measure in the education system of secondary schools is indicated by a few data, particularly: a) the reasons for which it was introduced, and which maintain and encourage the social exclusion of Roma and, at the same time, have an adverse impact on the achievement of strategic goals of the official policy pertaining to the improvement of the position and social inclusion of the Roma national community in Serbia, b)

26 *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*, March 2019, World Bank and EU. Available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/642861552321695392/pdf/Breaking-the-Cycle-of-Roma-Exclusion-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/758911554459613139/pdf/Executive-Summary.pdf>

the decade-and-a-half-long mentorship practice and the achieved outcomes and results showing that the number of Roma secondary school students who enroll in and successfully graduate from secondary school has continuously increased in the previous fifteen years, and c) data obtained by analyzing the state of education of Roma secondary school students before the introduction of mentorship support and after all the years of its implementation which, together with scholarships and affirmative measures, speak of a significant increase in the number of secondary school students from this ethnic group.

The task and purpose of the *Recommendations* is to argue for the significance of mentorship support, to point at the results of its implementation, and to contribute to the creation of guidelines and mechanisms for the introduction of the mentorship program in the education system of secondary schools.

Objectives of the mentorship support institutionalization are the following:

- to shift mentorship support from the level of a project measure to the level of a regular systemic educational measure within secondary schools;
- to ensure systemic continuity and sustainability of mentorship support for Roma secondary school students, as well as other students who need it;
- to make mentorship support an integral part of the secondary school curriculum and an active systemic measure of continuous support for students of the Roma nationality and other students who need it;
- to establish regulatory (laws and by-laws) and normative levels of mentorship support, including professional standards and work guidelines;
- to professionalize mentorship support, as an individualized way of working with (mentored) students, and thereby overcome any potential low expectations of teachers-mentors from Roma students;
- to maximize the competencies and commitment of trained mentors who, by decision of school principals, are appointed to work as mentors;
- to improve the competencies of mentored students, particularly in terms of achievement, regular class attendance, adoption of effective learning styles, outcomes and continuation of education, or entering the world of work.

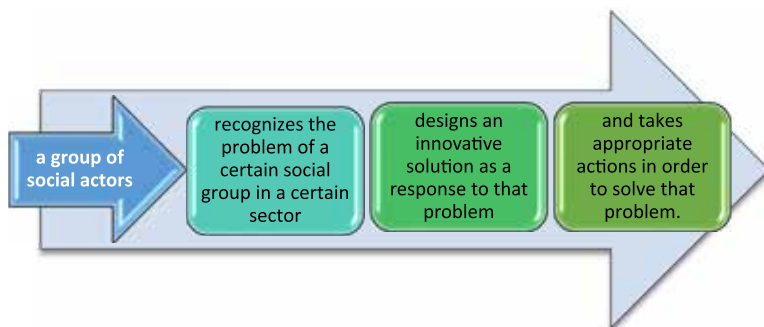
Institutionalization – in brief: the concept, stages and process

The concept of institutionalization is used here as a sociological term, and not as a term that most often refers to the placement of beneficiaries in social or health care institutions.

In this context, institutionalization is, by definition, the introduction of a certain *novelty* (innovation) into a certain area of social reality, i.e. the act of establishing a *new* practice in the society, an organization, institution, system, or the public. Institutionalization begins with some novelty, change, innovation – whether it is a newly introduced innovative practice or a newly adopted act that requires certain changes within an institution, organization, system, society, etc. Thus, to institutionalize something means to establish it as part of a social practice, organization and/or system.

Institutionalization of a *new social practice* implies that some social actors a) have recognized the problem of a certain social group in a certain sector, b) have designed an innovative solution as a response to that problem, and c) have taken appropriate actions in order to solve that problem²⁷ (Diagram 1.1).

Diagram 1.1: Institutionalization of a new social practice begins when



The undertaken activities become visible to other participants in the sector (externalization) and, if the other participants in the sector attach the meaning of rational, efficient and useful to that action (innovation), it acquires a special value (objectivization).²⁸ By introducing a novelty into a certain area of social reality (an institution, organization), the process of rationalization, unification, formalization and standardization begins, and that process is called institutionalization.

²⁷ Adapted from the presentation *Institutional Changes*. Available at: <http://www.ekof.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Institucionalne-promene2.pdf>

²⁸ Ibid

The process of institutionalizing a new social practice is essentially *a process of change*. The goal of every *innovation* (change, i.e. new practice) is institutionalization, but institutionalization will not occur if the change/innovation is not successfully initiated and fully implemented. The change process takes place within three overlapping phases (Figure 2.2).

Diagram 2.2: Three overlapping phases of the change process²⁹

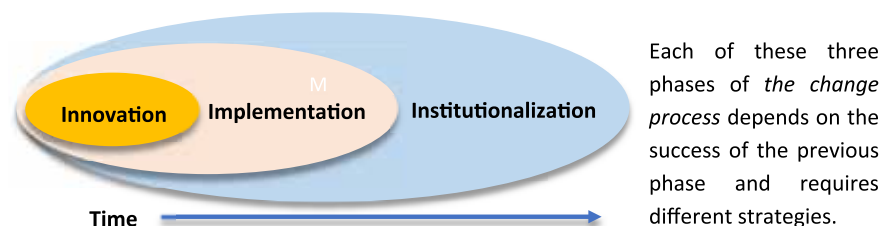


Diagram 2.2 shows that innovation is an integral part of the institutionalization process, i.e. that the process of innovation and its implementation is part of the continuum of the institutionalization process. However, it often happens that innovative ideas are either not adopted or, even more frequently, are adopted for a short term – e.g. until the end of a current project.

The institutionalization framework of successful change programs comprises three key forms and sources of institutionalization:³⁰

- Regulatory framework (applicable laws, by-laws and strategic documents),
- Normative (professional standards), and
- Cultural-cognitive (assumptions and beliefs).

Finally, institutionalization is the final stage of *the change process*. This means that the institution fully supports and implements what used to be *a new initiative*. The introduced *change* becomes just another part of the program that is implemented as part of routine activities and is supported by policy and resources. The long-term sustainability of the *change* is ensured and the process of systemic integration is completed – the new practice has become a sustainable standard practice.

²⁹ Phases of the Change Process. Available at: https://www.teachingandlearningnetwork.com/uploads/1/2/7/6/12764277/phases_of_change_fullan_unit_1_ho_3.1.pdf

³⁰ *Institucionalne promene [Institutional Changes]*. Available at: <http://www.ekof.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Institucionalne-promene2.pdf>

Methodology of preparing the *Recommendations*

The methodology of preparing the *Recommendations* was guided by an *evidence-based policymaking* approach that argues for making informed decisions and creating policies based on evidence – in this case, based on research findings.

The selection of this approach is in compliance with the tasks and purpose of the *Recommendations*. The reasons for choosing this approach are that the research findings inform decision-makers about the following: a) the importance of this support measure for Roma secondary school students, b) the reasons for its introduction into secondary schools fifteen years ago, c) the significance and outcomes of the fifteen-year mentorship practice, d) the degree of the informal institutionalization of the mentorship support program so far, and e) the necessity of completing the institutionalization process and systemic regulation of this project support measure.

Analytical framework and indicators. The analytical framework of the current, informal institutionalization of mentorship support includes the following five dimensions: a) the purpose and characteristics of the mentorship support program and its coherence with the educational goals of the school, b) the degree and mechanisms of the current mentorship support institutionalization through fifteen years of practice, c) the legal framework and the national strategic framework for the field of education, d) the initiators and implementers of mentorship support, and e) the achieved outcomes and results of mentorship support.

An analysis of these five dimensions was carried out using primary and secondary sources, and qualitative and quantitative methods and instruments, including: a) an online questionnaire for the principals of 216 secondary schools that were included in the program, b) an online questionnaire for 373 members of the school team who were in the role of mentors during the previous fifteen years, and c) the REF mentorship database. It needs to be emphasized that the mentorship databases were created based on the mentors' quarterly reports, which at the same time served as a work and progress monitoring tool – the reports included data related to the performance of the mentored students and mentors' activities.

One of the ways to measure the degree of the institutionalization of the mentorship support program so far is to analyze the extent to which this project measure has been undertaken and implemented as part of the school's pedagogical approach, and not as an isolated initiative of a teacher. In other words, the measurement of the degree of institutionalization so far was carried out based on the mentorship practice elements that indicate the institutionalization mechanisms and the extent to which this project support measure was implemented and accepted as part of the school's pedagogical approach, and not as an isolated initiative of individual

teachers. This type of analysis was conducted on the basis of data obtained through online questionnaires from mentors and principals.

The mentorship practice elements are also indicators of its institutionalization so far:

- Indicator 1: The initiator and implementers of the mentorship support program
- Indicator 2: The purpose of mentorship support – reasons for its introduction
- Indicator 3: The essence of the mentorship support program – the program's coherence with applicable legislation and educational goals of the school
- Indicator 4: Duration of the mentorship support program
- Indicator 5: Number and type of secondary schools involved in mentorship support
- Indicator 6: Number and profile of mentors
- Indicator 7: Number of training days and number of participants in accredited trainings for mentors
- Indicator 8: The mentor's role and work methods
- Indicator 9: Number of mentored students
- Indicator 10: Outcomes and results of mentorship support

According to all indicators, the mentorship practice was a continuous process of informal institutionalization of mentorship support, from the phase of recognizing problems and creating responses to those problems, to the phase of fifteen-year implementation in practice – and the final phase of regular systemic implementation and standardization that should follow.

Levels of analysis. The methodology of preparing *the Recommendations* is based on four levels of analysis: a) an analysis of the fifteen-year mentorship practice and its informal institutionalization so far; b) an analysis of the state of education of Roma secondary school students before and after the introduction of mentorship support, c) an analysis of the legal framework of institutionalization, and d) mapping of steps for completing the institutionalization process. A special section of the *Recommendations* is dedicated to an analysis of mentorship support in countries in the region and the possible institutionalization of this type of support in these countries. The analysis is based on available secondary sources in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, North Macedonia and Slovenia.

The analysis of the fifteen-year mentorship practice and its informal institutionalization so far was carried out on the basis of primary and secondary sources of data.

The primary sources of data are: a) REF mentorship databases and documentation, b) online survey of experiences, evaluations and attitudes of 373 mentors and 216 principals of the involved secondary schools, and c) five consultative meetings held in five cities of four statistical regions of Serbia.

The REF **mentorship databases** are organized by mentors' quarterly reports for: a) the first trimester, b) the first semester, c) the third trimester, d) the end of the school year, and e) a brief additional report for the end of the school year, after make-up and final grade exams in August – a total of five quarterly reports for each school year from 2014/15 until 2021/22. There are complete databases for two school years only (2018/19 and 2019/20), in which consolidated data are presented at the school year level. This makes a total of 47 databases covering an eight-year period.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the REF documentation included reports from projects in which mentorship support was implemented, reports from meetings with mentors and mentored students, reports from conducted trainings for mentors, including modular training materials within Modules 1, 2 and 3, documents of the MoESTD Working Group pertaining to competition documentation and supporting documents related to a) the selection of students of Roma nationality enrolled in secondary schools for the award of scholarships, and b) the selection of teachers or professional associates for the role of mentors of scholarship-holding students of the Roma nationality at secondary schools, etc.

The data collection was carried out on the basis of two online questionnaires created for the purpose of the survey of experiences, evaluations and attitudes of 373 mentors and 216 principals of the involved secondary schools. The number of mentors and principals was determined by reconstructing the lists of secondary schools and mentors included in the mentorship support program, based on the REF mentorship databases pertaining to the previous eight years. These databases included all mentors and schools that continued to work on new projects after the completion of the Vojvodina Project. However, as the lists of mentors and schools included in the program through the Vojvodina Project during the first seven years are not available, it is not possible to determine the exact number of either mentors or schools. By reconstructing the lists, it was established that in the previous 15 years, at least 216 secondary schools and at least 373 mentors were involved in the mentorship support program.

The online survey included all mentors and principals from the reconstructed list. The questionnaire for mentors had 37 questions, 11 of which were open-ended questions. The questionnaire for principals had 28 questions, four of which were open-ended questions. The online survey was conducted in the period from 20 February 2023 to 7 March 2023. Out of the total of 373 mentors, 263 mentors submitted completed questionnaires – upon reviewing the completed questionnaires,

it was determined that 259 questionnaires were valid, and four mentors submitted the questionnaire twice. Out of the total of 216 school principals, 150 principals submitted completed questionnaires – upon a review, it was determined that 145 questionnaires were valid, and five principals submitted the questionnaire twice. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the mentorship practice was based on data from 259 valid questionnaires obtained from mentors and 145 valid questionnaires submitted by principals.

Consultative meetings – In the period from 5 April to 23 May 2023, the REF organized five consultative meetings that were held in five cities of four statistical regions in Serbia (Belgrade, Vojvodina, Šumadija and Western Serbia, Southern and Eastern Serbia). The goals of the consultative meetings were 1) to analyze the current mentorship practice, its significance, advantages, achieved results and challenges, and 2) to identify/propose possible steps for the institutionalization of the mentorship support program – sustainability and possible challenges. The first consultative meeting was held in Niš, on 5 April 2023 (33 participants), the second in Novi Sad, on 21 April 2023 (25 participants), the third in Kragujevac, on 28 April 2023 (18 participants), the fourth in Vranje, on 9 May 2023 (14 participants), and the fifth in Belgrade, on 23 May 2023 (16 participants). The five consultative meetings held were attended by representatives of various stakeholders in individual regions – 55 mentors, 11 representatives of secondary schools (principals, teachers and an expert associate), 3 representatives of School Administrations (Niš, Leskovac and Novi Sad), 12 representatives of local self-government units, 11 representatives of the civil sector, 3 PAs, 4 leaders of the training programs for mentors, 6 representatives of the Roma community at the local and national level, including a representative of the Center for the Education of Roma and Ethnic Communities (CEREZ), a representative of the NCRNM and 1 representative of the IIEU. A total of 106 representatives of 78 institutions and organizations participated in the five meetings held, of which 73 (69%) were women and 33 (31%) were men. Each consultative meeting lasted about three hours. The agenda of the meetings was divided into three parts. In the first part of the meetings (opening), the mentorship program was presented. In the second part, a discussion was held on the current mentorship practice, its significance, advantages, achieved results and challenges. In the last, third part, the possible steps of the institutionalization of the Mentorship Support Program were considered. The moderators of the consultative meetings were Tatjana Antić Savarese (Niš, Vranje and Belgrade) and Jadranka Ivković (Novi Sad and Kragujevac).

A desk analysis of secondary sources included: a) the external evaluation and reports from the seven-year project of the Provincial Secretariat for Education, b) data and reports from international research on the position of Roma in countries in the region, c) national reports and data on the position of Roma and the progress of educational inclusion, and d) reports of the European Commission on the progress of Serbia in the EU accession process, etc. A list of sources is provided under Literature

Analysis of the situation in the education of Roma secondary school students before and after the introduction of mentorship support. The desk analysis of data related to the secondary education of Roma children before the introduction of the mentorship support program covers the period from the 2002 census to the school year 2007/08, when the project implementation of the mentorship support program at secondary schools in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina began. Besides the census, the year 2002 was chosen due to the fact that in that year the Roma received the status of a national minority.³¹ For the purpose of this analysis, data from various secondary sources were used, including the census data and data from available reports and studies from the said period. The analysis of the situation after the introduction of mentorship support is based on data from primary sources: the REF documentation (mentorship databases, reports, analyses, etc.), and secondary sources: the latest international reports on the position of Roma in Serbia, including European Commission reports, studies and analyses (of UNICEF, World Bank, UNDP, etc.) and national reports of the MoESTD on the progress of inclusive education. A list of sources is provided under Literature.

The analysis of the situation **before the introduction of the mentorship support program** refers to the period from the 2002 census, which is also the year when the Roma received the status of a national minority, until the school year 2007/08, when the implementation of the mentorship support program at secondary schools in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina began. The analysis of the situation **after the introduction of the mentorship support program** refers to a fifteen-year period – from the school year 2007/08 until August 2021/22, when the REF suspended the mentorship support program for students of the Roma nationality. For the purpose of both these analyses, secondary sources of data were used – data from the 2002 and 2011 censuses and data from available reports and studies from the both said periods, including national and international reports (European Commission reports, studies and analyses by UNICEF, the World Bank, UNDP, etc.), and national reports of the MoESTD on the progress of inclusive education.

The analysis of the **achieved outcomes and results of the mentorship support program** is based on data obtained from the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the REF documentation (mentorship databases, reports, analyses, etc.) and data from primary research – two online questionnaires for mentors and principals of secondary schools that have participated in the Mentorship Support Program for the past fifteen years.

Legal framework of the institutionalization of the mentorship support program. The desk analysis of the legal framework included a) the international legal

31 Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, Article 4 Available at: https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zastiti_prava_i_sloboda_nacionalnih_manjina.html

framework, b) the national legal framework, c) national strategic documents related to the improvement of the position of the Roma, and d) the current education reform within the REdiS 2030 Project. The analysis seeks to demonstrate the coherence of mentorship support with the existing legal framework and strategic goals, and the need to complete the institutionalization of the mentorship support program. A list of reference laws, by-laws and strategic documents is provided under Literature.

Mapping the steps to complete the institutionalization process. It should be emphasized that this is not a roadmap for the institutionalization of mentorship support, nor guidelines for its implementation. The mapping of steps is based on all data collected, including data from both online questionnaires and conclusions from the five consultative meetings. The data from both online questionnaires demonstrate a) the readiness of schools to appoint a mentor on their own initiative, b) assessments of personnel and financial capabilities of schools, c) the views of mentors and principals regarding the need to formalize and officially introduce mentorship support into the educational system of secondary schools, and c) proposals for the most important steps in the institutionalization of mentorship support as assessed by mentors and principals. In addition, it was planned to include the conclusions from the REF Mentorship Conference in this section.³² However, at the said conference, there were no conclusions on the topic of institutionalization of mentorship support.

Mentorship support in countries in the region. A review of education systems in countries of the region was carried out with the aim of determining a) whether and in which of the countries of the region there was mentorship support for Roma secondary school students, and b) whether it was institutionalized or the institutionalization process had just begun. The analysis included the education systems of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, North Macedonia and Slovenia. The desk analysis of education systems in the countries of the region was carried out on the basis of available secondary sources, and included international and national reports within individual countries, analyses, studies and official websites of competent institutions of individual countries. The selection of sources was guided by two key criteria: a) current data, not older than 2–5 years, and b) the topic – secondary education of the Roma with an emphasis on mentorship and/or similar types of support, primarily for secondary school students of Roma nationality. **A list of used sources is provided** under Literature.

Limitations in preparing the Recommendations. Limitations in preparing the *Recommendations* primarily refer to the lack of three complete and unique databases that relate to: a) the number and type of secondary schools that were included

32 On the occasion of the 15th anniversary since the beginning of the implementation of mentorship support for Roma secondary school students, the REF team organized the Mentorship Conference, which was held on 21 December 2022 in Belgrade. Available at: <https://romskinacionalnisavet.org.rs/15-godina-mentorskog-programa-ref-srbija/>; <https://romi-obrazovanjem-do-posla.org.rs/konferencija-povodom-obelezavanja-15-godina-mentorskog-programa-podrske-ucenicima-srednjih-skola-romske-nacionalnosti/>

in the mentorship support program, b) the number and profile of secondary school staff appointed as mentors in the past 15 years, and c) the number of Roma students who were mentored, who successfully completed secondary school (or left school), got a job or continued further education.

There is no unified database, nor a list of secondary schools that were included in the mentorship support program, either for the period when the program was implemented only in schools in Vojvodina, or for the period when it was implemented in schools throughout Serbia. The number of 216 secondary schools was reconstructed on the basis of REF databases organized by school years for the period from the beginning of the school year 2014/15 until the end of 2021/22. According to the data obtained from the mentors, there were schools and mentors whose participation in the program lasted half a year or only a few months and ended after the student left the school. There are no notes or data on the number of such cases.

By reconstructing the list of secondary schools that were part of the mentorship support program, it was established that 70 schools in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina were included; however, according to the data from the report on the Vojvodina Project, more than 90 secondary schools (out of a total of 121 secondary schools at that time³³) in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina were included.³⁴

There is no unified database, nor a list of secondary school personnel who have been employed as mentors³⁵ in the past 15 years – for either of the two mentioned periods. The number of 373 mentors was reconstructed on the basis of REF databases for the past eight years, of which 127 mentors were appointed at schools in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. According to the data from the report on the Vojvodina Project, a total of 110 mentors-teachers / expert associates were appointed at that time. However, according to data obtained from interviewed mentors in the past 15 years, at least 538 mentors were appointed at the identified 216 secondary schools in Serbia – 203 in the Vojvodina region, 52 in the Belgrade region, 213 in in Southern and Eastern Serbia, and 70 mentors in Šumadija and Western Serbia. During the analysis of the REF documentation and data from the online questionnaire for mentors, it could be noticed that a number of mentors changed their workplace, leaving from one school to another – however, there is no note or information about the number of such cases.

33 Today there are a total of 119 regular public secondary schools and 10 secondary schools for students with developmental difficulties and disability in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, in 40 local self-governments. Available at: http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/etext.php?ID_mat=1286

34 For more information, refer to the report on the project titled *Inclusion of Children of the Roma Nationality in Secondary Schools in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (2007–2014) Project Implementation Report – Results*. Available at: http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/dokumenti/_obrazovanje/Inkluzija/Izvestaj_inkluzija.pdf

35 When asked How many mentors are there in your school, that is, how many members of the school team in your school have worked as mentors so far? – out of 259 mentors, 248 mentors provided information, and 11 mentors answered that they did not know.

There is no unified database on the number of Roma children who were included in the mentorship support program, nor on the number of children who received mentorship support and graduated from secondary school, or left the program, for either of the two mentioned periods. According to the data obtained from the mentors, there were students who received mentorship support in Hungarian or students who were not of Roma nationality but also received mentorship support – there are no notes available, nor data on the number of students of non-Roma nationality who received mentorship support.

There are no systematized data on the types and frequency of providing certain types of support as part of mentorship, except partially in one report related to the *Analysis of Mentors Reports for the period from June 2019 to August 2020* for the needs of the REF.

An external evaluation of the implementation of mentorship support was carried out in the course of the Vojvodina Project;³⁶ however, there are no available reports on monitoring the work of mentors, and an external evaluation of mentorship support within the framework of REF projects was not done.

36 THE INCLUSION OF ROMA STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AP VOJVODINA – SER 032, Final Report and Project Evaluation Serbia, Novi Sad - Subotica, 2009. Authors: Gábrity Molnár, Irén PhD, Papp Z., Attila PhD, Márton, János. Available at: <https://mtt.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/Vojvodina-ROMA-project-2009.pdf>

ANALYSIS OF THE COLLECTED DATA

ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT
INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE
MENTORSHIP SUPPORT PROGRAM

2. Analysis of the collected data – current institutionalization

This section provides an analysis of a) the mentorship databases obtained from the REF, including the REF documentation pertaining to the mentorship support program, b) data from available reports and the external evaluation of the Vojvodina Project, and c) data obtained from the interviewed mentors (259) and secondary school principals (145) who were part of the mentorship support program. The analyzed data refer to mentorship practice in the previous 15 years.

General information

The analysis of the REF mentorship databases demonstrated that mentorship support had been implemented in at least 216 secondary schools within 105 municipalities and settlements in Serbia in the previous fifteen years. Most of the included schools are located in the territory of Southern and Eastern Serbia (76) and Vojvodina (70) – which is expected since, according to the data from the 2011 census, over 67% (out of 147,604) of Roma in Serbia live in these two regions.³⁷ (Table 2.1).

Mentorship support was provided by at least 373 mentors, mostly women. When it comes to mentoring experience, most of the mentors had one to two years (40%) and three to five years of mentoring experience (33%), while 23 mentors from Vojvodina worked in this role from 9 to 15 years – some of them are retired today. (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: An overview of the number of schools, mentors and mentoring experience by region

Statistical regions	Number of municipalities and settlements	Number of schools	Number of mentors			Mentoring experience					
			F	M	Total:	1–2 years	3–5 years	6–8 years	9–10 years	11–15 years	No data
Vojvodina	36	70	105	22	127	37	37	19	9	14	11
Belgrade	15	26	35	7	42	21	12	9	-	-	-
Šumadija and Western Serbia	22	44	48	15	63	29	28	6	-	-	-
Southern and Eastern Serbia	32	76	100	41	141	64	46	31	-	-	.
Total:	105	216	288	85	373	151	123	65	9	14	11
373											

Source: REF mentorship databases (base: 373), questionnaire for mentors (base: 259) and questionnaire for principals (base: 145)

37 Southern and Eastern Serbia 39% - 57,239 Roma; Vojvodina 29% - 42,391 Roma. Available at: <https://pod2.stat.gov.rs/ObjavljenePublikacije/Popis2011/Romi.pdf>

The data show that all types of state secondary schools in Serbia were included in the mentorship support program.

At least 216 state secondary schools had provided mentorship support for Roma students in the previous fifteen years, which is almost half (48%) of the total of 454³⁸ state secondary schools in the Republic of Serbia. The data show that mentorship support was provided by the following types of state secondary schools:

- 175 vocational secondary schools – or more than half (56%) of the total of 310 state vocational secondary schools in Serbia, according to the SORS data for 2022/23³⁹;
- 20 mixed secondary schools (vocational and high schools) – or more than a third (35%) of the total of 57⁴⁰ state mixed secondary schools;
- 11 high schools – 10% of the total of 110⁴¹ high schools;
- 4 art schools – 10% of the total of 40⁴² art schools in Serbia;
- three schools for elementary and secondary education, and three schools for the education of students with developmental difficulties and disability – 16% of the total of 38 state schools for students with developmental difficulties. (Table 2.2).

Tabela 2.2: Tipovi srednjih škola uključenih u program mentorske podrške po regionima

Secondary school type ⁴³	Vojvodina	Belgrade	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Total:
General secondary education – high schools	1	1	1	8	11
Vocational secondary schools	55	23	36	61	175
Mixed secondary schools (vocational and high schools)	9	1	5	5	20
Art schools	1	-	1	2	4
Schools for elementary and secondary education	3	-	-	-	3
Secondary schools for special education	1	1	1	-	3
Total:	70	26	44	76	216

Source: REF mentorship databases (base: 373), questionnaires for mentors (base: 259) and directors (base: 145)

38 According to data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), in the school year 2022/23, classes were held in 521 regular secondary schools (454 state and 67 private schools) and in 38 state schools/classes for students with developmental disabilities. Available at: <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/vesti/statisticalrelease/?p=13952&a=11&s=1103>

39 SORS data for 2022/23. Available at: <https://data.stat.gov.rs/Home/Result/11030104?languageCode=sr-Cyrl>

40 Ibid

41 Ibid

42 Ibid

43 Available at: <https://www.srbija.gov.rs/tekst/329758/srednje-obrazovanje.php>

Out of the total of 216 schools, 42 schools are in the dual education system, i.e. a quarter (25%) of the total of 165⁴⁴ schools included in the dual education system.⁴⁵ Each of these 42 schools has one or more dual education profiles – a total of 22 various dual profiles, i.e. 31% of the total of 72⁴⁶ currently registered profiles created in accordance with the needs of the economy and the labor market. (Table 2.3.)

Table 2.3: Number and types of secondary schools in the dual education system by region

Statistical regions	Vocational secondary schools	Mixed secondary schools	Number of education profiles	
Vojvodina	14	-	10	22 various profiles
Belgrade	5	-	6	
Šumadija and Western Serbia	6	1	7	
Southern and Eastern Serbia	15	1	19	
Total:	40	2	42	

Source: REF mentorship databases (base: 373) and questionnaire for principals (base: 145)

The listed 22 dual education profiles are from the domain of seven areas of work: 1) electrical engineering, 2) geodesy and construction, 3) mechanical engineering and metal processing, 4) agriculture, food production and processing, 5) forestry and wood processing, 6) textile and leather industry, and 7) trade, catering and tourism.

The number of included vocational secondary schools, including schools that are in the dual education system, testifies that Roma secondary school students most often choose schools after which they have the opportunity to find employment as soon as possible.

Data from the *Analysis of Mentors Reports for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20*, conducted by the REF in the autumn of 2020, show that a large number of mentored students choose their future occupations from among 15 areas⁴⁷ of vocational secondary education. The most popular occupations among mentored female students are, as stated in the *Analysis of Mentors Reports*, those related to *trade, catering and tourism, agriculture and food production, personal services and economics, law and administration*, while mentored male students primarily choose occupations from the areas of: *mechanical engineering and metalworking, transportation, agriculture and food production and processing, and electrical engineering*. Few mentored students choose profiles related to *culture, art and public relations, geodesy and construction, forestry and wood processing*. (Figure 2.1)

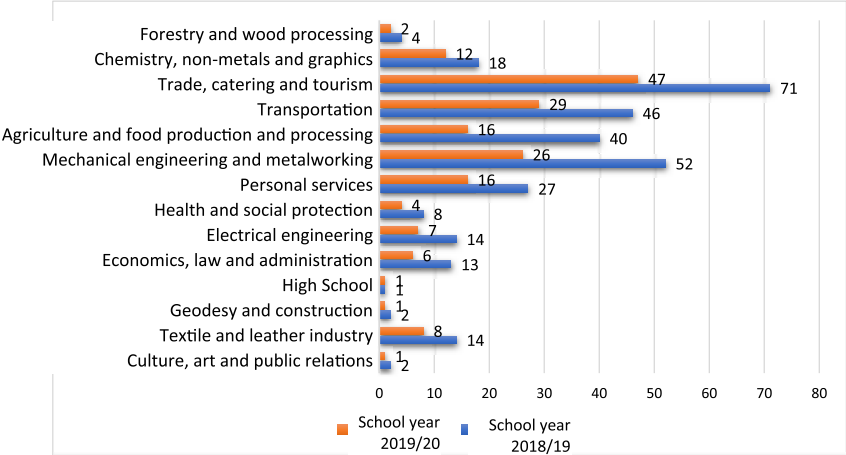
44 Available at: <https://dualnoobrazovanje.rs/?pismo=lat>

45 Dual education is part of the formal education system and represents a model in which theoretical knowledge is acquired at school, while practical knowledge and skills are acquired with the employer, in a real working environment. Available at: <https://dualnoobrazovanje.rs/o-dualnomobrazovanju/>

46 Available at: <https://dualnoobrazovanje.rs/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Obrazovni-profil-2023-2024-2.pdf>

47 Available at: <https://www.obrazovanje.rs/sr-lat/obrazovni-sistem/srednje-obrazovanje>

Figure 2.1: Areas of education chosen by students in the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20

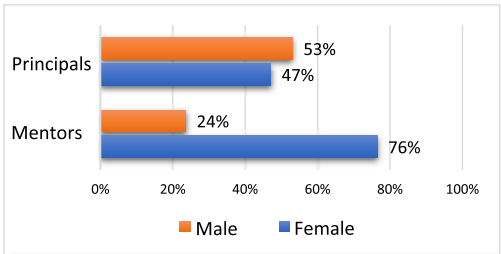


Source: REF's documentation – Analysis of Mentors Reports for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20

Implementers of mentorship support

The implementers of mentorship support were mentors and schools, i.e. school teams, as (*school-based*) mentorship support took place within the school, and the support by the entire school team and the principal was necessary for the effective work of mentors.

Figure 2.2: Distribution of mentors and principals by gender



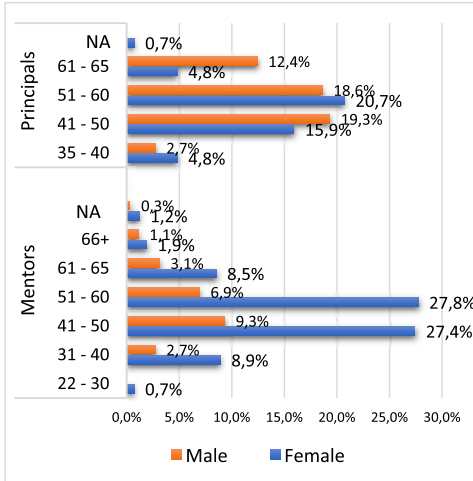
Source: Questionnaires for mentors (base: 259) and principals (base: 145)

Data show that the gender structure of principals is almost equal – 53% males and 47% females.

An analysis of the gender structure shows that among the mentors there are more than two thirds of females (76%) and slightly less than one quarter of males (24%).

The age structure of mentors and principals differs primarily in the age range – there are no principals younger than 35, nor older than 65, while the youngest mentor is 22 years old, and the oldest is 71 years old – he has been retired for several years and has not worked as a mentor since then.

Figure 2.3: Age of mentors and principals



Source: Questionnaires for mentors (base: 259) and principals (base: 145)

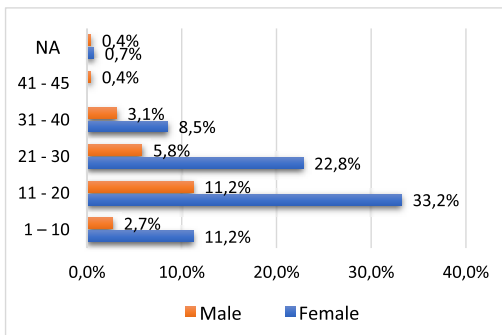
Data on the age of mentors show that some of the mentors are already retired (3%) or about to retire (11.6%), of which there are more females (8.5%) than males (3.1%). (Figure 2.3)

In the age structure of principals, a majority are between 41 and 60 years old, almost equally for both sexes. Seven female principals (4.8%) and 18 male principals (12.4%), aged 61 to 65 (17.2%), are currently in the pre-retirement phase. (Figure 2.3)

More than half of the mentors, the vast majority of whom are women, are aged between 41 and 60

(55.2%) and today actively participate in mentorship support and represent a significant source of knowledge and experiential lessons from mentorship. There are only 32 (12.3%) mentors aged 22 to 40 – mentors aged 22–30 (2 female mentors) and mentors aged 31–40 (23 female and 7 male mentors). These are the youngest mentors, not only in terms of age, but also in terms of experience in the mentoring role, as they joined the mentorship program in the past few years (Figure 2.3). The average age of mentors is 50, and that of principals is 49.

Figure 2.4: Years of employment at school - mentors by gender

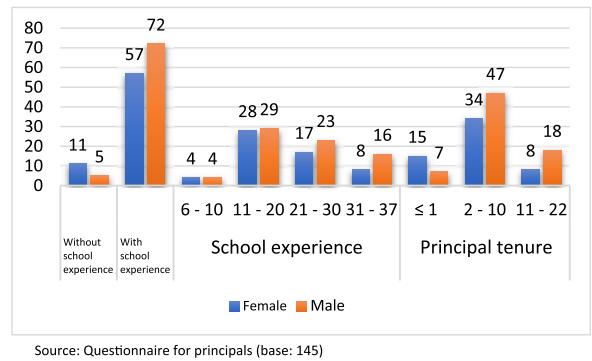


Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259)

Data on the work and school experience of mentor role holders show that more than half of female mentors (56%) and 17% of male mentors have been employed with the same school for the past 11–30 years. One in seven mentors (13.9%) has a school experience of one to ten years (29 women and 7 men), and one in eight mentors (12%) states that they have or had a work experience of 31 to

45 years (22 females and 9 males) – some of these mentors have been retired for several years. (Figure 2.4)

Figure 2.5: Years of employment at school - principals by gender



Out of a total of 145 principals who have submitted the questionnaire, 89% of them have school experience, and 11% of principals do not have a single working day at school.

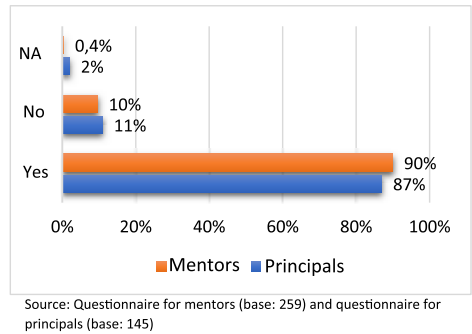
The data show that the length of school experience is not crucial for appointing a school team

member to the position of principal – among the principals there are those with six to ten years of school experience (2.7% of females and the same percentage of males) and principals with 31–37 years of school experience (11% of males and 5.5% of females).

The longest tenure of principals is 2–10 years for almost a third of male principals (32.4%). 10% of female principals and 4.8% of male principals have the shortest tenure, lasting from one or a few months to a year – this group of 22 principals did not have the opportunity to gain experience related to mentorship support at school. (Figure 2.5)

An average mentor’s length of service at school is 19.7 years, an average principal’s length of service at school is 20 years, while an average principal’s length of service at the position of principal is 7 years.

Figure 2.6: Mentorship support is exclusively a project activity



Mentorship support in all involved schools has been implemented so far exclusively as a project activity, as confirmed by 90% of mentors and 87% of principals. (Figure 2.6)

A small number of mentors (10%), who gave a negative response, state that *they always work with students and that activities that could be classified as mentorship support are*

present among many teachers in the school who are not official mentors. Support for students of the Roma population is present, active and sincere among teachers (mentor, 43 years of age, English teacher, Niš).

Recognizing the good sides of the concept of mentorship, I started to work with a few more students in agreement with the homeroom teachers and parents. First, I worked with Roma students who had not managed to get a scholarship, as well as with students who came from very poor families. To date, I have mentored both Roma students and poor students, as well as individual students as per IEPs (mentor, 56 years of age, expert associate - pedagogue, Paraćin).

At school, there has always been a large number of students of the Roma national minority, due to the specifics of the families they come from, often living in poor material conditions and not always having a positive attitude towards continuing education. The school and teachers have provided support for the students through various activities, from financial aid to help in learning (mentor, 42 years of age, expert associate - psychologist, Šabac).

We carry out many activities aimed at Roma integration, through the school's Development Plan, individual support plan or dropout prevention, if necessary (mentor, expert associate - pedagogue, 46 years of age, Kraljevo).

We help students with free transportation (mentor, 54 years of age, teacher of the economic group of subjects, Stara Pazova).

As part of the advisory work of the PP department, development and educational workshops are held at the level of a class and a group, which comprises 5 to 10 students who achieve lower academic results and two excellent students. Students of Roma nationality were also included in this manner. I have never worked individually with students so as not to stigmatize them. Seeing a psychologist, as opposed to a pedagogue, is still considered undesirable (as if something is wrong with them...). At 45-minute workshops, they notice how similar or different they are from their peers in their attitudes, way of thinking, experiencing and expressing emotions, how to successfully organize a day, which people's opinions they should consider and respect as constructive criticism, and whose opinions they should not burden themselves with, adopt mind maps as a learning technique, etc. (mentor, 65 years of age, expert associate - psychologist, Jagodina).

Years before the project activities, we had been involved in providing support to students of the Roma population. Providing support was in the form of visiting families, providing support for families in obtaining all kinds of assistance, helping students through additional support in mastering teaching units, participating in various competitions, as well as helping them to find jobs, etc. (mentor, 62 years of age, teacher of practical classes, Kraljevo).

A mentor is appointed for students of final grades in order to prepare them for graduation and final exams (mentor, 57 years of age, expert associate - pedagogue, Subotica).

During the project as such, but my and the team's support still lasts for students who need support (mentor, 45 years of age, history and Latin language teacher, Koceljewa).

Students who, for various reasons, made less progress or had specific problems in their family environment (economic, educational, social) were helped by providing mentorship and support (mentor, 52 years of age, expert associate - psychologist, Pančevo).

As the school with the largest number of Roma students, bearing in mind the benefits of this project activity for students and families, we have continued with mentorship support for students, although the mentors have not been financially or otherwise supported since then (mentor, 44 years of age, expert associate - pedagogue, Kruševac).

There were attempts to organize mentorship support through some other projects, but they did not take off (mentor, 63 years of age, expert associate - psychologist, Niš).

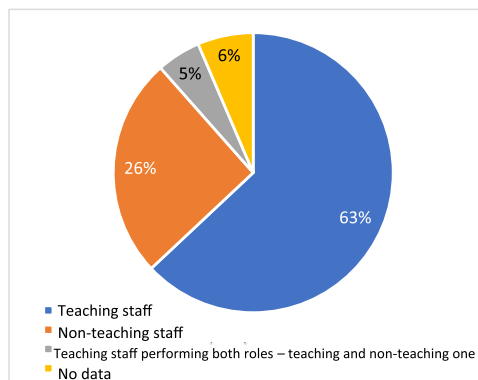
Mentor profile

The mentor profile has been created partly on the basis of the REF mentorship databases, and partly on the basis of data obtained through the online questionnaire for mentors.⁴⁸

An average mentor is a member of the school team of a vocational secondary school, female, 50 years old on average, has been working at school for almost 20 years (19.7), and has been in the role of mentor for an average of 4 years. The youngest mentor is 22, and the oldest is 71 years old – and has been retired for several years.

⁴⁸ Out of the total of 373 mentors, for 24 there is no information available about their regular job at the school, either in the mentorship databases, or in the questionnaire for mentors.

Figure 2.7: Regular position of mentors



Source: REF mentorship databases (base: 373) and data obtained from mentors (base: 259)

Mentors are school team members – more than half of mentors are teaching staff (63%), a quarter of them are non-teaching staff (26%), and 5% of mentors, in addition to the mentoring role, perform teaching and non-teaching tasks at the same time. For 6% of mentors, there is no available data on their regular job. (Figure 2.7)

The teaching staff comprises 235 teachers of various subjects – e.g. Serbian language and literature,

English language and literature, mathematics, computer and information science, biology and ecology, teachers of economic subjects, electrical engineering subjects, trade and textile subjects, transportation subjects, food subjects, agricultural subjects, mechanical engineering subjects, teachers of psychology, sociology and civic education, constitution and citizens' rights, etc.

The non-teaching staff includes: four principals, three assistant principals, 79 expert associates (34 psychologists, 43 pedagogues, two social workers), two school secretaries, four librarians, two organizers of practical classes, one administrative-technical worker, and one adult education coordinator – a total of 96 non-teaching staff mentors.

The school staff that, in addition to the mentoring role, simultaneously perform teaching and non-teaching roles, includes the following examples: a principal and piano teacher; an assistant principal and teacher of Serbian language and literature; an assistant principal and teacher of technological subjects; a librarian and organizer of practical classes; a librarian, teacher of civic education and Russian language teacher; three expert associates - psychologists and psychology teachers; three expert associates - pedagogues and civic education teachers; an expert associate - psychologist, psychology teacher and librarian; a Serbian language and literature teacher and librarian; and a teacher of sociology and constitution and citizens' rights and librarian – a total of 19 mentors in this category.

The total number of school team members who have worked as mentors within a single school varies from one school year to another, and primarily depends on the number of enrolled Roma students. The analysis of the REF mentorship databases shows that more than half of the schools (59%) have had one appointed mentor, one quarter of the schools (25%) have had two mentors each, while one school

(Catering and Tourism School, Belgrade) has had six appointed mentors, and another a total of 7 (Technical School, Pirot). (Table 2.4)

Table 2.4: Number of appointed mentors by school

Statistical regions	Number of appointed mentors by school:							Total number of schools
	1 mentor	2 mentors	3 mentors	4 mentors	5 mentors	6 mentors	7 mentors	
Vojvodina	39	21	6	2	2	-	-	70
Belgrade	16	7	2	-	-	1	-	26
Šumadija and Western Serbia	30	9	5	-	-	-	-	44
Southern and Eastern Serbia	42	17	9	4	3	-	1	76
Total:	127	54	22	6	5	1	1	216

Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259)

According to data obtained from 248 mentors in the past 15 years, a total of 538 mentors were appointed at 216 secondary schools in Serbia: 203 in Vojvodina, 52 in Belgrade, 213 in Southern and Eastern Serbia, and 70 mentors in Šumadija and Western Serbia.

An individual mentor was responsible for an average of five students in one school year. The fee for the work of mentors in the Vojvodina Project amounted to about RSD 3,100 gross per student a month, during ten months of a school year, while during the remaining eight years, the fee for the work of mentors amounted to RSD 2,500 gross per student a month, also during the school year.

Mentor competencies – mentor training

Mentors are mainly secondary school teachers and have been selected for this role primarily having in mind the standard of competencies for the teaching profession that are also necessary for performing the role of a mentor. The teacher in the role of a mentor has an opportunity, through individualized work with the student, to further improve their teaching competencies, particularly those related to teaching and learning (C2), competencies for supporting the student's personality development (C3), and communication and cooperation competencies (C4). These competencies become even more pronounced when teachers find themselves in the role of mentors, and the modular training sessions for mentors have been designed and developed in such a way that they build the mentoring role by relying on already developed teacher competencies.

The difference between the teaching and mentoring roles is only that the mentoring role greatly emphasizes the significance and encourages the application of these three groups of teaching competencies in relation to the competencies for the teaching area, subject and teaching methodology (C1).

Competencies and skills that are, in addition to the listed teaching competencies, essential for developing an effective mentorship process are: a) finding out the needs and concerns of students – assessing the needs of students and responding to those needs, b) understanding and empathy, c) motivating, guiding and providing feedback, d) joint problem solving, e) mutual (mentor-student) fairness, consistency, persistence, patience and correctness, f) advisory and educational work, g) communication skills, h) good organization, i) humanity and sincere concern for the well-being of students, etc.

During the first seven years (2007/08 – 2013/14), the team of the Provincial Secretariat organized trainings for mentors. The report on the Vojvodina project reads that additional training for mentors was organized in the form of seminars and that attendance at those seminars was mandatory for teacher-mentors. In this period, a total of eight seminars were held in Novi Sad and other centers in Vojvodina. The program *Mentoring Work with Students of Roma Nationality in Secondary Schools* (introductory training) received a status of a mandatory professional development program for teachers, expert associates and school principals, and was included in the list of mandatory programs.⁴⁹

The REF team has designed a Mentor Training Program that includes 3 modules: Module 1 - *Introduction to Mentorship*, Module 2 - *Mentorship Practice* and Module 3 - *Mentorship Support to Secondary School Roma Students for Acquiring 21st Century Competencies*. The modules are mutually connected in terms of the contents and processes. All the three modules have been accredited as programs of public interest by the Minister of Education, Science and Technological Development.⁵⁰ These modular trainings additionally develop teacher competencies that are essential for the successful performance of the role of a mentor, and relate to supporting the development of the student's personality (C3), teaching and learning competencies (C2) and communication and cooperation competencies (C4).

Module 1 – Introduction to the Role of a Mentor, deals with topics regarding the role of a mentor, the mentorship principles, necessary competencies, the mentorship cycle, communication with the student and other actors, developing motivation for learning, the student's GROWTH model and the student's psychological-pedagogical

49 Available at: http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/dokumenti/_obrazovanje/Inkluzija/Izvestaj_inkluzija.pdf

50 Modules 1 and 2 by decisions number 151-00-00001/1/2015-06 and number 151-00-00001/2015-06, dated 05/03/2015, and Module 3 by decision number 611-00-00828/2020-03, pursuant to Article 7, Paragraph 3 of the Rulebook on Continuous Professional Development and Career Promotion of School Teachers, Preschool Teachers and Expert Associates ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 72/09, 52/11 and 55/13, 81/2017, 48/2018).

profile. **Module 2 – Mentorship Practice** is a logical continuation of Module 1 and deals with topics related to intercultural education, monitoring of students' progress through creating profiles, planning to provide specific assistance and support for students, self-regulated learning, peer support, effective mentorship support for students. **Module 3 – Mentorship Support to Secondary School Roma Students for Acquiring 21st Century Competencies**, deals with topics related to encouraging the development of key competencies in scholarship-holding students, strengthening the students' self-confidence, encouraging the development of entrepreneurship, encouraging the development of life skills, assessment aimed at developing students' competencies, mentorship support in the professional guidance of students, inclusion of scholarship holders in the world of work, parts I and II, and a topic that was added during the COVID-19 pandemic – grading under distance learning conditions, where the focus of this topic was the exchange of experiences among participants in the training on grading under distance learning conditions during the pandemic.

The REF team started organizing mentor training sessions in May 2015, when the first two-day training for mentors was held as part of Module 1. From then until the end of August 2022, when the last two-day training was held as part of Module 3, the team of REF leaders realized a total of 49 days of training, of which 31 days of training for mentors in Serbia and 18 days of training for mentors and tutors in the region. A total of 1021 participants took part in the training, of whom 711 participants were from Serbia and 310 participants were from countries in the region – Module 1: a total of 508 participants, of whom 289 participants were from Serbia and 219 from the region, Module 2: a total of 265 participants, of whom 174 were from Serbia and 91 were from the region, and Module 3: a total of 248 participants from Serbia. (Table 2.5) A detailed overview of all the REF training sessions is provided in Appendix 3.

A total of 28 training sessions were realized for all the three Modules – for Module 1 (11 training sessions): 8 two-day and 4 one-day training sessions; for Module 2 (9 training sessions): 3 two-day and 6 one-day training sessions; and for Module 3: eight two-day training sessions. (Appendix 3)

Table 2.5: Number of days of mentor training sessions held and number of training participants for Module 1, Module 2 and Module 3 in Serbia and the region

	Number of training days for:			Total number of training days:	Number of participants:
	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3		
Serbia	9	6	16	31	711
Kosovo and Metohia*	5	--	--	5	70
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2	2	--	4	41

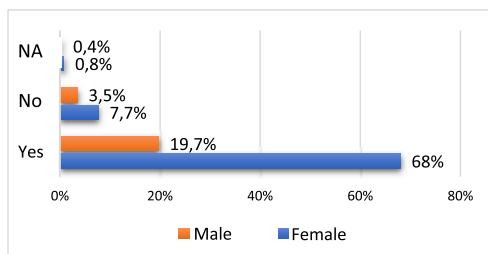
51 Two rounds of two-day training for Module 1 were held from 8 to 11 January 2017 in Sofia for two groups of participants (47 and 53) out of a total of 107 secondary school teachers appointed as future tutors (100) and mentors (7).

Bulgaria ⁵¹	4	--	--	4	107
Montenegro	1	2	--	3	51
Albania	--	2	--	2	41
Total days of training:	21	12	16	49	--
Total participants:	508	265	248	--	1021

Source: REF documentation

*Without prejudice to any views of the status and in accordance with Resolution 1244 and the opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

Figure 2.8: Participation of mentors in REF training sessions - distribution by gender

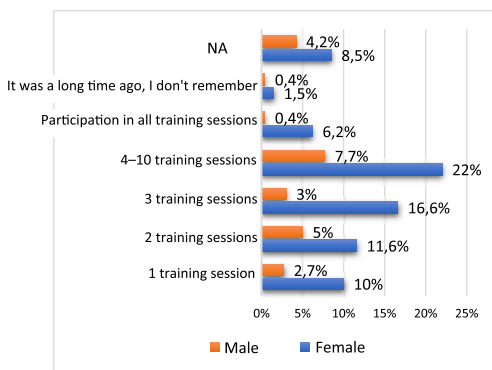


Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259)

A total of 227 surveyed mentors participated in the REF training sessions, 68% women and 19.7% men. Among only 29 mentors who did not participate in the training, there were more females (7.7%) than males (3.5%). (Figure 2.8) The number of training sessions attended by individual mentors primarily depends on the duration of

mentorship. Mentors whose mentoring tenure lasted from one to two years (151 mentors out of a total of 373) could participate in one or at most two training sessions. On the other hand, mentors whose mentoring tenure lasted from three to five years (123 mentors out of 373) or from six to 15 years (88 mentors out of 373) had the opportunity to participate in a greater number of training sessions, i.e. all training sessions organized by the REF team. The number of training sessions attended by individual mentors increases with the duration of their mentorship.

Figure 2.9: Number of training sessions attended by mentors – by gender



Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259)

Data show that 12.7% of mentors participated in one training session, 16.6% participated in two training sessions, and 19.6% participated in three training sessions. Among these 128 mentors who participated in one, two or three training sessions, there were only 28 males. (Figure 2.9)

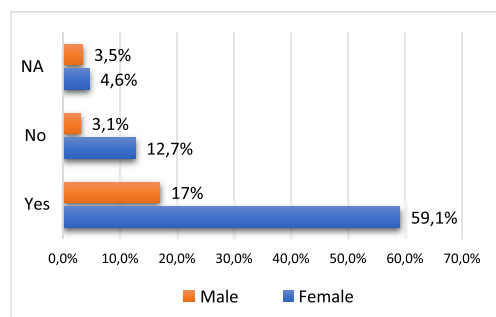
A total of 93 mentors participated in 4 to 10 training sessions (76 or 29.7%) or all training sessions (17 or 6.6%). Some mentors also

classified mentorship meetings as training sessions, and this is discussed in more detail in Appendix 2.1.

Five mentors only (1.9%) state that they do not remember how many training sessions they participated in - these are mostly mentors who only participated in seminars/training sessions organized as part of the Vojvodina Project and are now retired. (Figure 2.9)

Skills and knowledge acquired during the REF training sessions

Figure 2.10: Were the REF training sessions an opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge?



Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259)

When asked whether they had the opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge during the training sessions organized by the REF team, every sixth mentor (15.8%) believed that they did not, while more than two thirds of mentors (76.1%) believed that they did have the opportunity. (Figure 2.10)

The responses of mentors⁵² who stated that they had the opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge during the REF training sessions were grouped into 18 categories. This group of mentors provided multiple examples of the skills and knowledge they had acquired during the training sessions. (Table 2.6)

The multiple responses from mentors were grouped into 18 thematic categories. (Table 2.6) Among the most common skills and knowledge, the mentors mention the following: a) communication skills – active listening and successful communication techniques, b) better understanding of sensitive/marginalized groups, c) new approach to students – cooperation, trust and respect, d) mentoring role and the mentor's way of working, e) career guidance, f) individualization of relationships and learning processes, g) ensuring better academic achievements of students, h) self-confidence of students, etc. (Table 2.6 and Appendix 5) A more detailed insight into the content of these categories is provided in Appendix 5.

What needs to be underlined is the knowledge related to *a better understanding of the Roma tradition, history, culture and customs*, which are also often mentioned, particularly *the School of Romology, which has contributed to a better*

⁵² Out of a total of 197 mentors who reported that during the mentorship support training sessions they had the opportunity to acquire new skills and knowledge, 179 mentors provided multiple examples of the acquired skills and knowledge – 140 women and 39 men.

understanding of the culture and tradition of the Roma community – since this topic was covered during the seminars/training sessions as part of the Vojvodina Project.

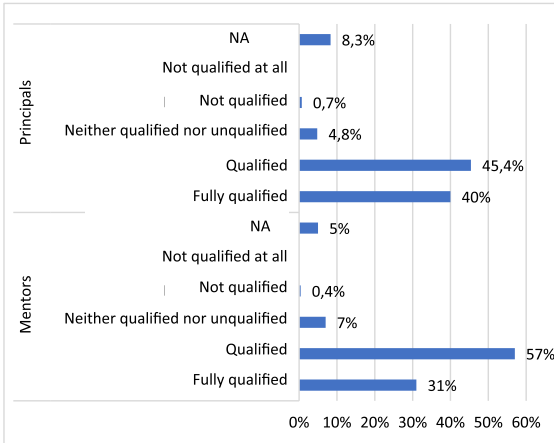
Table 2.6: Skills and knowledge acquired during the REF training sessions

Skills and knowledge acquired during the REF training sessions – multiple responses:	Mentors:
Communication skills – active listening and successful communication techniques	34
Better understanding of sensitive/marginalized groups	22
New approach to students – cooperation, trust and respect	21
Better understanding of the Roma tradition, history, culture and customs - <i>the School of Romology has contributed to a better understanding of the culture and tradition of the Roma community</i>	20
Exchange of experience – experience of other mentors	18
Mentor's role and work methods	16
Career guidance	13
Individualization of relationships and learning processes	13
Ensuring better achievements of students	12
Crisis management skills – solving problems and conflict situations	10
Applying the acquired skills to all other students	10
Better understanding of students of that age	9
Pedagogical profile of students	9
Better organization of work	7
Dropout reduction techniques	6
Improving mentor competencies	4
Cooperation with colleagues at school and evaluation of one's own work	4
Total:	238

Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259)

A number of mentors indicated the significance of training in the context of *exchanging experiences* among mentors – emphasizing the importance of experiences from practical application and examples of good practice. *What meant the most to me at the training sessions was the exchange of experiences with my colleagues, due to which I have a larger set of options for dealing with various situations* (mentor, expert associate - psychologist, 43 years of age, Belgrade). (Appendix 5)

Figure 2.11: Ability to work as a mentor after the training sessions



Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259) and questionnaire for principals (base: 145)

After the training sessions, mentors are (*fully*) capable of performing the mentor role, as assessed by a vast majority of both mentors (88%) and principals (85.4%). (Figure 2.11)

7% of mentors and 4.8% of principals have an undecided attitude, while 0.4% of mentors and 0.7% of principals state that they are *not qualified*.

Suggested topics for future mentor training

Suggestions of topics to be included in future training sessions were given by 185 mentors (71%), 145 females and 40 males.

The suggested topics were structured within 17 thematic categories. A qualitative analysis of the suggested topics shows that mentors are guided by the experiences gained during mentorship and the need to proactively address specific problems they face while mentoring students, but also problems that the mentored students encounter in their everyday lives. (Table 2.7)

The largest number of suggestions for future training sessions are grouped into five thematic categories: 1) *Roles and tasks of mentors*, 2) *Cooperation with student's parents and families*, 3) *Motivation of students*, 4) *Prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination*, and 5) *History, tradition, culture and customs of the Roma*. Of these five topics, the first four were separately and in different ways dealt with in the REF modular training sessions, but it is clearly necessary to strengthen them further, while the fifth topic was not dealt with. In addition to these, mentors are of the opinion that topics related to *Legal and social protection of children* and *Involvement of the local community* should be included in the future training of mentors. (Table 2.7 and Appendix 6)

The topics suggested within the category *Roles and tasks of mentors* (49 mentors) refer to the following: *the frequency and types of support, precisely stated*

obligations and methods of monitoring students, organization of time in providing support, setting personal goals, suggestions for solving specific situations, support for students with problems in behavior, involvement of students in extracurricular activities, work with children with physical impairments (hearing impairment), which are among the mentored students, orientation to results, social topics, access to new technologies, gender equality, support for continuing education, topics related to student enrollment in universities, greater support for continuing education, familiarization with affirmative measures for greater access to education, the need to hear examples of good practice from Serbia and the region, etc. A more detailed insight into the content of these categories is provided in Appendix 6.

Table 2.7: Suggested topics for future mentor training

Suggested topics for future mentor training – multiple responses:	Mentors:
Roles and tasks of mentors	49
Cooperation with parents, family	31
History, tradition, culture and customs of the Roma	19
Motivation of students	19
Prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination	16
Strengthening self-confidence of students	14
Career guidance	13
Communication skills	11
Socialization of students	11
Learning techniques	10
Proposals of activities to improve the position of Roma secondary school students	10
Involvement of the local community	7
Inclusive education	6
Legal and social protection of children	5
Implementation of outcome-oriented teaching, grading	4
Students' dropout prevention – dropout prevention measures	3
Exchange of mentors' experience	2
Total:	230

Source: Questionnaires for mentors (base: 259)

The second most common are topics related to the category *Cooperation with students' parents and families* (31 mentors), which includes topics such as: *work with the family, the relationship of the family and student with the education system, the influence of the family on the continuation of education, education of students' parents for better cooperation, education on the subject of early marriages, the place of women in the Roma culture, prevention of early marriages, starting a family, minor pregnancies, early entering into a marriage union – how to oppose tradition, etc.*

The third and fourth places, when it comes to the number of topics suggested for future training sessions, are shared by two categories: a) *Motivation of students* (19 mentors) and b) *Prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination* (16 mentors).

The category *Motivation of students* includes topics related to various types of student motivation – from *the student motivation that is increasingly difficult to achieve today, motivation for learning and work, for attending classes, for advancement, motivation for further education, to motivation for the involvement of students of the Roma population in programs of developmental and educational workshops, motivation for a better quality of life, etc.*

The suggestions from this category may also indicate that some of the mentors are not familiar with the living conditions of Roma secondary school students – what some of the mentors most often interpret as a lack of motivation can often be the need to devote time to daily coping for survival, both one's own and that of one's family, rather than to school and learning. All the more so because it is not to be expected that there is a person who is not motivated to have *a better quality of life*. At the same time, the issue of the alleged lack of *motivation for the inclusion of students of the Roma population in the developmental-educational workshop programs* can also indicate the different life priorities of these secondary school students, but also a possible feeling of being stigmatized and not accepted by students from the general population.

Within the category *Prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination*, the following topics were proposed – *discrimination in education and employment, discrimination by employers, prejudices and what to do with them, gender stereotypes, creating equal conditions for everyone in education and employment, affirmation of cultural differences, tolerance, rights of citizens, social justice, support systems, sensitization for work with vulnerable groups of young people, etc.*

The fifth category, with the highest number of proposals (19 mentors), covers issues related to a better understanding of *History, tradition, culture and customs of the Roma*, and includes the following topics: *better understanding of the Roma way of life, impact on the education of students, health, life in the Roma community, getting to know the basic characteristics of family relationships, children's development in a non-stimulating environment, understanding the culture of the people, etc.* Although only 19 mentors gave their suggestions for this category, the qualitative analysis shows that this topic is important for all mentors – it contributes to a better understanding of the students for whom they provide mentorship support, and therefore to the effectiveness of the mentoring work.

The category related to *Proposals of activities to improve the position of secondary school students and families of the Roma nationality* (10 mentors) includes: a) proposals for the introduction of the Romani language in schools, b) workshops to be organized with parents and workshop training sessions for parents, c) intercultural exchange of students, d) inclusion of students in developmental-educational workshop programs, and d) organizing scientific workshops to be attended by students and mentors. (Appendix 6)

A qualitative analysis of the proposed topics suggests that future training sessions of mentors should be expanded and elaborated with a lot of specific/practical examples, particularly in terms of:

- forms and organization of time in providing support, setting personal goals, proposals/examples for solving specific situations, supporting students with behavioral problems, etc.;
- the role of mentors in the context of everyday problems of secondary school students and a more specific description of the mentor's job, including examples of good practice of mentorship support;
- mentorship methods guided by outcomes and results of mentorship support;
- monitoring the effectiveness of mentors' work and their achievements;
- mentors' familiarity with developed mentoring tools related to the dynamics, planning and monitoring of mentored students.

The mentor's work methods – types of mentorship support

The mentor's work methods and types of mentorship support are listed on the basis of three reports from the REF documentation – 1) *An Overview of the Scholarship Program from 2007 to 2013* (hereinafter referred to as: *the Program Overview 2013*)⁵³, prepared by the Vojvodina Project team, 2) *Report on the Analysis of Mentor Training Needs* (hereinafter referred to as: *the Needs Analysis Report 2014*)⁵⁴, prepared as part of the TARI Project, 2014, and 3) *Analysis of Mentors Reports for the School Years 2018/19 and 2019/20* (hereinafter referred to as: *the Analysis of Mentors Reports*)⁵⁵, conducted by the REF team at the end of 2020.

All the three reports, among other things, deal with the data pertaining to the way mentors work with students and the cooperation of mentors with their colleagues

53 *Inclusion of Roma Pupils in Secondary Schools in AP Vojvodina - Overview of the Scholarship Program from 2007 to 2013*, (Aleksandrović, M, Kriš Piger, J, Dimitrov, D, Jovanović, A, Milivojević, Z, December 2013), Source: REF documentation

54 *Report on the Analysis of Mentor Training Needs*, author: Aleksandra Pejatović, Belgrade, September 2014. The analysis was carried out as part of the TARI Project – "Technical Support to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development in Establishing and Strengthening the Dropout Prevention Program for Roma Secondary School Students", a sub-component of the Project „Technical Assistance for Roma Inclusion” – IPA 2012 Social Development Program. Source: REF documentation.

55 During these two school years, the REF *Scholarship and Mentorship Support Program* was implemented in 155 municipalities: 103 municipalities in the school year 2018/19 and 52 municipalities in the school year 2019/20. The program included 113 secondary schools and 134 mentors in 2018/19, and 78 secondary schools and 92 mentors in 2019/20. During these two school years, the REF provided scholarships along with mentorship support for 312 students in the school year 2018/19, and 176 students in the school year 2019/20. The analysis is based on a total of 695 mentor reports (340 reports from the school year 2018/19 and 355 from the school year 2019/20) submitted in the period from June 2019 to August 2020. The reports contain data for two school years – the end of the school year 2018/19 and the school year 2019/20. Source: REF documentation - *Analysis of Mentors Reports for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20*.

from the school team and students' parents. A separate section is dedicated to the types of mentorship support that mentors provide for students based on the data from the *2014 Needs Analysis Report and the Analysis of Mentors Reports*.⁵⁶

The mentor's work methods. The *2013 Program Overview* reads that mentors meet with students who have noticeable problems with learning, school performance, attending classes, etc., two to eight times a month on average, lasting from five minutes to 2–3 hours. With students who achieve excellent results (with a remark of some mentors that they do not have such students) mentors meet two to eight times a month on average, lasting from five to 45 minutes. In addition to individual work (meeting) with students, mentors, during the same time interval, meet with students' parents in the school, ranging from "only at the end of a trimester" to 4 times (although contacts are predominantly made by phone); visit students at home, ranging from once a month to the point where they do not practice such visits at all; conduct interviews with students' homeroom teachers two to three, i.e. up to eight times a month; meet with some of the subject teachers one to six times; hold meetings with several participants at the same time at least once a year, and at most four times a month.

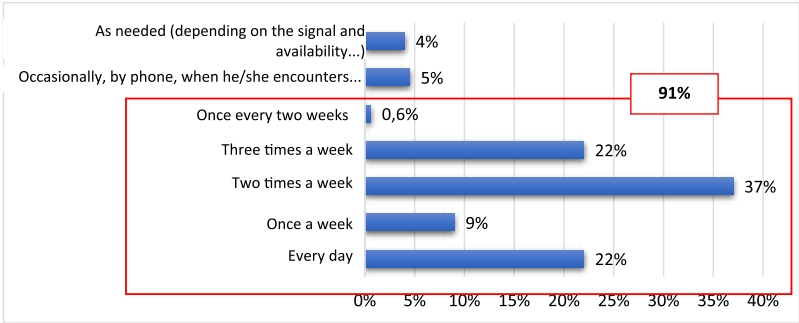
The Analysis of Mentors Reports reads that out of a total of 134 mentors appointed during 2018/19, the vast majority report that they have good cooperation with homeroom teachers (95%) and subject teachers (97%) – in the descriptive comments they say that they receive significant support from most members of the school team, expert services and the school principal. Nine mentors state that they have satisfactory cooperation with homeroom teachers (5%), and six with subject teachers (3%).

Assessing the cooperation with students' parents, 89% of mentors report that they have good cooperation, 9% say that parents cooperate to some extent, and 2% of mentors say that parents do not cooperate at all. According to the descriptive comments, the cooperation of mentors with parents is most often associated with absenteeism and poor grades of mentored students.

The cooperation between mentors and students is assessed as good: 97% of students cooperate, four percent to some extent, and only one percent do not cooperate at all; 86% of students often attend mentor-student meetings, 10% of them attend the meetings periodically, and 4% of students rarely. As for the frequency of communication with mentored students, 91% of mentors report that they have regular communication with students: most often twice a week (37%), daily (22%), three times a week (22%), once a week (9%) or once in two weeks (0.6%), and 9% report that they communicate with students occasionally or as needed. (Figure 2.12)

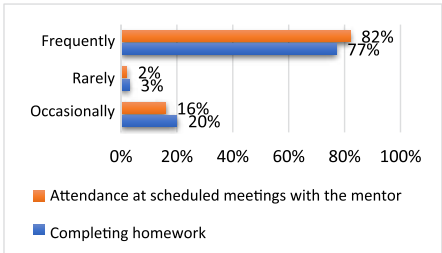
⁵⁶ Brief extracts from this Analysis of Mentors Reports for the school year 2018/19 are provided here for illustrative purposes only, as in the second semester of the school year 2019/20 mentors switched to online work due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2.12: Frequency of mentors’ communication with students



Source: REF documentation – *Analysis of Mentors Reports* for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20

Figure 2.13: Responsibility of mentored students



Source: REF documentation – *Analysis of Mentors Reports* for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20

The *Analysis of Mentors Reports* reads that the issue of responsibility can be a challenge for adolescents – however, judging by the data from mentors' reports, the vast majority of mentored students (82%) showed responsibility in terms of a) arriving at agreed mentor-student meetings at the scheduled time and b) active participation in those meetings, which speaks of

respect for their own and mentor's time and interest in work. The data from mentorship reports also confirm the responsibility of students in terms of timely completion of their homework – 77% of students complete their homework on time, and 30% occasionally. (Figure 2.13)

Types of mentorship support. The *Analysis of Mentors Reports* addresses the question related to the types of mentorship support provided by mentors for mentored students. The question was close-ended and included the following five modalities of⁵⁷ support: a) learning support, b) checking grades and the quality of students' homework, c) checking students' performance and achievement, d) including students in supplementary classes, and e) including students in extracurricular activities.

A total of 135 mentors were appointed to provide mentorship support for 312 students during the school year 2018/19. In their reports, the mentors state that these five support modalities are combined depending on the needs of the individual

⁵⁷ As already mentioned in the methodology section, mentors had the obligation to submit quarterly reports – which took a lot of their time – for that reason, the format of mentorship reports could not include all types of mentorship support as it would burden them additionally.

student. Out of 312 mentored students, 261 (84%) received one or a combination of two, three or more types of support at the same time in the school year 2018/19 – 58 students received one of five types of support (Table 2.8), 73 students received different combinations of two support modalities, 68 students received different combinations of three types of support, 27 received combinations of 4 types of support, and 35 students received all five types of support simultaneously. For 51 students, there is no information on the type of support received. (Appendix 7)

Table 2.8: Number of students who received one modality of mentorship support in the school year 2018/19

Type of mentorship support	Number of students
Learning support	9
Checking grades and the quality of students' homework	8
Checking students' performance and achievement	35
Including students in supplementary classes	1
Including students in extracurricular activities	5
Total:	58

Source: REF documentation – *Analysis of Mentors Reports* for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20

The data from the *Analysis of Mentors Support* show that certain types of support dominate among a certain number of students:

- support related to checking performance and achievement – 215 students,
- support related to checking grades and the quality of homework – 144 students,
- support for including students in supplementary classes – 124 students,
- learning support – 114 students,
- support for including students in extracurricular activities – 97 students.

The *2014 Needs Analysis Report* provides an overview and a ranking list of all the seven types of support provided by mentors for students (Appendix 3) – the data show that mentors and students rank the mentioned types of support differently.

Based on the data presented in Table 2.9, it is noticeable that the mentors emphasize that they mostly deal with: professional counseling, providing direct learning support for students, providing direct assistance in solving various school problems.

On the other hand, students believe that mentors primarily deal with monitoring the implementation of the set plan, somewhat less with providing direct assistance in solving various school problems, followed by professional counseling, and only then with providing direct learning support.

The biggest difference in assessments can be observed in relation to activities aimed at providing direct assistance in solving various life problems. While among

mentors, this activity is in fifth place (with an arithmetic mean of 3.8), among scholarship holders it is in seventh place (with a very low arithmetic mean of 2.0). (Table 2.9)

Table 2.9: Representation of different types of support based on the assessment of mentors and scholarship holders

Ranking list of mentors			Ranking list of scholarship holders		
Ranking	Type of support	AM	Ranking	Type of support	AM
1.	Professional counseling	4.6	1.	Monitoring the implementation of the set plan	4.3
2.	Providing direct learning support for students	4.4	2.	Providing direct assistance in solving various school problems that are not directly related to students' achievement	4
3-4.	Providing direct assistance in solving various school problems that are not directly related to students' achievement	4	3.	Professional counseling	3.4
3-4.	Monitoring the implementation of the set plan	4	4.	Providing direct learning support for students	3.1
5.	Providing direct assistance in solving various life problems	3.8	5.	Referring students to supplementary classes	3
6.	Referring students to supplementary classes	3.4	6.	Referring students to additional classes and involvement in school clubs	2.4
7.	Referring students to additional classes and involvement in school clubs	2.6	7.	Providing direct assistance in solving various life problems	2
Total arithmetic mean		3.83	Total arithmetic mean		3.17

Source: REF documentation – 2014 Needs Analysis Report

The essence of mentorship support: strengths and weaknesses

There is no universal definition that explains the mentor's role – the significance of the mentor's role lies precisely in the fact that each individual mentor can, based on personal mentoring experience, give a different and at the same time completely relevant definition of the essence of mentorship support for secondary school students.

Out of 259 surveyed mentors, 239 gave their opinion on the essence of mentorship support (184 females and 54 males). A small number of mentors stated that they did not have enough experience to determine the essence, as they had had one

student; some mentors described the essence of mentorship support briefly, using key words, while 63 mentors gave almost entire definitions of mentorship based on their experience. Each of these definitions provides an insight into the mentor's way of working and each in its own way highlights the essence of mentorship, its tasks, goals and scope. (Appendix 8).

Different views of the essence of mentorship support are structured within 12 thematic categories (Table 2.9). A qualitative analysis shows that mentors determined the essence of mentorship support based on their personal experience and insight into the various "profiles" of mentored students, their needs, priorities and aspirations, as well as challenges in working with students. (Table 2.10 and Appendix 8).

The primary essence of mentorship support, judging by the number of mentors who mentioned it (44), is *support in developing the student's own potential – support in psychological, organizational, legal, advisory, material, emotional and career terms*.

Table 2.10: The essence of mentorship support as assessed by mentors

The essence of mentorship support is:	Mentors:
Support in developing the student's own potential – support in psychological, organizational, legal, advisory, material, emotional and career terms	44
Assistance in lectures, learning, overcoming any difficulties, for further education, for a better future	37
Continuous monitoring, achievement monitoring, supervision and commitment, care of student development	34
Communication with the student, empathy, empowerment, encouragement and joint planning for the future	29
Safety, trust, respect and understanding	23
Affirmation and encouragement for completing school and further education	20
Strengthening of the student's self-confidence leads to an increase in the overall student's potential	13
The student's perception of school: to make the student see that they have support at school to deal with their problems, that they have someone to rely on	12
Dropout reduction, regularity of attendance	7
Motivation for going to school and studying	7
Socialization and development of life skills	7
Cooperation with parents and the broader community	6
Total:	239

Source: Questionnaires for mentors (base: 259)

Assistance in lectures, learning, overcoming any difficulties, for further education, for a better future is in second place, as assessed by 37 mentors, and *Continuous monitoring, achievement monitoring, supervision and commitment, care of student development* is in third place (34).

Overall, the essence of mentorship support lies in unifying all the listed 12 categories, as only one of the said categories never acts independently from the others – e.g. support in developing the student's own potential is not possible without

encouraging motivation for going to school and studying, or without communication with the student, empathy, empowerment, encouragement and joint planning for the future, etc. The data suggest that it is important for mentors to generate an active learning environment as this improves the students' perception of autonomy and competence, provides students with choices and opportunities for independent learning and activity planning, which increases their feeling of success. The fact that a different number of mentors more often mention or emphasize one of the determinants of the essence of mentorship support in relation to the others indicates that each mentor, in the context of the needs of their students, has a relatively different focus.

In addition, the way mentors talk about the essence of their work testifies to their commitment, their view of the significance of mentorship support and their attitude towards the mentor's role – most mentors see providing support for students as a kind of mission in which they qualitatively change the lives of young people for the better. A lot of them openly express their satisfaction for having the opportunity to be in this role. Evaluations of the essence of mentorship support also show with how much sovereignty the majority of mentors performed their role.

Strengths of mentorship support. Out of 259 surveyed mentors, 229 provided an answer to the question „*What is the most significant advantage/strength of mentorship support?*“; 30 mentors (19 females and 11 males) did not answer this question. Multiple responses received from 229 mentors were structured within 19 thematic categories. (Table 2.10)

The most significant advantage and strength of mentorship support, as assessed by mentors, is the *student's feeling of security, the feeling that they have someone to turn to, that they have support* – the student knows at all times that they are not alone, that they have someone to support them inside and outside the school; the student's awareness that someone else is taking care of them; the student knows that they are accepted; the student's perception that they have someone familiar at school, whom they can turn to at any time; the significance of mentorship support is that the students who are its beneficiaries develop positive qualities over time and change their attitude towards obligations and school. A positive sense of belonging to the school increases the student's motivation for learning and success in learning, as well as their involvement and participation in curricular and extracurricular activities. This particularly applies to students who are at risk of dropping out of school. The sense of belonging to the school makes Roma children know that they are accepted and valued in their school.

The second most significant advantage is „*Assistance and support for the student in every sense and guidance for them to successfully complete secondary school and become capable of independent life*“, and the third is „*Trust between the mentor and the student and understanding*“. (Table 2.11)

The assessment of the most significant advantages and strengths of mentorship support also speak to some extent about the mentor's way of working – there are mentors who use an individual approach and an individualized way of working with students, and rare mentors who work with mentored students in smaller groups.

Table 2.11: The most significant advantage/strength of mentorship support.

Advantage/strength of mentorship support – multiple responses:	Mentors:
Student's feeling of security, the feeling that they have someone to turn to, that they have support	65
Assistance and support for the student in every sense and guidance for them to successfully complete secondary school and become capable of independent life	43
Trust between the mentor and the student and understanding	41
Continuous and systematic control of the student's achievement	31
Motivation for learning, regular attending classes, better achievement	28
Development of the student's self-confidence and encouragement of their independence in work and learning	24
Open communication of the students and parents with the mentor	24
Better student's achievement and continuation of education	20
Improving the level of inclusivity of schools	18
Individual approach and individualized way of working with the student	17
Raising the student's social competences	14
Student's perception that they can manage their development	10
Getting to know the student better – insight into the entire personality (social, economic, emotional, health)	7
Empowering the student and developing faith in their own potential, abilities and values	7
Developing responsibility, fostering ambition and developing faith in one's own abilities and values	6
Empathy, understanding and care for the student	6
Reducing the student dropout, preventing school dropouts	5
Financial support – if the child does not have money for travel and food, we cannot discuss other forms of support	5
Working in a small group enables closer cooperation with students	2
NA	30
Total:	403

Source: Questionnaires for mentors (base: 259)

The listed advantages and strengths show the essence and most important elements of this support measure, including its significance for the school as a whole – one of the advantages mentioned by the mentors is the „*Improvement of the level of inclusivity of schools and the exchange of examples of good practice*“. Some of the mentors state that mentorship makes every child a visible and equally important member of the community; encourages direct work with students, a better understanding of the problem, professional development through excellent training sessions and their applicability in practice; trained mentors better understand socially disadvantaged groups and recognize the importance of education for Roma

students. A more detailed insight into each of the listed advantages is provided in Appendix 9.

Weaknesses of mentorship support. Out of 259 surveyed mentors, 195 provided multiple answers to the question “*What is the most significant weakness/deficiency of mentorship support?*”; and 64 mentors (46 females and 18 males) did not answer this question. The multiple responses were grouped into 20 categories. (Table 2.12)

Out of 195 mentors who answered this question, 41 assessed that mentorship support had no weaknesses or deficiencies. The responses from mentors were grouped into 20 thematic categories.

The first weakness, as assessed by 26 mentors, is that *it is not institutionalized*, i.e. that it is not *a systemic measure* and *has no institutional support, which depends on the project*. This group of mentors believes that mentorship support should be a systemic solution and be recognized in the system; stating that this is something that every school should have as a position, and that the mentor should work with all Roma children, not only with those who receive scholarships.

Table 2.12: Weaknesses/deficiencies of mentorship support

Weaknesses of mentorship support – multiple responses:	Mentors:
No weaknesses – mentorship support has no weaknesses	41
The fact that it is not institutionalized, is not a systemic measure	26
Lack of time for mentorship support	20
Insufficient/poor cooperation with parents	19
Insufficient cooperation with non-school institutions and the local community	18
It is not adequately designed, students with an average grade lower than 2.5–3.5 are excluded	18
The fact that not all vulnerable groups of students are included	14
Mentoring work is not valued enough	13
Insufficient interest of a number of students	12
Non-acceptance by some colleagues, frequent discrimination, prejudices	11
Scholarships: conditions, small amount, irregular payments	10
The fact that schools are left to choose mentors themselves	10
Lack of interest of some mentors	10
A small number of students covered by the support	8
Lack of continuity of support, we do not have sufficient information about the program	8
It is difficult to maintain continuity in work, difficulties in mentorship implementation	8
Weak ability to influence traditional behavior	7
Lack of training – more specific contents of working with students are needed	7
Mentorship support is developed in the north, but not in the south of Serbia	3
The family and the student are not informed about the significance of mentorship support	2
Mentorship support is not visible in the public, in the media	2
I don't know	3
NA	64
Total:	331

Source: Questionnaires for mentors (base: 259)

The second weakness, as stated by mentors (20), is that mentors, whether they are teachers or expert associates, do not have enough time to work as they are overloaded with many other tasks – more time should be allocated for each individual student; other tasks prevent a more dedicated work; lack of time due to too much paperwork and report preparation; the mentor must be relieved of some school duties or have a reduced number of hours in order to deal with their students better and every day; too many obligations at the same time; considering all the school obligations of both students and teachers, it is difficult to find time for meetings; too many administrative requirements.

Insufficient/weak cooperation with parents is the third weakness of mentorship support, as assessed by 19 mentors who state a poor access of parents to cooperation; the fragmentation of small and rural environments, which makes it difficult to have constant contact with families and the environment in which the student lives; absence of parental support; sometimes we need a lot of time and energy for parents to understand the importance of education; weaknesses are manifested in the impossibility to act on families, their values and the undervaluing of the education system, students leave school and parents approve this; sometimes the social conditions in which they live prevail as negative influences; girls often marry and drop out of school, etc. This group of mentors concludes that parents must understand how important education is and must influence a positive outcome along with the mentor.

It is also important to underline the weakness mentioned by 18 mentors, which refers to the fact that mentorship support is not adequately designed, primarily because students with an average grade lower than 2.5–3.5 are excluded. This group of mentors points out that students with lower average grades are at the highest risk of leaving school early – while only excellent and very good students received support, and they actually do not need such an incentive to finish school – they certainly want to do it. Support for students who achieve higher academic performance is also necessary, but it is different, requiring less time and perseverance for the mentor. According to this group of mentors, greater support is needed for students who achieve lower results and come from socio-economically disadvantaged families. A weakness is the shifting of attention to better students, separating students from other students who also need additional mentorship support; turning the mentor into a kind of service and understanding of some students that he/she will help them achieve better performance without much effort is also a weakness. A weakness is that sometimes we do not teach those students, so we have to get to know them in other ways, or we do not see them enough. A more detailed insight into each of the listed weaknesses is provided in Appendix 10.

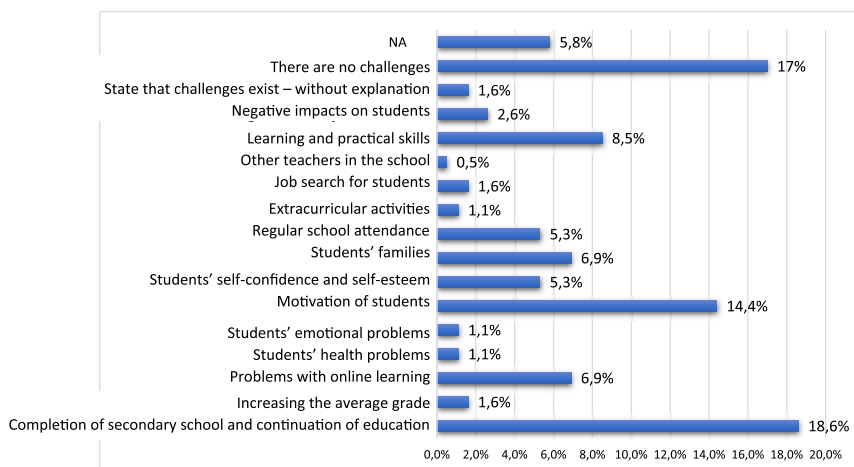
Challenges for mentors. Data from the *Analysis of Mentors Reports for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20* show that the most common challenges faced by

mentors during mentorship, e.g. in the school year 2019/20,⁵⁸ are those referring to the following:

- Encouraging students to finish secondary school and continue their education – successful completion of the final grade, graduation exams and continuing education (18.6%);
- Student motivation – maintaining motivation for learning (14.4%);
- Students’ learning and practical skills – strengthening learning and practical skills of students (8.5%);
- Students’ families – weak cooperation with students' families (6.9%);
- Regular attendance of classes (5.3%), etc. (Figure 2.14)

Challenges with distant learning emerged after the introduction of online classes, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2.14: Challenges for mentors – the school year 2019/20



Source: REF documentation – Analysis of Mentors Reports for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20

Students’ motivation and problems

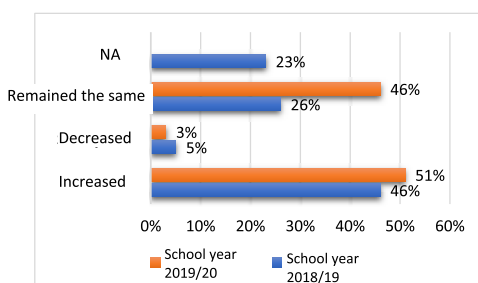
Students’ motivation. Motivation for learning, for regular attendance of classes, for better performance, etc. is, as assessed by a number of mentors, a significant advantage of mentorship support, but also one of the major challenges for mentors – as student motivation can decrease depending on the influence of various factors from the environment.

⁵⁸ Out of a total of 92 mentors appointed in the school year 2019/20, 49 mentors provided 188 multiple answers to the question about challenges – the answers were grouped within the appropriate thematic categories. The percentage for each category was calculated in relation to the number of answers received (188).

Mentors see motivation as a particularly important factor in the learning process, emphasizing that motivation and self-esteem are key factors in achieving a better academic performance and greater success. According to mentors, a motivated student has an inner strength enabling them to learn and use their own potential, to improve educational outcomes and to adapt to the demands of the school context. In addition, student motivation for learning has been identified as an element that greatly affects the general performance and retention of students in school.

Data from the *Analysis of Mentors Reports for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20*⁵⁹ show that, as perceived by mentors, the student motivation in 2018/19 increased for 46% of students in relation to the previous school year, it remained the same as in the previous school year for 26% of students, while for 5% of students it decreased in relation to the previous year. (Figure 2.15)

Figure 2.15: Student motivation at the end of the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20



Source: REF documentation – *Analysis of Mentors Reports for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20*

In 2019/20, motivation increased for more than half of students (51%), it remained unchanged for slightly less than half of students (46%), and motivation decreased for 3% of students.

Improving motivation is basically an attempt to change students' "mindsets" and attitudes regarding education. Enhancing and maintaining the motivation of

mentored students is one of the most common challenges that mentors face – as student motivation largely depends on their own and their immediate environment's attitudes regarding education.

Motivation for learning, particularly learning with self-belief, is a key dimension that affects students' performance and staying in school – as emphasized by a large number of mentors. That is why, as stated by the mentors, it is important to recognize a student with reduced self-confidence early, to identify and strengthen factors that can improve their self-confidence and thus prevent early school leaving – e.g. by looking at the relationship between the student's self-confidence and their performance in certain curricular and extracurricular activities.

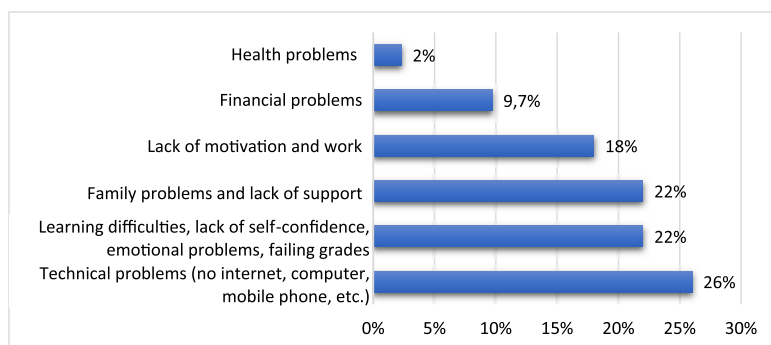
Problems of mentored students. Data from the *Analysis of Mentors Reports for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20* show that almost half of mentored students (47% or 82 out of 176 in 2019/20) face multiple difficulties that hinder their learning and educational progress.

⁵⁹ During 2018/19, there were a total of 312 mentored students, and during 2019/20, there were 176 students.

During the school year 2019/20 (due to the COVID-19 pandemic and online learning), technical problems (poor or no internet connection, lack of appropriate technical equipment – a computer, mobile phone, etc.) were most often mentioned in combination with lack of self-confidence, emotional problems, poor grades, lack of family support and, finally, financial problems. (Figure 2.16).

According to mentors, during 2019/20, some students faced big problems at all the three levels: school (e.g. poor grades, lack of feeling of belonging to the school), family (lack of family support, financial resources, appropriate technical equipment) and personal level (lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, emotional problems, lack of motivation and work/study habits, health problems).

Figure 2.16: Difficulties faced by mentored students during the school year 2019/20



Source: REF documentation – Analysis of Mentors Reports for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20

These problems and difficulties affect students' regularity, motivation, learning and academic achievement in general – supporting the claim that the link between students' socio-economic context and their academic achievement appears to be enduring and significant. Using PISA data of 2018 (OECD, 2019), the OECD concluded that students from low socio-economic households are disadvantaged in schools as they lack an academic family environment, which affects their academic performance in school.⁶⁰

On the other hand, parents with a higher socio-economic status can provide their children with financial support and household resources for individual learning. Whether students are successful in school or at risk of dropping out depends largely on their socio-economic status. The effects of socio-economic status are clearly present in all European education systems. The impact of socio-economic status,

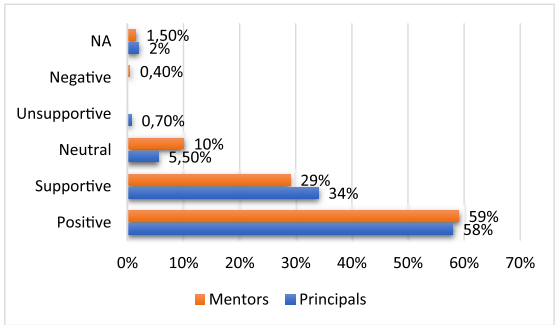
60 PISA 2018, Insights and Interpretations, Andreas Schleicher, OECD, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA%202018%20Insights%20and%20Interpretations%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf>

family background and home learning environment is passed down from one generation to the next.⁶¹

Attitude of the school team towards mentorship support

The attitude of school team members towards mentorship support is twice as positive as supportive, as assessed by more than half of mentors (59%) and almost as many principals (58%).

Figure 2.17: Attitude of school team members towards mentorship support



Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259) and questionnaire for principals (base: 145)

Slightly more than a quarter of mentors (29%) state that they have support from members of the school team, that is, that the school team members have a supportive attitude towards this type of support. Slightly more than a third of principals (34%) share the same opinion. Figure 2.17.

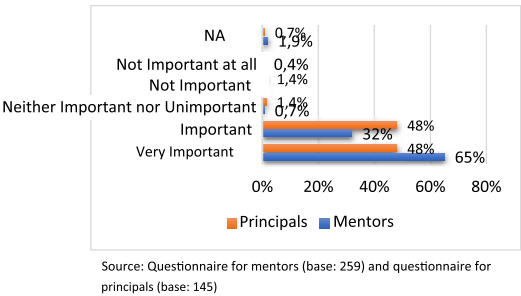
The lack of support from the school team was mentioned by a number of mentors as a type of weakness in mentorship support, which was discussed in the previous section. Some of the mentors talked about the need to strengthen the support of the school team and the parent school as a whole, in the context of making proposals for institutionalization.

The mentorship support program requires teamwork within the school and the support of all school employees is extremely important for successful mentorship, and particularly for creating a climate where Roma students are fully accepted. Acceptance of mentorship support by the school team, support for the mentor's work, involvement of all employees in working with Roma children and support of the school the student attends are indicators that, according to about a third of the mentors, speak positively about the welcoming atmosphere and acceptance of all students in the same manner. This kind of atmosphere eventually develops a sense of belonging to the school in students, contributes to their socialization, encourages a more relaxed interaction with their peers and develops free communication with teachers.

61 European School Manual, available at: <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/resources/toolkitsforschools/subarea.cfm?sa=23>

Evaluating the significance and contribution of mentorship support

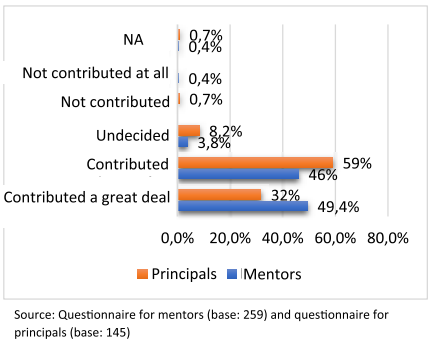
Figure 2.18: Importance of mentorship support for the educational inclusion of students



The views of mentors and principals regarding the importance of mentorship support for the educational inclusion of Roma students do not differ. The vast majority of mentors (97%) and the vast majority of principals (96%) share the opinion that mentorship support is (extremely) important for the educational inclusion of students.

(Figure 2.18).

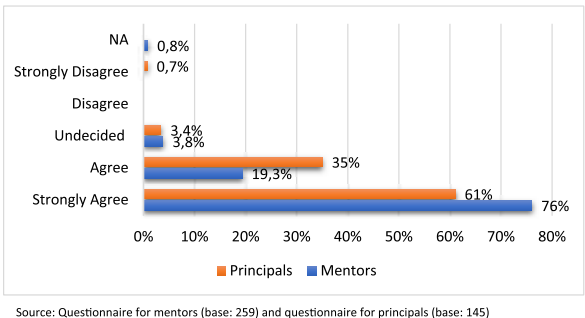
Figure 2.19: Contribution of mentorship support to the educational inclusion of students



Mentorship support has (extremely) contributed to the inclusion of Roma students, according to a vast majority of mentors (95.4%) and principals (91%).

There are few mentors (0.4%) and principals (0.7%) who believe that the support has not contributed to the inclusion of Roma students. (Figure 2.19)

Figure 2.20: Mentorship support could be an important form of support for other students as well



What specifically speaks to the importance of mentorship support is the opinion of more than two thirds of mentors (76%) that mentorship support could be an important form of support for other students coming from similar socio-economic conditions. (Figure 2.20)

Mentorship brings to the fore the needs of the individual student, emphasizes the importance of adapting the measures and types of support to the developmental potential and affinities of the specific teenager, and encourages the development of the student's personality in a direction that will enable them to become what they want.

An analysis of the data collected for the purposes of analysis of the fifteen-year implementation of mentorship support shows that mentorship is a multi-layered process that benefits the student the most, but no less the mentor and the school as a whole. Overall, the analysis of the collected data showed the significance and indicated the essence of mentorship support and the key characteristics of mentorship:

The mentor institution is a multi-useful and undoubtedly necessary support mechanism that helps the student (regardless of nationality) to learn how to manage their own learning in order to increase their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be.

- Mentorship and the method of mentorship support depend on the context, i.e. differ from student to student – there is no uniform mentorship support model, but there is a model of mentoring work that provides the desired results and ensures the continuous development of students and, at the same time, the professional development of mentors.
- Mentorship is a particularly important and necessary form of support for Roma secondary school students, as mentorship support compensates for unequal chances with which most Roma children enter the world of education.
- A successful mentorship program implies a well-elaborated plan for the joint work of the mentor and the secondary school student, and is based on jointly pre-planned, expected results, mutual trust and empathy.
- Effective mentorship is based on pre-defined principles of mentoring work, the appropriate mentoring methodology and the procedure for monitoring the student's progress.
- Data show that the mentoring methodology is based on the fact that mentorship is a process that has at least five successive phases: 1) recognizing the student's needs, 2) building mutual trust between the mentor and the student, 3) jointly defining goals to be achieved by the student, 4) the student's progress and monitoring of the achievement of set goals and results, and 5) regular evaluation of outcomes achieved by the student.
- The experience of mentors shows that mentored secondary school students exhibit: a) regularity, responsibility, more effort and work, better

performance, b) increased self-confidence and self-esteem, and c) improved social and communication skills.

- Mentorship has failed to significantly influence the further education of students, as Roma secondary school students are primarily focused on getting a job as soon as possible and providing regular sources of income.

ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION BEFORE
AND AFTER THE INTRODUCTION
OF MENTORSHIP SUPPORT

3. Analysis of the situation before and after the introduction of mentorship support

This section provides an analysis of data related to a) the education of Roma secondary school students before and after the introduction of the mentorship support program, and b) the achieved outcomes and results of mentorship support after 15 years of practice.

Situation before and after the introduction of mentorship support

The analysis of the situation **before the introduction of the mentorship support program** refers to the period from the 2002 census, which is also the year when the Roma received the status of a national minority,⁶² until the school year 2007/08, when the implementation of the mentorship support program at secondary schools in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina began. The analysis of the situation **after the introduction of the mentorship support program** refers to a fifteen-year period – from the school year 2007/08 until August 2021/22, when the REF suspended the mentorship support program for students of the Roma nationality. For the purpose of both these analyses, secondary sources of data were used – data from the 2002 and 2011 censuses and data from available reports and studies from the both said periods, including national and international reports (European Commission reports, studies and analyses by UNICEF, the World Bank, UNDP, etc.), and national reports of the MoESTD on the progress of inclusive education.

The secondary education of Roma children before and after the introduction of the mentorship support program, according to the data collected from various sources, differs greatly in terms of student enrollment rates, their transfer from elementary to secondary school, early school leaving and secondary school completion rates.

The data show that, with each year of mentorship support, the enrolment and number of students who regularly attend secondary school, including the number of students who complete it, has continuously increased, while the number of children who leave secondary school early has continued to decrease (Table 3.1):

⁶² Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, Article 4 Available at: https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zastiti_prava_i_sloboda_nacionalnih_manjina.html

- **The enrollment of Roma children in secondary education increased by 18% in the period from 2005 to 2019:**
 - In 2005 – only 10% of students from Roma settlements attended secondary school (MICS 3, 2005);⁶³
 - In 2011 – according to the 2011 census, the SORS states that 11.5% of Roma have secondary education, and that at the time of the 2011 census, 10.5%, i.e. only 3,020 teenagers of the Roma nationality, attended secondary school;⁶⁴
 - In 2014–2019 – the enrolment increased from 22% in 2014 to 28% in 2019, according to the progress report of the European Commission for the Republic of Serbia 2021;⁶⁵
- **The transition rate from elementary to secondary school for Roma children – in the period from 2004 to 2021, increased by 44.3%:**
 - In 2004/05 – only 8.3% of Roma children continued their education at the secondary level (REF, 2004);⁶⁶
 - In 2019/20 – the transition rate from elementary to secondary school for Roma teenagers was 52.6% (MoESTD, 2019/20)⁶⁷
- **Dropout rate of Roma secondary school students from secondary school – in the period from 2004 to 2022 decreased by 37.6%:**
 - In 2007/08 – 38% of students left secondary school;⁶⁸
 - In 2014/15 – 7% of students left secondary school,⁶⁹ (Table 3.2);
 - In 2019/20 – 2.3% of students left secondary school,⁷⁰ (Table 3.2);
 - In 2021/22 – 0.46% of students left secondary school (REF, 2021); (Table 3.2);

63 *Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma in Serbia*, (Monitoring Report)

Serbia 2007, Open Society Foundation, Serbia, available at: https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/8e4fcf0a-87bf-4936-941f-a16aeca3cc30/serbia2_20070329_0.pdf

64 Roma in Serbia, Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in 2011 in the Republic of Serbia, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2014 Available at: <https://pod2.stat.gov.rs/ObjavljenjePublikacije/Popis2011/Romi.pdf>

65 Progress Report of the European Commission for the Republic Serbia 2021. Available at: https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/godisnji_izvestaji_ek_o_napretku/izvestaj_ek_oktobar_21.PDF

66 REF - Serbia - Situation in the country and REF's Labor Strategy. Available at: https://www.romaeducationfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/country_strategy_sr_srpski_09_05.pdf

67 MICS 6 2019 Serbia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/16076/file/MICS%206%20Multiple%20Indicator%20Cluster%20Survey.pdf>;

68 Roma children in „special” education in Serbia – overrepresentation, low achievement and impact on life, Research on Schools and Classes for Children with Developmental Disabilities, Open Society Institute, 2010. Available at: <https://www.cipcenter.org/preuzimanje/publikacije/Romska%20deca%20u%20specijalnom%20obrazovanju%20s%20Srbiji.pdf>

69 Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the Period 2022–2030. (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, number 30/18). Available at: <https://www.minljmpdd.gov.rs/strateska-dokumenta.php>

70 Ibid

- **Secondary school completion rate – in the period from 2004 to 2019/20, increased by 54.8%:**

- In 2004/05 – 6.2% of Roma secondary school students completed secondary school⁷¹
- In 2019/20 – 61% of Roma secondary school students completed secondary school, (MoESTD, 2019/21), which is an increase of 20% compared to MICS 5 of 2014.

The said results were achieved through a combined action of various measures⁷² – affirmative measures (which means measures related to ensuring greater coverage – enrollment), scholarships and mentorship support (which means measures to prevent dropouts, maintain regular attendance and achieve a better performance). Each of these measures has its own significance and results; however, by combining these measures significantly more can be achieved than by any of these measures individually.

The data show that the number of Roma students enrolled in secondary schools through the application of affirmative measures in the period from 2005/06 to 2015/16 significantly increased (almost six times in a ten-year period – from 67 in 2005/06 to 422 in 2015/16) – in the said period, a total of 2,153 Roma students were enrolled in secondary school based on affirmative action measures.⁷³

There is no data on whether and how many students who received scholarships and mentorship support were enrolled using affirmative measures.

By implementing the *scholarship and mentorship support* measures in the period from 2007/08 to 2021/22, the number of Roma secondary school students increased almost 28 times – from 300 students in 2007/08 to a total of 8,176 students who attended secondary school during this period with provided scholarships and mentorship support. During the first seven years of the Vojvodina Project, there were a total of 1,643⁷⁴ students, and during the following eight years, 6,533 students – according to data from the REF documentation.

71 REF Country Strategy 2005. REF - Serbia - Situation in the country and REF's Labor Strategy. Available at: https://www.romaeducationfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/country_strategy_sr_srpski_09_05.pdf

72 Affirmative action measures aimed at the Roma population have been implemented sporadically since 2003, and systematically since 2005. Source: "Analiza primene afirmativnih mera u oblasti obrazovanja Roma i preporuke za poboljšanje mera" [Analysis of the Application of Affirmative Measures in the Field of Roma Education and Recommendations for Improvement of Measures], Jasminka Čekić Marković, SIPRU 2016. Available at: <http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/en/analysis-of-the-application-of-affirmative-measures-in-the-field-of-roma-education-and-recommendations-for-improvement-of-measures-study-published/>

73 "Analiza primene afirmativnih mera u oblasti obrazovanja Roma i preporuke za poboljšanje mera" [Analysis of the Application of Affirmative Measures in the Field of Roma Education and Recommendations for Improvement of Measures], Jasminka Čekić Marković, SIPRU, June 2016. Available at: <http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/en/analysis-of-the-application-of-affirmative-measures-in-the-field-of-roma-education-and-recommendations-for-improvement-of-measures-study-published/>

74 Report on the project titled *Inclusion of Children of the Roma Nationality in Secondary Schools in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (2007–2014) Project Implementation Report – Results*. Available at: http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/dokumenti/_obrazovanje/Inkluzija/Izvestaj_inkluzija.pdf

The enrolment of Roma in universities in the period from 2002 to 2018 increased by only 1.7% – from 0.3% of the Roma community members who had university education according to the 2002 census,⁷⁵ to less than 2% of Roma who were academic citizens in 2018,⁷⁶ according to the MoESTD report.

Despite the achieved results, the data show that today the inter-ethnic gap in the enrolment of students of Roma nationality and students from the general population in secondary education is still extremely large – **the gap is 62%**. According to MoESTD data (MoESTD, 2021), the enrolment of children from the general population in secondary education is below 90% – only 28% of children living in Roma settlements enroll in secondary school.⁷⁷

75 Policy study of Affirmative Action for Roma in the Field of Education, Belgrade, 2010. Available at: <https://www.cpes.org.rs/Publikacije/Afirmativne%20akcije%20za%20Roma%20u%20oblasti%20obrazovanja.pdf>

76 National Report on Inclusive Education in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2019 to 2021. Available at: <https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Nacionalni-izvestaj-o-IO-2019-2021.pdf>

77 National Report on Inclusive Education in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2019 to 2021. Available at: <https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Nacionalni-izvestaj-o-IO-2019-2021.pdf>

Table 3.1: Overview of data on Roma secondary school students before and after the introduction of (project) mentorship support

Data on Roma secondary school students – before and after the introduction of mentorship support			After the introduction of ⁷⁹ (project) mentorship support: from the school year 2007/08 to the school year 2021/22	Plan until 2030 – target values until 2030 ⁸⁰
Before the introduction of ⁷⁸ (project) mentorship support: until the school year 2007/08	10% (MICS 3: 2005)	Enrolment of students in secondary school		
Percentage of students attending secondary school			28% (MoESTD: 2019/21)	
Percentage of students who continue their education at the secondary level	8.3% (REF: 2004)	Transition rate from elementary to secondary school	52.6% (MoESTD: 2019/21)	Transition rate to secondary school for Roma students: 80%
Percentage of Roma who complete secondary education	6.2% (REF: 2004)	Secondary school completion rate	61% (MoESTD: 2019/21) which is a 20% increase compared to MICS 5 of 2014	Secondary school completion rate: 98%
Scholarships for secondary school students	There were no scholarships ⁸¹ (REF: 2004)	For the first 7 school years: total awarded from 2007/08 to 2013/14 (Provincial Secretariat of APV and REF)	1,643 scholarships (until 2014)	--
		For the last 7 school years (2014/15-2021/22), total awarded (REF)	6,533 scholarships (MoESTD: 2019/21; REF: 2023)	--
		Student scholarships for 2021/22 from the budget of the Republic of Serbia	1,114 scholarships (MoESTD: 2022)	--
	--	For the first 7 school years: from 2007/08 to 2013/14, employed	110 mentors / over 80 secondary schools	--

⁷⁸ REF Country Strategy 2005, Serbia - Situation in the country and REF's Labor Strategy, page 12. (Source: Needs Assessment Study, 2004). Available at: https://www.romaeeducationfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/country_strategy_sr_srpski_09_05.pdf

⁷⁹ MICS 6 2019 Serbia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/16076/file/MICS%206%20Multiple%20Indicator%20Survey.pdf>; National Report on Inclusive Education in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2019 to 2021. Available at: <https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Nacionalni-izvestaj-o-10-2019-2021.pdf>

⁸⁰ Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the Period 2022–2030, available at: <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SIGlasnikPortal/ell/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2022/23/1>

⁸¹ Scholarships are based on achievement (the financial position of the student's family contributes only about 5% to the selection of the candidate), and Roma students usually do not qualify for them. REF Country Strategy 2005, Serbia - Situation in the country and REF's Labor Strategy, page 10. Available at: https://www.romaeeducationfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/country_strategy_sr_srpski_09_05.pdf

Mentorship support for Roma secondary school students		For the last 8 school years, employed	(APV: 2014) 373 mentors in 216 secondary schools (REF: 2023)	--
Secondary school student dropout	38% (2007/8) ⁸²	For the first 7 school years: from 2007/08 to 2013/14, on average For the last 8 school years, (2014/15–2021/22), on average	4.2% (APV: 2014) 2.5% (REF: 2023)	--
Percentage of children enrolled in special schools and classes	39.34% (REF: 2004)	18% of children from the total population of children in "special schools" are children of Roma nationality (2016) ⁸³		Representation of Roma students in schools for the education of children with developmental disabilities: 2.1%
Enrolment in university education	0.3% (2002) ⁸⁴	Less than 2% of Roma men and women enrolled in university education (MoESTD: 2018)		- Transition rate to universities for Roma students: 15% - University education completion rate: 4%

82 Roma children in „special” education in Serbia – overrepresentation, low achievement and impact on life, Research on Schools and Classes for Children with Developmental Disabilities, Open Society Institute, 2010. Available at: <https://www.cipcenter.org/preuzimanje/publikacije/Romska%20deca%20u%20specijalnom%20obrazovanju%20s%20SRbiji.pdf>

83 IPSSOS, MoESTD and UNICEF, 2016 research Listed according to the STRATEGY for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022-2030. Available at: <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2022/23/1>

84 Policy study of Affirmative Action for Roma in the Field of Education, Belgrade, 2010. Available at: <https://www.cpes.org.rs/Publikacije/Afirmativne%20akcije%20za%20Rome%20u%20oblasti%20obrazovanja.pdf>

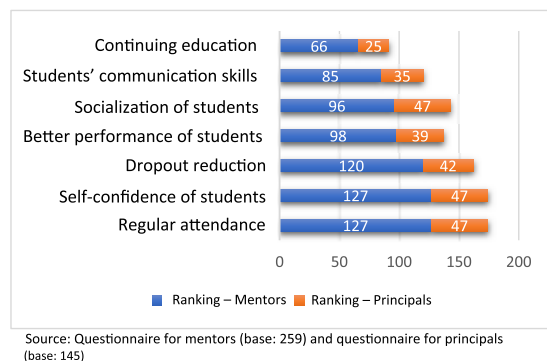
Impact and achieved results of mentorship support

The evaluation of the impact of mentorship support is based on data from two online questionnaires for mentors and principals of secondary schools, while the analysis of the achieved results was determined on the basis of a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the REF documentation and mentorship databases.

Evaluation of the impact of mentorship support

There are no significant differences in the ranking of the impact of mentorship support on students between mentors and principals. Mentorship support in all schools was the most focused on and contributed the most to regular attendance and raising of students' self-confidence – according to the unanimous assessment of mentors and principals. These assessments of the impact of mentorship support testify that, regardless of scholarship support, the possibility of irregular attendance and possible early school leaving is the primary problem of secondary school students, a problem in the solving of which mentors invest the most time and efforts. The impact on reducing dropouts, as assessed by mentors, and the impact on the socialization of students, as assessed by principals, are in second place. (Figure 3.1)

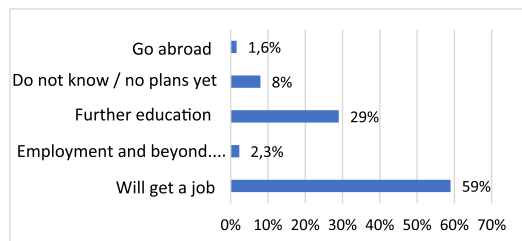
Figure 3.1: Ranking – the impact of mentorship support



The impact on achieving better performance is in third place, more according to the assessment of mentors and less according to the assessment of principals – as principals are of the opinion that mentorship support has contributed more to socialization, and less to achieving better educational outcomes. The impact of mentorship

support on students' communication skills is in fifth place according to both groups of respondents.

Figure 3.2: Plans of students who completed secondary school in 2019/20



Source: REF documentation – *Analysis of Mentors Reports* for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20

According to the assessment of mentors and principals, mentorship support has contributed the least to encouraging students to continue their education. (Figure 3.1)

Data from the *Analysis of Mentors Reports for 2018/19 and 2019/20* show that out of 135

scholarship holders who completed secondary school in 2019/20, more than half (59%) plan to get a job immediately, slightly more than a quarter plan to continue their education (29%), 8% say they don't know yet, that they have no plans, and 2.3% intend to get a job and continue their education, while 1.6% will go abroad. (Figure 3.2)

Achieved results – effectiveness of mentorship support

Over the seven-year duration of the Vojvodina Project, from the school year 2007/08 to the school year 2013/14, a total of 1,643 scholarships were provided for students from over 90 schools based in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. A total of 110 teachers/expert associates who provided mentorship support were involved. Out of a total of 121 regular secondary schools in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, more than 90 secondary schools were involved in the Project.

During the following eight years, from the school year 2014/15 to the end of 2021/22, a total of 2,954 scholarships were provided for students from over 216 secondary schools in the territory of Serbia. More than 373 teachers/expert associates who provided mentorship support were involved. Out of a total of 454 state secondary schools in Serbia, more than 216 secondary schools were included in the mentorship support program.

However, it is not possible to consistently evaluate the effectiveness of mentorship support as there is no unified database on the number of children who were included in the program, the number of newly enrolled students per school year and the number of mentored students per class within each school year – for any of the implementation phases of this support.

Data on the number of scholarship holders who received mentorship support and the number of students who completed secondary school for the period from 2007/08

to 2012/13 (in Table 3.2) clearly indicate the dropout rate by school year – except for the two school years 2013/14 and 2021/21, for which no data are available.

However, data on the number of scholarship holders and the number of students who completed secondary school for the period from 2014/15 to 2021/22 are apparently not in compliance with the specified dropout rate (in Table 3.2) – the reason for this is one of the requirements of the scholarship award competition. This is the requirement stating that students may take part in the scholarship award competition if in the school year 2014/15 they enrolled for the first time as regular students in the first, second, third or fourth grade of secondary school (high, vocational or mixed school). This requirement applied to competitions for each subsequent school year until 2019/20, when the Ministry took over the awarding of scholarships to Roma secondary school students.

The discrepancy between the number of beneficiaries/scholarship holders and the number of students who completed secondary school in this period, which can be seen in Table 3.2, is a consequence of the fact that the REF from the school year 2014/15 continued to award scholarships to all students of Roma nationality from grades 1–4 and that there were a total of 525 Roma scholarship holders in the secondary schools that were included in the program in 2014/15, of whom 98 were in the final grades.

There are no available data on the basis of which it is possible to determine how many there are newly enrolled scholarship holders in each subsequent school year as of 2015/16, and how many of them have remained in different grades from the previous school year.

The school dropout rate had a steady downward trend in the first four years of the Vojvodina Project and the last three years of the mentorship support implementation – in all other school years, early school leaving varied from one year to the next. Despite this, the effectiveness of mentorship support in terms of preventing and reducing dropping out is evident as the dropout rate has significantly decreased by 34.2% – from 38% in 2007/8 to an average of 3.8% over the past fifteen years. (Table 3.2)

The average grade at the end of each school year has increased almost continuously, if we exclude two school years (2011/12 and 2012/13), when it was in a slight decline in secondary schools in Vojvodina, and two years for which data are missing (the school years 2013/14 and 2021/22). The effectiveness of mentorship support in terms of increasing the academic achievement of students is not particularly evident, as the average achieved grade for all years is lower compared to the competition requirement – the average achieved grade for all years is 3.41, and the competition requirement was that students had completed the previous grade with an average grade of 2.00 to 3.50. (Table 3.2)

The results of previous mentorship support, according to the data presented in Table 3.2, show that in the period from the school year 2007/8 until the end of 2020/21 (as there are no data available for 2021/22), a total of 2,236 Roma teenagers completed secondary school – an average of 180 students each school year. Each school year, an average of 328 students received scholarships and mentorship support from 118 mentors, as many as were appointed per school year on average – in an average of 127 secondary schools involved per school year.

It would be useful to have data for 2021/22, and particularly data on the number of students in lower grades who were left without mentorship support as of the school year 2021/22 – and how many of them will complete secondary school at the end of this school year 2022/23 and in the upcoming school years.

Table 3.2: Results of scholarship and mentorship support in the previous 15 years – from the school year 2007/2008 to the school year 2021/2022

	SSMP* implemented only in secondary schools in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina ⁸⁵							SSMP* implemented in secondary schools throughout Serbia**							
	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Number of beneficiaries/scholarship holders	355	267	170	66	404	340	41	525	516	498	500	312	176	427	
Number of students who completed secondary school	329	250	165	66	375	320		98	103	126	148	121	135	105	
Dropout rate	7.32%	6.37%	2.94%	0.00%	7.18%	5.88%		7%	3%	1%	2.4%	3.52%	2.27%	0.46%	
Average grade at the end of the school year	3.41	3.49	3.64	3.88	3.53	3.73	No data	2.88	3.11	3.11	3.17	3.22	3.45	3.73	No data
Number of involved schools	Out of a total of 121 ⁸⁶ regular secondary schools in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, more than 90 schools were involved in the Project. ⁸⁷							170	170	160	144	113	78	90	
Number of appointed mentors	60	38	100	77	85	78		201	193	182	174	134	92	124	

Source: REF mentorship databases and documentation

*SSMP – (REF – Secondary Scholarship and Mentorship Program for Roma Students)

**Note: The data for the school year 2020/21 should be taken with a grain of salt primarily due to the changed work regimen of schools and mentors due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the introduction of a state of emergency (6 March 2020).

⁸⁵ For more information refer to the report on the project titled *Inclusion of Children of the Roma Nationality in Secondary Schools in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (2007–2014) Project Implementation Report – Results*. Available at: http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/dokument/_obrazovanje/Inkluzija/Izvestaj_inkluzija.pdf

⁸⁶ Today, in 2023, there are a total of 119 regular public secondary schools and 10 secondary schools for students with developmental difficulties and disability, in 40 local self-governments. Available at: http://www.puma.vojvodina.gov.rs/etext.php?ID_mat=1286

⁸⁷ Listed according to the aforementioned report from the Vojvodina Project.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE MENTORSHIP SUPPORT INSTITUTIONALIZATION

4. Legal framework of the mentorship support institutionalization

This section provides a brief analysis of the legal framework that includes a) the international legal framework, b) the national legal framework, c) national strategic documents related to the improvement of the position of the Roma, and d) the ongoing education reform within the REdiS 2030 Project.

In this section, the focus will be placed on international, national legal acts and strategies related to education, primarily to secondary education of Roma.

International legal framework

The right to education is established in a number of international documents: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, (Art. 26)⁸⁸; UN Convention against Discrimination in Education, 1960⁸⁹; Millennium Development Goals (MDG2, Task 2).⁹⁰ One of the most important documents is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Art. 28 and 29), which obliges the signatory states to provide free elementary education and appropriate conditions for regular schooling.⁹¹ A number of documents of the Council of Europe, the European Union and the OSCE explicitly speak about the right to education in minority languages, e.g. the Oslo Recommendations regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities, and an Explanatory Note, 1998,⁹² the Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities, and an Explanatory Note, 1996,⁹³ the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 1995 (Art. 12 and 13).⁹⁴

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966⁹⁵ (Art. 13, Par. 2b). Secondary education, in its various forms, including secondary technical and vocational education, should be general and accessible to all through appropriate measures, and particularly through a gradual introduction of free education.

88 Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/cnr.pdf

89 Regulation on the Ratification of the Convention on the Fight Against Discrimination in the Field of Education, ("Official Journal of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – International Treaties and Other Agreements", No. 4/64). Available at: http://demo.paragraf.rs/demo/combined/Old/t/t2006_01/t01_0286.htm

90 Available at: https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sites/default/files/2018-11/Nacionalni%20milenijumski%20ciljevi_1.pdf

91 Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/3186/file/Konvencija%20o%20pravima%20deteta.pdf>

92 Available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/5/67542.pdf>

93 Available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/a/32191.pdf>

94 Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/okvirna-konvencija-za-zastitu-nacionalnih-manjina/168094dfe6>

95 Law on Ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, "Official Journal of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – International Treaties", No. 7/71). Available at: <https://www.minljmpdd.gov.rs/lat/medjunarodni-ugovori-icescr.php>

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1969 (Art. 5, Par. e5). Member States undertake to prohibit and abolish racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone to equality before the law without distinction as to race, color or national or ethnic origin, especially with regard to the enjoyment of all kinds of rights and the right to education and professional training.⁹⁶

Declaration of Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process (the Poznan Declaration – 2019)⁹⁷ by which the signatories, the Prime Ministers from the Western Balkan region, undertake to continue and strengthen their efforts to achieve full equality and integration of Roma men and women, particularly through the implementation and monitoring of the Operational Conclusions of the Seminar on the Inclusion of Roma Men and Women. The signatories have also undertaken to a) use available data (including the results of the 2017 regional survey on Roma in the Western Balkans) to **formulate evidence-based** (i.e. data-based, comment by ZM) **Roma integration policies**, b) establish an appropriate mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of policies for the integration of Roma, by including data relevant to measuring the achievement of the goals established by this Declaration and designating national statistical offices as key institutions responsible for collecting the necessary data in accordance with their programs. The declaration provides precise goals for the enhanced integration of Roma men and women, which must be achieved as a minimum before membership in the European Union. This declaration, among other things, has set two goals related to education: a) a) increasing the rate of enrollment and completion of elementary education for Roma men and women to 90% and the rate of enrollment and completion of secondary education for Roma men and women to 50%.

EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) until 2020.⁹⁸ In 2011, the European Commission adopted the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies until 2020, aimed at combating the socio-economic exclusion of Roma in the EU and enlargement countries by promoting equal access to public services. The EU Framework, adopted in 2011, defines the EU goals for the integration of Roma men and women in four priority areas: education, employment, health and housing. The EU Framework for NRIS until 2020 recognizes access to education as a key priority. The EU Framework recommends that Member States take effective measures to ensure equal treatment and full access to quality and regular education for Roma boys and girls, as well as to ensure that all Roma students complete at least compulsory education.

96 Law on Ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, ("Official Journal of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia", No. 31/67). Available at: https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_ratifikaciji_medjunarodne_konvencije_o_ukidanju_svih_oblika_rasne_diskriminacije.html

97 Declaration of Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process (adopted on 5 July 2019 in Poznan). The time frame of this Declaration is the date of entry into the EU, as stated in the Declaration. Available at: <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/files/admin/docs/5276e54b1a08c61969fea63c0dd27f13.pdf>

98 Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/642827/EPRS_STU\(2020\)642827_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/642827/EPRS_STU(2020)642827_EN.pdf)

The thematic areas that the EU Framework considers important and ranks in terms of their relevance are: 1) fight against early school leaving; 2) taking into account the needs of individual students; 3) encouraging Roma participation in – and completion of – secondary and tertiary education; 4) increasing access and quality of education and care in early childhood; 5) eliminating school segregation; 6) using inclusive education and adult learning; 7) fight against illiteracy; 8) prevention and customized teaching and learning methods; 9) support for the acquisition of skills adapted to the needs of the labor market; 10) support for the transition between educational levels; 11) encouraging the participation of parents; 12) improvement of teacher training; 13) promotion of extracurricular activities; 14) expanding access to other inappropriate placement of Roma in schools for students with special needs.

EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation for 2020–2030 (adopted on 6 October 2020).⁹⁹ The European Commission called on Member States to review their national Roma strategies as the problems of anti-Gypsyism, anti-Roma racism, segregation and discrimination in the EU still exist. In its evaluation report, the Commission concluded that the national plans of the Member States differ significantly in the implementation of common features and minimum obligations established in the EU strategic framework. The new strategic framework takes the same holistic approach as before, but has been expanded to include equality, inclusion and participation.¹⁰⁰ The strategic framework defines sectoral goals for the area of **equality, inclusion and participation of Roma in the EU**. Sectoral goal number 4 refers to secondary education, within which it is stated that *effective equal access to quality inclusive regular education should be increased*. Although the goal is full equality, the Commission has proposed minimum goals for 2030 such as reducing the gap in secondary school completion by at least one third and ensuring that by 2030 the majority of Roma youth complete upper secondary education – the latest available data, against which progress will be measured, show that the current gap in completing secondary school is 55.5% – 28% of Roma have completed secondary school or higher education, while for the general population the percentage is 83.5%. The Strategic Framework applies for EU Member States. Contrary to the previous rounds of enlargement, the integration of Roma is one of the conditions that candidate countries must fulfill for joining the EU.

99 EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020 – 2030, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1813 ; https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/eu_roma_strategic_framework_for_equality_inclusion_and_participation_for_2020_-_2030_0.pdf

100 Available at: <https://www.newipe.net/2023/01/17/evropska-komisija-pozvala-drzave-clanice-da-preispitaju-svoje-nacionalne-strategije-za-rome/>

National legal framework

The right to education is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia.¹⁰¹ In the legislation of the Republic of Serbia, education is recognized as a social, economic and cultural right and is governed by the Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System (LFES),¹⁰² the Law on Elementary Education, the Law on Secondary Education,¹⁰³ the Law on University Education, the Law on the Social Care of Children, the Law on Establishing the Competence of the Autonomous Province, the Law on Textbooks and Other Teaching Aids, and by-laws, including the Rulebook on Detailed Instructions for Determining the Right to an Individual Education Plan, its Implementation and Evaluation (hereinafter referred to as: the IEP Rulebook).¹⁰⁴ The education of members of national communities is governed by the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities¹⁰⁵ and the Law on the Ratification of the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages.¹⁰⁶

Additional support. Article 3, Paragraph 3 of the LFES prescribes the right to upbringing and education with individual or group **additional support in teaching and learning**, and Paragraph 4 stipulates the right to education and upbringing that respects specific educational needs of individuals. However, Paragraph 3 applies to **persons with developmental difficulties and disability**,¹⁰⁷ and Paragraph 4 applies to **persons with exceptional abilities**.¹⁰⁸ Article 12, Paragraph 1 of the Law on Secondary Education prescribes that for students and adults who, due to developmental difficulties and disability, specific learning difficulties, social deprivation, risk of early school leaving and other reasons, need additional support in education, the school shall ensure the removal of physical and communication

101 Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", number 98/06

102 Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System (LFES). ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 88/2017, 27/2018 – other law, 10/2019, 27/2018 – other law, 6/2020 and 129/2021). Available at: https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_osnovama_sistema_obrazovanja_i_vaspitanja.html

103 Law on Secondary Education. ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 55/2013, 101/2017, 27/2018 – other law, 6/2020, 52/2021, 129/2021 and 129/2021 – other law). Available at: https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_srednjem_obrazovanju_i_vaspitanju.html

104 Rulebook on Detailed Instructions for Determining the Right to an Individual Education Plan, its Implementation and Evaluation. ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 74/2018). Available at: <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/pravilnik-blizim-uputstvima-utvrđivanje-prava-individualni-obrazovni-plan.html>

105 Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities. ("Official Journal of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia", No. 11/2002, "Official Journal of Serbia and Montenegro", No. 1/2003 – Constitutional Charter, and "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 72/2009 – other law, 97/2013 – Decision of the Constitutional Court, and 47/2018). Available at: https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zastiti_prava_i_sloboda_nacionalnih_manjina.html

106 Law on the Ratification of the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages ("Official Journal of Serbia and Montenegro - International Treaties, No. 18/2005). Available at: https://ravnopravnost.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/images_files_Zakon%20o%20ratifikaciji%20evropske%20povelje.pdf

107 Article 3, Paragraph 3 of the LFES reads: A person with developmental difficulties and disability has the right to education that respects their educational needs in the education system, with individual or group additional support in teaching and learning or in a special educational group or school, in accordance with this and separate law.

108 Article 3, Paragraph 4 of the LFES reads: A person with exceptional abilities has the right to education that respects their special educational needs, in the education system, in special classes or a special school, in accordance with this and a separate law.

obstacles and, depending on the needs, issue an individual education plan, in accordance with the Law. The goal of additional support in education is to achieve optimal inclusion of students and adults in regular educational work, independence in the peer group and their advancement in education and preparation for the world of work, as stated in Article 12, Paragraph 2, of this Law.

Right to an individual education plan. Article 76 of the LFES stipulates an Individual Education Plan that is prepared for both groups of students under Article 3. In this Article, Paragraph 3 reads that the Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a special act that aims at the optimal development of the child and student and the achievement of education outcomes, in accordance with the prescribed goals and principles, i.e. meeting the educational needs of the child and student. Paragraph 6 of this Article stipulates three types of IEP:

1. IEP1 – adapting the work method and the conditions in which educational work is carried out; learning the language in which educational work is carried out;
2. IEP2 – adapting the goals of the content and the implementation method for the teaching and learning program and the outcome of the educational work;
3. IEP3 – expanding and deepening the content of educational work for students with exceptional abilities.

Paragraph 7 stipulates that the IEP should be issued by the institution's pedagogical professional board at the proposal of the inclusive education team, i.e. the team for providing additional support to the child and student. The interdepartmental commission assesses the needs of children, students and adults for additional educational, health and social support (Article 77 of the LFES). Article 2, Paragraphs 3 and 4, of the IEP Rulebook states that the right to IEP belongs to a child, student and adult who needs additional support due to difficulties in accessing, enrolling and participating in education, if these difficulties affect their well-being, i.e. achieving the outcomes of education, or present a risk of early school leaving, and apply to a child, student or adult who: 3) originates from or lives in a socially unstimulating environment (socially, economically, culturally, linguistically poor environment, or resides in a health care or social institution for a long time); and 4) for other reasons, exercises the right to support in education.

Additional support team. Article 76, Paragraph 9, of the LFES stipulates that the team providing additional support to the student at school consists of a home-room teacher, i.e. a subject teacher, a class teacher, an expert associate, a parent, i.e. another legal representative, in accordance with the needs of the student, a pedagogical assistant, i.e. the student's personal assistant, at the suggestion of the parents or other legal representative. Furthermore, Article 136, Paragraph 9, of the

LFES stipulates that expert teams can be established in the territory of the local self-government unit in order to assist teachers in providing additional supports in teaching, i.e. performing the educational work.

Strategic framework

The issue of improving the social inclusion of Roma children is recognized as one of the priorities in all reference national strategic documents, which include measures and programs the implementation of which is important at the national and local level in order to improve services, the exercising of rights and the position of children. Priorities and goals related to the improvement of Roma inclusion have been integrated into the EU accession negotiation process (Marković, 2020).

Education Development Strategy in the Republic of Serbia until 2030.¹⁰⁹

On 3 June 2021, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted *the Education Development Strategy until 2030* aimed at improving the quality of the education process. The Strategy focuses on student-oriented education and the development of student competencies, as well as on the application of contemporary approaches, methods and techniques. The Strategy represents a plan for continuing reforms that will allow for more children to be included in education, for the education system to respond to the demands of the labor market, i.e. for students to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies that are necessary for the world of work and the future. The Strategy recognizes the need for improving the quality of education of members of national minorities, as well as students with developmental disabilities – this area was recognized in the previous Strategy (Education Development Strategy 2020), and further improvement is foreseen through this new Strategy (Education Development Strategy in the Republic of Serbia 2030).

Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022-2030.¹¹⁰ The Strategy is based on international acts and national regulations related to all areas covered, namely: justice and protection of human and minority rights, inclusion and equality of Roma men and women in society, equality and non-discrimination, education, employment, housing, health care, social protection, civil status. In this sense, *the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2022 to 2030* represents the official policy of the Government towards Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia. The overall goal of the Strategy is to

109 Education Development Strategy in the Republic of Serbia until 2030. "Official Gazette", number 63, dated 23 June 2021 Available at: <http://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2021/63/1/reg>

110 The Strategy was adopted in February 2022 ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", number 30/18). Available at: <https://www.minijmpdd.gov.rs/strateska-dokumenta.php>; Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022–2030. "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", number 23, dated 17 February 2022. Available at: <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/strategija/2022/23/1>

improve the quality of life of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia, while respecting human and minority rights, eliminating discrimination and gypsyism as a form of racism, and achieving greater social inclusion in all segments of society. The Strategy sets seven specific goals, and specific goal 3 is: a developed education system as an inclusive, intercultural, non-discriminatory and safe environment for children of the Roma nationality and all other children, by ensuring full inclusion in preschool, elementary, secondary and university education, and providing support for functional education of adult Roma men and women, while increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanism for combating discrimination and gypsyism as a form of racism.

Action Plan for the period 2022–2024¹¹¹ for the implementation of the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022–2030.

Action Plan for the period 2022–2024. for the implementation of the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022–2030 – for the first time, these public policy documents **are based on the drafting methodology defined by the Law on the Planning System of the Republic of Serbia** and accompanying by-laws, the implementation of which ensures the quality of public policy document preparation.

The Action Plan includes a general and seven specific goals – the overall goal of the Strategy is to improve the quality of life of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia, while respecting human and minority rights, eliminating discrimination and gypsyism as a form of racism, and achieving greater social inclusion in all segments of society. The seven specific goals include specific goal 3, which pertains to: a developed education system as an inclusive, intercultural, non-discriminatory and safe environment for children of Roma nationality and all other children, by ensuring full inclusion in preschool, elementary, secondary and university education, and providing support for functional education of adult Roma men and women, while increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of mechanisms for combating discrimination and gypsyism as a form of racism. As part of this specific goal, indicator 3.3 refers to the rate of enrollment and completion of secondary school among Roma men and women – at least 50% by 2030:

- **Baseline value, 2019 data:** enrollment in secondary school – 28% (girls 27%), completion of secondary school: 61% (girls 49.5%)
- **Target value for 2024:** enrollment in secondary school – 32% (girls 32%), completion of secondary school – 67% (girls at least 49.7%).

111 Action Plan for the period 2022–2024 for the implementation of the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022–2030. "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", number 105, dated 14 September 2022. Available at: <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/drugiakt/2022/105/1>

Operational conclusions on the social inclusion of Roma men and women.¹¹²

The seminar on social inclusion of Roma men and women in the Republic of Serbia has been held every other year since 2011 – the seminar is an opportunity to determine priorities for the future period in the field of social inclusion of one of the most vulnerable population categories in Serbia, in the form of operational conclusions. Such an approach allows for a dialogue of different actors through a broad consultative process and the establishment of a constructive intersectoral dialogue. The operational conclusions represent the states and obligations that Serbia has assumed and will fulfill in a period of two years in order to further improve the status of Roma men and women in Serbia (Marković, 2020).

The report on the implementation of the Operational Conclusions from the seminar *Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period October 2019. – October 2021* reads that the Government of the Republic of Serbia, relevant ministries and the Ministry of European Integration in the capacity of the Technical Secretariat of NIPAK,¹¹³ and institutions competent for the coordination of international aid, will strive to ensure continuity of support for the area of social inclusion of Roma men and women through the presentation of quality projects focused on priority areas of the integration of Roma men and women.

It is important to underline a few Operational Conclusions pertaining to local self-government units, and elementary and secondary education, including the following:

- **Operational Conclusion 6** (part – Intersectoral issues): The coordinating body for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women for the period 2016–2025, in cooperation with relevant ministries and local self-government units, will undertake special measures aimed at the sustainability of mechanisms at the local level, particularly coordinators for Roma issues and mobile teams in LGUs.
- **Operational Conclusion 11** (part – Education): The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development will provide effective and efficient mechanisms for the prevention of early leaving of elementary education of Roma children through: a) recognition of risks and development of a plan for the prevention of early school leaving; b) creation of support measures for students who are at risk of leaving the system; c) ensuring the regularity of class attendance and monitoring academic achievements of Roma students, particularly girls, especially at the transition from the fourth to the fifth grade, through defining the responsibility of parents and the school to monitor and react in cases of

112 Report on the Implementation of the Operational Conclusions from the seminar "Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia", for the period October 2019 – October 2021. Available at: https://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Operativni_zakljucci_z_a_period_2019-2021.pdf

113 Available at: <https://www.mei.gov.rs/srl/srbija-i-eu/ko-je-ko/nacionalni-ipa-koordinator/>

leaving and/or early leaving the education system, in cooperation with the center for social work.

- **Operational Conclusion 12** (part – Education): As of the school year 2019/2020, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development (through the implementation of the IPA14 Project) will provide scholarships for students in secondary education for all students of the Roma nationality who have an average grade of 2.0 to 5.0. The support system will include the active participation of Roma parents and the National Council of the Roma National Minority. The Rulebook on Student Loans and Scholarships has been amended, in terms of the exclusion of performance criteria for Roma students.
- **Operational Conclusion 12.1** (part – Education): **The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development will develop a mentorship system for Roma students attending secondary schools with the aim of reducing the dropout rate in secondary education, with a focus on the education of Roma girls.**

Coordinating Body for Improving the Position and Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women. In June 2021, the Government of the Republic of Serbia rendered the decision¹¹⁴ on establishing *the Coordinating Body for Improving the Position and Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women and Monitoring the Implementation of the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025* (hereinafter referred to as: the Coordinating Body).¹¹⁵

The members of the aforementioned body are the ministers of education, science and technological development, health, labor, employment, veterans and social affairs, state administration and local self-government, finance, construction, transport and infrastructure, justice, European integration, as well as representatives of the National Council of the Roma National Minority and the Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction. At the constitutive session held on 25 August 2021, the Expert Group of the Coordinating Body, which would carry out operational activities, was established.¹¹⁶

The Coordinating Body is responsible for coordinating and directing the affairs of state administration bodies and monitoring the implementation of established

114 Available at: https://www.mgsi.gov.rs/sites/default/files/Odluka_o_osnivanju_Koordinacionog_tela_Strategija_zaiinkluziju_Roma_i_Romkinja.pdf

115 Coordinating Body for Improving the Position and Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women and Monitoring the Implementation of the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2025 to 2025. "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", number 62, dated 17 June 2021). Available at: <https://www.mgsi.gov.rs/lat/dokumenti/koordinaciono-telo-za-pracenje-realizacije-strategije-za-socijalno-ukljucivanje-roma-i> ; <https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/odluka/2021/62/7/reg>

116 Available at: <https://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/rs/odrzana-konstitutivna-sednica-koordinacionog-tela-za-unapredjenje-polozaja-i-socijalno-ukljucivanje-roma-i-romkinja/>

measures and activities for improving the position and social inclusion of Roma men and women, in accordance with the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025.

Current education reform – REdiS 2030

The current education reform is taking place with the technical support of the EU through the project titled *EU Support for Education Reform in the Republic of Serbia - REdiS 2030* (hereinafter referred to as: REdiS 2030), as part of the Negotiation Chapter 26 – Education and Culture.¹¹⁷ Through the project *EU Support for Education Reform in Serbia – REdiS 2030*, the European Union supports the modernization of the education system and harmonization with the standards and practices of EU countries. Among other things, the reform is aimed at harmonizing education in accordance with the interests of students and the needs of the labor market – the reform supports the provision of quality educational opportunities, in accordance with the needs of the labor market.¹¹⁸

The REdiS 2030 Project is part of the Education Sector Reform Agreement, which supports the provision of quality educational opportunities, in line with the needs of the labor market. The project implementer is the MoESTD, and the implementation period is from March 2019 to March 2023.

The project beneficiaries are the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Institute for the Improvement of Education and Upbringing, the Institute for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education, the National Education Council, the National Council for University Education, the Council for Vocational and Adult Education, the Qualifications Agency, the National Accreditation Body, and other competent institutions.¹¹⁹

The project activities are carried out through five components¹²⁰ related to: a) strengthening the capacity of umbrella educational institutions, with the aim of better coordination, cooperation and implementation of the sectoral approach; b) **creation of public policies based on data**, more effective monitoring and reporting on the education system and support for the creation of a new strategic framework for the development of education until 2030; c) mechanisms for quality assurance at all levels of education; d) improving citizens' information about the course of education reform; and e) establishing a dialogue on educational policies with all relevant stakeholders

117 Available at: <https://capacity-building-education-reform.euzatebe.rs/rs/o-projektu>

118 Available at: <https://europa.rs/razvijeni-standardi-kvaliteta-unapredice-visoko-obrazovanje/>

119 Qualifications Agency. Available at: <https://azk.gov.rs/redis.php>

120

One of the results of the REDiS 2030 Project is *the Education Development Strategy in the Republic of Serbia until 2030*, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia on 3 June 2021,¹²¹ with the accompanying Action Plan for its implementation for the period 2021–2023.

Already at the end of 2022, the Ministry of Education rendered the decision to prepare and adopt a new Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy for the period 2023–2026 earlier, as the analysis of the existing Action Plan found that, although it also included the year 2023, the level of planning for this year during the period of its preparation could not be as detailed as for the first two years of the Action Plan's validity.¹²² Furthermore, previous reports on the implementation of the existing Action Plan indicate that it is necessary to foresee additional activities in 2023, as well as that some of the previously planned activities are no longer relevant for achieving the specific and general goals of the Strategy. The preparation and adoption of the new Action Plan will allow for effective, coherent and purposeful planning of resources (human, material, financial – including financial resources from the budget, funds from donors and creditors and others) for the implementation of measures and activities planned by the new Action Plan, and thereby contribute to the achievement of specific and general goals outlined in the Strategy until 2030.¹²³

A part of the comprehensive education system reforms in Serbia within the REDiS 2030 Project is also the issue of **early school leaving**. Early school leaving was the topic of an event organized in January 2022¹²⁴, which brought together representatives of the MoESTD intersectoral working group, which deals with dropout prevention, and key actors from other institutions, civil society organizations and local self-governments. Participants from the EU provided general information on early school leaving and ways to reduce it, and illustrated the current situation in various countries of the European Union. Professors from European universities spoke about the policy of preventing early school leaving in Portugal, Sweden and Poland **with a focus on the social inclusion of students in secondary vocational education**, and **the role of support in education** and recognizing resources in and out of school.

Early school leaving was recognized to affect students' life chances, reducing their opportunities to enter the labor market and often leading to poor health outcomes and social exclusion.

121 "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", number 64, dated 23 June 2021 Available at: <https://www.poslovnibiro.rs/files/File/b/14-4.pdf>

122 Available at: <https://www.pravniportal.com/novi-akcioni-plan-za-realizaciju-strategije-obrazovanja-za-period-2023-2026/>

123 Available at: <https://www.pravniportal.com/novi-akcioni-plan-za-realizaciju-strategije-obrazovanja-za-period-2023-2026/>

124 Available at: <https://www.euzatebe.rs/rs/vesti/sprecavanje-ranog-napustanja-solovanja-isustva-iz-drzava-eu>

It was concluded that effective measures to prevent student dropout from the education system in Serbia could only be implemented through an intersectoral approach and engagement at all levels.

In the period 2024–2026, the education system of the Republic of Serbia will have at its disposal significant non-reimbursable donor funds from the European Union, the maximum utilization of which requires the existence of a credible strategic framework, including a coherent and properly budgeted Action Plan.¹²⁵

Given that *the Recommendations* of the study are based on empirical data (evidence-based policymaking), perhaps there is an opportunity to link the mentorship support institutionalization process to the second components of the REdiS 2030 Project, which is related to the creation of public policies based on data, and to try to include the process of introducing mentorship support in the education system of secondary schools in the Action Plans of both strategies – the Education Development Strategy in the Republic of Serbia until 2030 and the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022–2030. This would limit the process of institutionalization of mentorship support to the period until the end of 2026, and perhaps to some extent open the possibility of initiating the institutionalization process already during 2023.

In addition, the Seminar on the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia should, as scheduled, take place at the end of this year 2023, and it would be worthwhile to consider the progress of the development of the mentorship system for students of the Roma nationality attending secondary schools – as stated in Operational Conclusion 12.1 of 2021.

125 Available at: <https://www.pravniportal.com/novi-akcioni-plan-za-realizaciju-strategije-obrazovanja-za-period-2023-2026/>; <https://www.euzatebe.rs/rs/projekti/eu-za-reformu-obrazovanja-u-srbiji---redis-2030/1>

MAPPING THE STEPS OF THE MENTORSHIP SUPPORT INSTITUTIONALIZATION

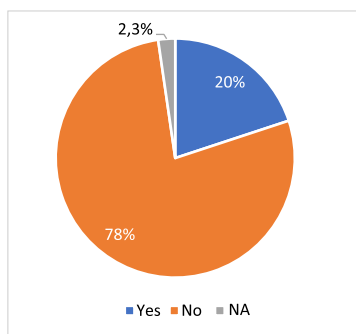
5. Possibilities of institutionalization of the mentorship support program

The possibilities of institutionalization of the mentorship support program are analyzed here on the basis of: a) the evaluation of the readiness of schools to employ mentors at their own initiative, b) the assessment of personnel and financial capabilities of schools, c) the views of mentors and principals on the need to formalize mentoring support and officially introduce it into the education system of secondary schools, c) opinions of mentors and principals on the most important steps of mentorship support institutionalization, and d) conclusions from consultative meetings organized in the period from 5 April to 25 May 2023.

Readiness of schools to employ mentors at their own initiative

Although the Roma Education Fund, as of August of the school year 2021/22, after 15 years of continuity, suspended the mentorship support program, a smaller part of mentors continued to provide support for students.

Figure 5.1: Mentorship support in the school year 2022/23 – after the cancellation of the program



Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259)

The data show that 52 mentors (20%), within 49 secondary schools (23%), continued to provide mentorship support during the school year 2022/23.

The support includes a total of 204 secondary school students, who live in 33 municipalities/settlements within four statistical regions. According to the mentors, mentorship is mainly provided for students who have remained from last year or students who have become eligible for scholarship this year. Figure 5.1 and Table 5.1.

The region of Southern and Eastern Serbia has the highest number of mentored students (76) in 24 secondary schools, it is followed by the region of Šumadija and Western Serbia (61 in eight schools), and Vojvodina (60 in 13 schools), while Belgrade has the least students, only 7 of them in four schools. Table 5.1.

At the present moment, the school implements mentorship support as some employees (and their number is SMALL) have recognized it as an effective method of

working on the advancement of students (Principal, 51 years of age, region of Šumadija and Western Serbia).

All secondary schools that have provided mentorship support to Roma students in the previous period, and particularly mentors, represent a significant resource of knowledge and experience – the institutionalization of mentorship support without this resource would not have a real support.

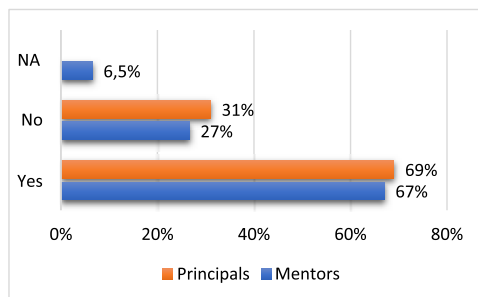
Table 5.1: Overview of mentorship support in the school year 2022/23 – after the cancellation of the program

Statistical region	Number of municipalities / settlements	Number of secondary schools	Number of mentors	Number of mentored students
Vojvodina	8	13	14	60
Belgrade	4	4	4	7
Southern and Eastern Serbia	17	24	25	76
Šumadija and Western Serbia	4	8	9	61
Total:	33	49	52	204

Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259)

When asked whether their school is today ready to employ a mentor at its own initiative if a certain group of students need it – more than half of mentors (67%) and principals (69%) answer affirmatively. Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2: Readiness of schools to employ mentors at their own initiative



Source: Questionnaire for mentors (abase: 259) and questionnaire for principals (base: 145)

Slightly more than a quarter of mentors (27%) and almost a third of principals (31%) believe that their schools are not ready to employ a mentor at their own initiative. These are mostly principals who assess that their schools do not have sufficient employee capacity or financial resources to independently employ a mentor. Mentors whose mentoring years of service are no longer than a year / two years, i.e. started

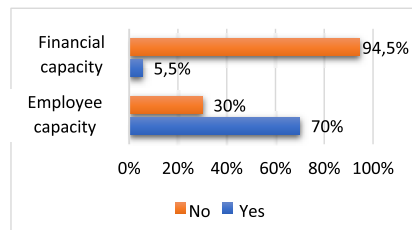
during the last couple of years, also assess that their school is not ready to employ a mentor independently.

The key limiting factor for schools to employ a mentor at their own initiative is finances, i.e. the lack of funds to provide mentors with compensation for their mentoring work.

Our teachers certainly support students prone to dropping out. Mentors should receive compensation for their work; from entering school to applying for scholarships, mentors are available to those students and their parents even outside of working hours (Principal, 60 years of age, the region of Southern and Eastern Serbia).

Employee and financial capacity of schools

Figure 5.3: Employee and financial capacity of schools



Source: Questionnaire for principals (base: 145)

As assessed by principals, slightly more than two-thirds of schools (70%) have the employee capacity to introduce mentorship support as a regular activity; however, only 5.5% of schools have the financial capacity to ensure the continuity and sustainability of mentorship support. (Figure 5.3)

Local self-government units (LGUs) play a key role in financing secondary education (in addition to pre-school and elementary) and it would mean a lot, according to a number of principals, if LGUs could provide the necessary support for Roma secondary school students, primarily in terms of *providing Internet access, free transportation, free textbooks and accessories, including laptops, given that modern teaching implies, pursuant to the law, students' digital competencies.* (Principal, 48 years of age, Šumadija and Western Serbia).

In addition, the provision of additional support for inclusive education is the responsibility of local self-government units, and the level of economic development of LGUs has a direct and significant impact on whether additional support will be provided (World Bank and UNICEF, 2022). The *Sector Financing Report* (World Bank and UNICEF, 2022.) states that underdeveloped low-income municipalities and low-quality schools do not receive targeted support from their LGUs.

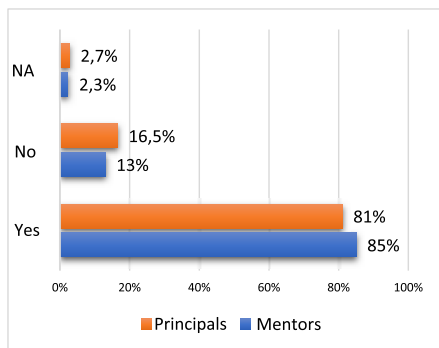
On the other hand, cross-sectoral funding (which includes education, health and social support with a holistic approach aimed at children) has not been introduced at the national or local level to support the implementation of inclusive education; instead, the funding for inclusive education remains segmented, which further contributes to existing inequality.¹²⁶

126 OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC SPENDING IN EDUCATION IN SERBIA - General sector financing document 2022. World Bank, UNICEF, 2022. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/23186/file/Pregled%20javne%20potro%C5%A1nje%20u%20obrazovanju%20u%20Srbiji.pdf>

Views on the institutionalization of mentorship support

After 15 years of the project implementation of mentorship support, a vast majority of mentors and principals of the involved schools share the opinion that it is necessary to officially introduce this measure of student support into the secondary school education system.

Figure 5.4: Mentorship support should move from the level of project activity to the level of a systemic measure of student support



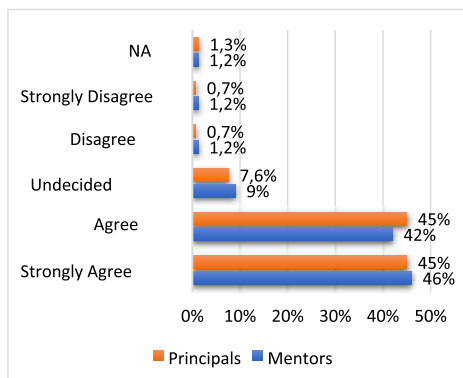
Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259) and questionnaire for principals (base: 145)

A vast majority of mentors (85%) and principals (81%) believe that mentorship support should move from the level of project activity to the level of a systemic measure of support for students within secondary schools.

A smaller number of mentors (13%) and principals (16.5%) who do not share this opinion include those who came into contact with mentorship support in the last few months or a year or two at the most. These are the

principals who were appointed to this position a few months ago or mentors whose mentoring experience started in the last year or two – the reasons for such attitudes are short mentoring years of service and insufficient mentoring experience.

Figure 5.5: The most important prerequisite for the institutionalization of mentorship support is that it is necessary for a certain group of students



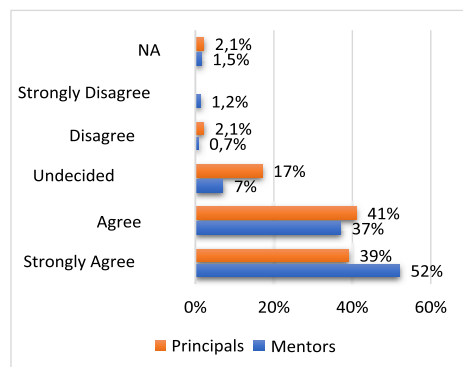
Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259) and questionnaire for principals (base: 145)

Almost all mentors and principals share the view that the most important prerequisite for the institutionalization of mentorship support is that it is necessary for a certain group of students. The percentage of those who fully agree and those who agree is almost identical in both groups of respondents.

Out of 259 mentors, 227 agree – 119 fully. Out of 145 principals, 130 agree, 65 fully. Figure 5.4.

Few mentors (1.2%) and principals (0.7%) do not agree at all with the view that the most important prerequisite for the systematic introduction of mentorship support is that it is necessary for a certain group of students. Figure 5.5.

Figure 5.6: Mentorship support should be an integral part of the secondary school program and curriculum



Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259) and questionnaire for principals (base: 145)

Mentorship support should be an integral part of the program and curriculum of secondary schools and an active systemic measure of support for all students who need it – 93% of mentors (52% fully) and 80% of principals (39% fully) agree.

Only 7% of mentors and 17% of principals state that they are undecided on this issue, while 1.9% of mentors and 2.1% of principals do not agree (at all) with the view that

mentorship is a measure of support that, in addition to Roma children, should also be provided for all students who need it and who come from similar, if not the same, socio-economic conditions.

Both groups of respondents point out that it is necessary to look at the needs of the students, make a categorization and define the target groups of students who need this measure, and to ensure equal availability of this type of support to all structures of students. As underlined by a vast majority of mentors and principals, it is necessary to: a) include all students of the Roma nationality, not only those with better performance, and b) provide mentorship not only for Roma students but also for other marginalized groups of students.

The three most important steps towards institutionalization

The most important steps of the institutionalization of mentorship support, as assessed by mentors and principals, are listed here. The experience and current challenges they face in their everyday work have dictated their proposals and the choice of the most important steps for the official introduction of mentorship support in the system of state secondary schools.

Out of a total of 404 respondents (259 mentors and 145 principals), almost one third (125 or 31%) did not answer the question “Which are the three most important steps towards the institutionalization of mentorship support?”.

Multiple answers were given by 68% of mentors (175 out of a total of 259 respondents) and 72% of principals (104 out of a total of 145), and the answers received from both groups of respondents were grouped into 13 thematic categories. (Table 5.2)

According to the frequency of responses, the three most important steps, as assessed by mentors, are (Table 5.2):

1. Establishing an institutional (legal) framework, i.e. legal regulation of mentorship support and its introduction into the education system
2. Preparing the Rulebook on Mentorship Support, professional standards and competencies of mentors, a work schedule and supervision of mentors, and
3. Solving the issue of financing mentor salaries.

As assessed by principals, the first three most important steps are (Table 5.2):

1. Solving the issue of financing mentor salaries
2. Establishing an institutional (legal) framework – legal regulation of mentorship support and its introduction into the education system, and
3. Training and professional development of school employees for the role of mentors, with obtaining a certificate.

The different perspectives of mentors and principals suggest that everyday professional roles can influence the perception of institutionalization steps.

Table 5.2: The three most important steps towards the institutionalization of mentorship support

The three most important steps – multiple responses:	Mentors	Principals
Establishing an institutional (legal) framework – legal regulation of mentorship support and its introduction into the education system	80	35
Preparing the Rulebook on Mentorship Support, professional standards and competencies of mentors, a work schedule and supervision of mentors	53	26
Solving the issue of financing mentor salaries	46	68
Providing mentorship support for all students who need it - assessment of support needs	37	23
School status of mentors – job classification, teacher workload, motivation, selection and number of mentors	35	29
Training and specialization of school employees for the role of mentor, certificate	30	31
School support for appointed mentors	23	9
Analysis of the results of the mentorship support program so far – public presentation of results, increased visibility, and informing competent institutions	19	17

Support by the local self-government and local institutions for the school and the mentored student	16	14
Initiation of a new mentorship support program	9	2
Parents – support from the students' environment, cooperation with Roma organizations	7	4
Introduction of mentor assistants	3	4
It is necessary to introduce the Romani language in schools	1	-
Other	6	3
I don't know	6	4
NA	84	41
Total:	455	310

Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259) and questionnaire for principals (base: 145)

Conclusions from consultative meetings

In the period from 5 April to 23 May 2023, the REF organized five consultative meetings in four statistical regions of Serbia (Belgrade, Vojvodina, Šumadija and Western Serbia, Southern and Eastern Serbia). The consultative meetings were held in Niš, Novi Sad, Kragujevac, Vranje and Belgrade. A total of 106 representatives of 78 institutions and organizations participated in the five meetings held – of which 73 (69%) were women and 33 (31%) were men.

The goals of the consultative meetings were 1) to analyze the current mentorship practice, its significance, advantages, achieved results and challenges, and 2) to identify/propose possible steps for the institutionalization of the mentorship support program.

The agenda of the meetings was divided into three parts. In the first part of the meetings (opening), the mentorship program was presented. In the second part, a discussion was held on the current mentorship practice, its significance, advantages, achieved results and challenges. In the last, third part, the possible steps of the institutionalization of the Mentorship Support Program were considered.

The conclusions from all the five consultative meetings are summarized here within four topics that stood out as dominant during the analysis: 1) previous mentorship practice – significance, advantages, achieved results, 2) previous and current challenges, 3) proposals for the improvement and expansion of mentorship support, 4) proposals for the institutionalization of the mentorship support program – various perspectives. The conclusions have been thematically processed and are presented in the form of a narrative that allows for the acquisition of better insights into the authentic experience of various stakeholders and the layering of information obtained.

Previous mentorship practice – significance, advantages, achieved results

This topic was elaborated in detail at the meetings held in Novi Sad and Niš, and considerably less so at the other three meetings in Kragujevac, Vranje and Belgrade – during the meetings in these three cities, the participants, at some moments, emphasized more general topics, e.g. the role of LGUs and local action plans, peer to peer mentorship, the importance of educational inclusion, etc.

Positive assessment. Overall, a vast majority of participants, at all five consultative meetings, are almost unanimous in their positive assessment of mentorship support and its contribution so far, emphasizing that its importance for Roma secondary school students is extremely great, and that mentorship support has helped students stay in the education system and achieve better results.

A vague and questionable attitude. A smaller number of participants in some cities have a questionable attitude regarding how to explain to the majority population that someone has a mentor because he/she is a member of a national minority, and why some Roma students receive mentorship support while others do not. The necessity should be explained (Niš). Some believe that the mentorship program is a kind of exclusive service – and why mentorship support is needed when the support is the responsibility of the school – all we have heard about mentorship so far are ongoing things that should be done. These are all things that schools already do – career guidance, support for students. When making recommendations, it is necessary to compare what already exists in the system and what is already expected of teachers, and what is missing in the current regulations and practices of the Ministry (Kragujevac).

There is no information about mentorship support. A small number of participants in some cities report that they do not have any information about mentorship support, that they do not know which secondary schools were included in the program, who the mentors were, and what responsibilities and results they had. Not all of us here know what mentorship support is. We live in a Roma settlement and I have never heard that anyone was in this program (Vranje). I have been a mentor for 7–8 years, and about 13 students have participated. I have received a letter from the school principal asking me to be a mentor to that student. Even today, it is not clear to me what the goal of the mentorship program is. It was not clear to me what the goal was (Surdulica).

Significance of mentorship support and achieved results. The number of children from the village who are included in secondary school education has increased. The number of secondary school students is higher today than 15 years ago (Niš). The number of excellent students who can apply for a regular scholarship is growing

(Novi Sad). The contribution lies in the fact that the students now have positive role models in their peers - so they can see themselves in that role. There used to be talk of 1,000 or so secondary school students, now we have 4,000 students applying for scholarships - this is the result of these support measures (Novi Sad). This has helped children a lot to stay in the system and achieve great results (Niš). The program was significant for the Roma community, we started to understand each other better and to support each other, after getting to know a little more about the culture and customs. The biggest advantage was getting to know the essence and Roma culture. We had classes with half Roma and half non-Roma; they didn't cooperate at all until we started with programs, extracurricular activities, and that introduction helped. Children see a friend in the teacher and no longer hesitate (Niš). The change is big – children are integrated, the number of children from vulnerable groups has increased and other children have been sensitized, so now we have no problem having drivers for five children of Roma nationality. An acceptable environment, less and less discrimination, we had *"I want to be a Roma too" situations*. Children accept it much more easily than adults, it used to be a much bigger problem (Novi Sad). The mentorship program contributed to the reduction of child marriages (Novi Sad). Now there are 20 self-declared Roma in the school, I speak from the perspective of secondary school, which is still not compulsory by law (Kragujevac). I want to praise mentorship as it has produced results. In Kraljevo, we have about 20 students enrolling in secondary schools since we introduced mentorship, out of 21 secondary school students 18 have received a scholarship. In the last 3–4 years, I do not know what is happening with the mentorship program, but the connection with the civil sector has been lost. We have 5 mentors in Kraljevo. The program is really effective; it helps Roma students and gives us the opportunity to cooperate with schools much more. We already have a good relationship with mentors, it's a system – civil society organizations, mentors, schools (Kraljevo). The mentorship program has contributed to the Roma community – it is important for parents when their child has support within the school (Novi Sad). It is important that this program be included in the system (Kragujevac). The mentorship program is good as it raises the self-confidence of the students. I worked to make them feel part of our family. As for scholarships, I managed to ensure that everyone received them (Vranje). I have been a mentor in Preševo for 2 years. From my point of view, the extension of mentorship funding is not important. My students will not be left without my support regardless of the fact that I am not funded. My personal success is my 2 female students, I took them to university. The girls wanted to enroll in a course, I asked them why they did not enroll in a higher school. The girls are very good, I have succeeded as a mentor and a person. If it will be financed, it would be nice, but if it is not, no big deal. There are three students at my school who receive scholarships and mentorship support (Vranje). We have a lot of Roma children, especially in three-year vocational education classes. We do not have any Roma children dropping out of school. We initially had a lot of mentored students, then the number finally fell to one student as they did not meet the criteria to receive

scholarships. Those who enroll in secondary school generally graduate and find employment, bakers, butchers, Deleze employs them (Belgrade).

The impact on students. They experienced a lot of discrimination, and with support they could get started, it motivated them, gave them the wind at their back and a feeling that someone supported them. The atmosphere is good, which is good for the entire class – friendship and socialization are spread, we include them in important activities. We introduce them to the fact that there are easier and more difficult faculties (Novi Sad). The children get to know themselves, their affinities, qualities, their potentials, and decide to continue their education. It is also important for parents that their child has support within the school, that they know who they are leaving their child with (Novi Sad). Most often, after the second grade they become brave enough to strengthen themselves. They develop strength to recognize themselves and their capabilities and potential to be equal to their friends and the community (Novi Sad). Part of the scholarship helps the child deal with existential obstacles in order to feel better (Novi Sad).

Crucial role of the mentor. The mentor has become an unbreakable bond among students, teachers and homeroom teachers, a bond between family and school. Mentorship is a 24-hour job (Niš). The mentor has a more intimate and open relationship, it is a person of trust given only to me and I can tell them everything – so it is a more intimate relationship than the relationship with the homeroom teacher. We have a child in the 4th grade who has never declared herself as a Roma girl in order not to be discriminated against. We motivated her and she ultimately enrolled in university as a Roma girl (Novi Sad). A mentor is a person who helps a student to remove obstacles on the way to education, but also in their private life. He/she helps the child to address challenges while setting goals at the same time, and with other adults tries to be a mediator and find the best way to support the child to persevere. Mentors are mostly both parents and siblings and support. When we address them, they feel special, they feel safe, they feel that they have someone of their own (Novi Sad). A mentor can always cooperate with parents and encourages children to continue their education (Novi Sad). In my opinion, a mentor cannot be just anyone from school, but a person who has a big heart and is ready to give of themselves. It is something else, regardless of our financial situation in education, a person must have a big heart and help (Novi Sad). The mentor's role is crucial, a person who wants to help will create a positive atmosphere around that student, with colleagues; let us allow that child attend classes online so that we do not limit or condition them, let us make it possible for that child not to give up. High school is not compulsory and we use that as an arrogant argument. The mentor's role is to show each child that they are desirable, welcome, accepted. It is the backbone of the mentorship program – how are you, are you okay, are you tired?; to show them that they are equal and desired (Novi Sad). The relationship between the teacher and the student is different. The communication was much

more difficult 10 years ago. There is no gap we used to have. The mentor responds to teachers' complaints. When it comes to grades, knowledge was never graded and that was the problem of Roma students; now they are graded as they deserve. Lower expectations because you are Roma no longer exist (Novi Sad). The mentor, which is even more important, recognizes that the child is threatened, labeled, that they have a status in a group that harasses them, that at the same time they can help the child to be affirmed – programs are implemented at the school level to ensure the child is accepted – that they do not feel unsafe, as there is no learning in such situations. In a child who is not safe, not accepted and does not feel good in the community, that psychosocial support is crucial (Novi Sad). The children come from a family environment where the parents are not at a high educational level and do not know the basic things to be a good support for their children. Our role is to empower parents, educate them and encourage them in the same direction, to help children successfully complete their education. A primary role and all other segments, emotional support, advice. They see us as friends that they maybe cannot find in other persons (Novi Sad). Not everyone can be a mentor, we have to talk about the competencies of mentors, they are mostly pedagogues, psychologists, as that is in their job description. Directors choose us as they believe we can do the job well (Kragujevac). The mentorship program brings results as you work individually. You monitor the student, inform the teachers that that student is at some risk, and all attention is focused on that student (Kragujevac). In all situations, and in this one concerning the education of Roma and mentors, and the mentorship program for members of the Roma nationality – I think that the biggest contribution is that of mentors'. The system has paved the way by introducing inclusion as the main direction of educational development, but those who actually carry this out are mentors (Belgrade). Recording what they needed, we often gave them something that was relevant to the class, not only for direct communication with the children, and I think that the REF's role is very valuable, the fact that they have connected these people, they have become one community, we have learned from each other. The mentors had precise tasks. Sometimes the mentors themselves told us that they would like to know more about Roma culture. They felt like an extended arm of the Roma community. For that reason it was important for them to feel competent. **Some mentors had such a practice that the entire system must be proud** (Belgrade).

Previous and current challenges

Unless mentorship is continued, it will lose its purpose and meaning, schools will lose children. If this link is lost, the whole program will be lost, and the children will lose the confidence to progress, to do something in life, and we had good results, to graduate from university, to stay in touch after that (Novi Sad). Unless mentorship is continued in the future, it will lose its purpose and meaning.

It will lose children. (Novi Sad). This break in the program is bad, children who are currently in the education system will not receive additional support (Niš). I am talking about what is left of the program – there are scholarships left, secretaries help students apply for scholarships (Kragujevac). I have heard that in one school mentorship support is dying because they no longer have funds, which were symbolic, but also significant (Novi Sad). There are almost no students in the secondary school, their number is at the level of statistical error, another problem is Roma girls, it is particularly crucial to promote the education of Roma girls (Novi Sad). The number of Roma students is decreasing, somewhere we have dropping out in the transition from secondary school to university (Novi Sad). The number of students has decreased and dropping out is growing. We have a reduced number of students in elementary school, in the southern part of Serbia (Niš). I currently have 12 Roma students who do not show up at school. It is less important now whether they will enroll in faculties (Surdulica).

The average grade, scholarships and dropping out. Students receiving scholarships were more regular. The group that is the most critical was not included in the transition to state scholarships. A lot of children wanted to have that scholarship, they didn't meet the requirements, they had low grades, this year we only have one female student who has kept the scholarship (Niš). If you include students who have a good average grade – that is a good average grade from 2.5 to 3.5. If you mean to keep students in schools, so that they don't drop out, then we haven't included the right students (Surdulica). This year, we have enrolled 20 Roma students in the 1st grade, but 6 of them have already left school. We have a problem with keeping them in school. I do not like the scholarship awarding criteria as we have students in a more difficult situation who do not receive anything (Vranje). If you have 3 students who have received scholarships, and you have another 5–6 who have not, but are quite similar, one of them will ask why they do not receive it and will lose motivation to go to school. Then the fault lies with you as a mentor (Vranje). I have 12 students in the second grade, the children are smart and know the rules when the competition comes out. I also have children who do not receive a scholarship as they do not have an average grade of 3.5. The number of unexcused absences is also looked at. They know they will receive it if they are good (Vranje). During 2014/15 and 2015/16, when students applied with an average grade of 2.5–3.5, we had the best results; later on, when this was revoked, it was worse, everything collapsed. The changed conditions destroyed everything they had been building for several years. Without mentors, that success would not have been the same. Raising the threshold to 3.5 has worsened the results (Niš). The number of mentored students decreased as the average grade criterion increased (Niš). We have been in the program as a school since 2014; at one point we had 15 students; as those criteria fell, the number decreased. Support is needed for students with lower grades, so that more students are included; the average grade should range from 2 to 4 to increase the number of students. Those children who

have a higher average grade, maybe they should be rewarded, and those with lower grades should be stimulated (Niš). We need to include more children in mentorship scholarships. We have a lot of Roma children, but they are not included because of those criteria (Niš). When we fill out the documentation for scholarships, they do not know a lot when they fill it out, maybe some meetings should be organized already in May where they would be provided with explanations about scholarships. They are not sufficiently informed. Assistance in applying for scholarships is quite significant (Niš). The main problem with dropping out is those children who have a lower average grade and do not receive scholarships. Children who have a lower average grade are in a more difficult financial situation. A scholarship would be crucial for them to stay in education, and this may be an omission and should be resolved somehow (Novi Sad).

We cannot learn about Roma anywhere – stereotypes and prejudices still exist. We cannot learn about the Roma anywhere, we take it partially, in the education system we do not learn anything about the Roma, we have nowhere to learn, and in the teaching process there are only stereotypes about the Roma. There are still stereotypes in schools. The school administration continues to call them “Gypsies” despite warnings. Teachers convince us that it is better for them to go to special schools because they will get free textbooks. If you do not teach mentors about the culture and language in what they have as a task, none of this will make sense. They would rather not declare themselves as the Roma. Teachers are very vain – do you know anything about them except that they are lazy, dirty, that they steal, nobody knows anything else about them. These are things that must be looked at and pointed out (Belgrade). As for the language, I do not expect mentors to speak the Romani language as it is difficult, but they should know the basics. The mentor must know, the Serbian language has 7 cases, Romani has 8. Different children will be empowered (Belgrade). Sometimes a prejudice can be heard at a training session and you are astounded. I would really like that precise instructions are given to principals who choose mentors; I think that 95% of mentors are people who are highly motivated, they do not receive much money, but they care. As for discrimination, there are laws, regulations, it is very well set out, it is just necessary for people to become aware, sometimes people do discriminatory actions unintentionally (Belgrade).

We are lowering the knowledge threshold to retain children, persuading teachers to give passing grades. These are the children who were usually given passing grades in elementary school, and it is difficult for them to study when they enroll in secondary school. Those levels of knowledge do not have to exist, let us start with the lowest level and see how far they can go. They need to be systematic and contact us whenever they encounter a problem, we can always find a solution (Novi Sad). First, we are lowering the knowledge threshold to retain children; we will have graduate engineers, but how functional will it be? (Novi Sad). At the end

of the year, we help if teachers need to be persuaded to increase the average grade for the children to receive scholarships. We are trying to make their average grade slightly higher so that they can finish school (Novi Sad).

Problems of Roma students. Children and their parents face problems of a legal nature – they cannot obtain identity cards and exercise the basic right to get a job (Novi Sad). Due to a low average grade, they most often opt for a three-year school (Novi Sad). The problem is that sometimes they are not willing to declare themselves as the Roma (Novi Sad). I have had a case where a child wanted to enroll in a graphic design faculty; the boy did not arrive in time for the entrance exam. I was convinced that as a Roma he would have some benefits, but he did not manage to enroll (Novi Sad). Most of them do not know how to study (Novi Sad). The problem is in their socialization – they come, children from the village, it is a big transition when they come to Ruma, the problem is in their socialization and fitting in society (Novi Sad). The cooperation with parents is excellent, but in some cases children work with their parents on construction sites and it is something that is difficult for them to deal with; the child is good and in that case they are either sleepy or asleep, and I cannot help with that (Novi Sad). When we had online classes, I would call a child, they would say “I will send the homework tonight when I come home after I finish everything”, and they would send it. In such situations, we can make an exception to allow the children to fulfill their obligations so that they can move on (Novi Sad). They have capacity but no finance. Affirmative measures give them the possibility of further advancement. It's a shame that the potential remains at the secondary school level. The parents say they do not have money, and the child thinks that he/she does not have any potential and does not enroll in any school. The child simply does not have the time to study, nor the conditions, they opt for a three-year school although they have the capacity for other professions. That is why, in my opinion, it would be good to introduce it in elementary schools as well. This is another type of support, not a pedagogical assistant. It means individualization, that you have a completely open relationship, that you can say everything and you do not get hurt. For me, mentorship support is exceptional (Novi Sad). It is extremely important to bring them to the end of the third grade and, considering their structure, it is a great success of the mentors if they manage to finish secondary school and secure their livelihood. Many children attend practical instruction afterwards and support the entire family (Novi Sad). We have a problem with some Roma families who encourage their children to get married earlier and get a job. We would need training on how to deal with it, how to help those families (Niš). Problems include the family situation, customs, financial situation (Niš).

Proposals for the improvement and extension of mentorship support

Comprehensive cooperation. We all have to work together, the local community, students, parents, we have to introduce them to the culture, to motivate them for further education, to present to the parents what education will bring to the children (Niš). Cooperation between mentors and pedagogical assistants – the cooperation should be a bond (Niš).

A special focus on girls is needed. Encouraging four-year education and the education of Roma girls, with more serious support (Novi Sad). Girls from rural areas usually only finish elementary school as it is compulsory, and then we do not have dropouts; it is thus important to have mentorship support. Individualization 1:1. When the child is in puberty, in addition to their professional orientation, they also need support in order not to get married. Some parents cannot deal with it, some can, that is why support is necessary. As soon as marriage starts, so does violence, and it all follows one another (Novi Sad). Even more assistance is needed for girls as they are mostly below the scholarship threshold and, in addition, despite various interventions and support, it happens that they drop out even a few months before finishing secondary school (Novi Sad).

The mentorship program should be brought down to elementary schools. I think this kind of support would be beneficial in elementary schools as well. A pedagogical assistant works with all children, and here individualization is needed for the socialization and preparation (Novi Sad). The mentorship program should be brought down to elementary schools so that students could be forwarded to some vocational schools from that level. The mentor in elementary school recognizes the student and directs them assessing whether they should go to high school, three- or four-year school (Novi Sad). There should be continuity, especially when they are in the seventh or eighth grade and do not know which major to enroll in, they are not informed (Novi Sad). This is needed in elementary school as well, it is mostly done by homeroom teachers. However, expert associates should work with them a little more, if they can and want to (Novi Sad). I suggest, if the state takes this over, that the program be brought down to elementary school; my main reason is that Roma students come from vulnerable families who cannot support their children, and those children do not survive elementary school. I agree that mentorship is important in elementary schools, as children who enroll in secondary school manage to complete it (Belgrade).

Mentorship support for all children who need it, not only for Roma children. Schools have faced the situation where not only Roma but also non-Roma children have the obligation to work and earn money, and it is their priority in relation to school. Schools should make a kind of agreement with them under which Google

Classroom would be a place for students to do their duties, and some balance needs to be found so that school is not neglected and existence is secured, and school should provide opportunities at the same time. The child will leave school if the school does not have understanding for that. Even in the case that they are absent for two weeks, the school should make an exception (Novi Sad). Support for children of all national communities who have learning needs, and it is assumed that mentorship support would be an effective form of support (Novi Sad). For all students who need it, not only for Roma children. While support was part of the project, it was justified to deal with the Roma only; if it is included in the system, we cannot deal with the Roma only, we have vulnerable groups at school other than the Roma. We have the problem of how to deal with only one group of vulnerable children, while we have many other groups. The system has to recognize all children (Niš).

Proposals for the institutionalization of the mentorship support program – various perspectives

Sustainability. As for sustainability, mentorship should never be continued through projects. It should be proposed that the costs of mentorship be included in the budget. Recommendations for the state to form a budget and include this as a budget item based on an action plan (Niš).

Mentor as a new job position. The mentorship program was more like an obligation, as we had to prepare reports, but we also received financial compensation, so we had some satisfaction. If it becomes institutionalized and additional workload is introduced for teachers, I am an expert associate with 50% of working time. This needs to be elaborated with additional teaching workload for teachers. It should be introduced as additional teaching workload. The local community would not be involved, but the Ministry of Education; it should be introduced as a new job position and they would have a salary. The teachers who have a shortage of teaching workload could supplement it with this work (Niš).

By no means a new job position. We do not have enough children, the conditions are catastrophic, a new job position is not an option. I used to perform this job, not for compensation but as a person in the field, an operative. Maybe this is a supplement to the teaching workload of colleagues who are losing classes. This is not a new job position. I am a history teacher with 50% of teaching workload, this should by no means be a new job position. What does that mean? I will not be a teacher but a mentor, that cancels each other out (Niš).

Separate teaching workload should be provided. If a teacher does not have enough classes, how will it be realized? Will it become a problem? It should not be done by people who do not want to and have no affinity for it. These are the results we are presenting today, if we let anyone do this it will not be good. Separate

teaching workload should be provided. If we include this in the regular work of expert associates as part of my 40 classes, they can ask teachers what to do with their remaining working hours. It is not paid for separately. The third is potentially dangerous, if we are going to reduce the workload, that must not be allowed. If someone has 30 Roma students, the Ministry can say this is one full teaching workload (Novi Sad).

Supplementing the teaching workload is out of question, such as optional subjects or civic education, it must not be the case, a relationship of trust needs to be established, maybe it can be a fee, but not a supplement to the teaching workload. I work in three schools, I cannot teach, only a teacher/expert associate cannot do it. We were paid under a special service contract. If this were to be done by a teacher or an expert associate, I could do something beyond 100%, but it is not a systemic solution in the school where I work, I cannot have 100% (Novi Sad).

Through applying for assistant teachers. We apply for assistant teachers every July, so it can be implemented here as well. This can also be introduced here, if you have students, you should look for mentors. That is the principle. The first step is for our people at the Ministry of Education to understand that it is necessary. They should not be convinced, but the state should deal with it itself. I have visited a number of institutions, and we have finally broken the ice and managed to persuade the state to give scholarships to students enrolling in 3-year schools. This has now been included in the draft law. In order to keep them in the local self-government, they need to allow our schools to have free access to enrollment. I am asking that we are returned into the system; I am talking about 3-year schools as that is where the Roma are enrolled; they need to give us back up to 15-16 profiles from the current three profiles in the class. I do not need 30 tailors, I need 10. You have classes with 5 students and pay teachers with classes of 5 students. Let us combine this ourselves. Perhaps requests should be sent to local self-governments, regarding the sustainability of mentorship, we have a good cooperation with Roma coordinators. The communication with parents is not good (Niš).

This has to be solved systemically. Parents do not trust us, they think we want to deceive them, so we call their representatives, to explain it to them, and that is how we win them over. This has to be solved systemically. It is all about money. A principal has a 20% higher salary than a teacher and much more responsibilities. Huge responsibility, little financial support. The state supports this, but if someone else finances it. The state must recognize this and solve it systematically. We have said it should go through the teaching workload, and it is the salary. There must be continuity, if children know that someone is controlling them, then they will not drop out (Niš).

Various options. The class teacher should be the mentor. In all schools where there are Roma students, the MoESTD should pay 5% of the salary to one person to

deal with Roma students. How much do class teachers have? – 4%. We can make a proposal to the Ministry, we can jointly formulate it (Kragujevac). Schools should apply each year; every school year the schools and the percentage of time allocated to this program should be determined. It is up to the school to design and create it. The school can appoint more than one teacher and can opt for 1 or more teaching workloads (Kragujevac). That would be an option as extra work. As for how it will be legally defined, we will see that, but the mentor should cover a smaller number of students and have some experience, we do not need anyone from the outside. They need support to deal with it (Vranje). A teacher has 6 or 7 lectures, and imagine that they have 10 or 15 more students to work with. It should either be a job position or what is used to be (Vranje). As for funding, if you want it to enter the institutions, it must be submitted as a request, but it should not be financed by the Ministry only, it needs to be brought down to the local level – this would encourage local self-governments to think about it as well (Vranje). When it comes to funding in our municipality, Albanian and Serbian are separated where we have Roma students. When it comes to local self-government, it would be problematic for them to provide funding for this, as in the part of the school where Albanian is used, about 50 students have left secondary education, and they are a national minority. This is problematic. And in Preševo, the vulnerable group is the Serbs. This should also be taken into account (Preševo).

Implementation of mentorship support through a local action plan. We need to think about how to connect it, to transfer some segments of this program to the local level, such as scholarships, the mentorship program, as these are our teachers. We can do that through a local action plan. It would be a step forward – transferring this to the local level (Kragujevac). If powers were to be delegated and brought down to the level of local self-government, then the allocation of funds could not go through the local action plan, from the position of the city towards the mentors, but through civil society, as that is the method of the budget system, payments. That transition period of 5 or 10 years, when the mentorship program would be systematically supported by the Ministry of Education, is missing. When something needs to be transferred from the central level to local self-government units, it is difficult. Few cities like the city of Kragujevac have the opportunity to implement a mentorship program through a local action plan. You need to provide tangible evidence for it to be systemically accepted. If you want to do something quickly, if you have lobbying, support and examples of good practice, you can go faster, but you must have donor support (Kragujevac). Mentors' cooperation with civil society organizations and pedagogical assistants, and the Coordinator for Roma Issues. It is necessary to recognize NGOs that can help in reaching institutions (Niš).

An example of good practice – Municipality of Ruma. Our municipality has solved the problem so that all Roma who have not received a scholarship will receive a municipal one. Here is one piece of information: the municipality of Ruma

started giving scholarships; at the beginning there were 42 students in the school, now there are 87, and we only have three children in secondary school who have discontinued their education. The number has doubled and 3 children have dropped out of school, which is an excellent result. The scholarship is 5,000 dinars, and two years ago it amounted to 3,000 dinars (Ruma).

Previous informal institutionalization of mentorship support – various perspectives. Mentorship support has been present in secondary schools throughout Serbia for 15 years already – does this mean that mentorship support is already (somewhat) institutionalized? If it is not funded by the state, it is not institutionalized. The moment the funding stops, it stops as well, except for a few enthusiasts. A principal cannot request it if it is not supported. I agree that it is not institutionalized. This occupation or role does not exist in the documents of the Ministry of Education, it is not mentioned. Yes, 15 years is a significant contribution, it really needs to be institutionalized. If this practice had not already produced excellent results in Vojvodina, it would not have continued. **Mentors are recognized by Roma students, the program is recognized. That's no small thing** (Belgrade).

CONCLUSION – MAPPING THE STEPS OF THE MENTORSHIP SUPPORT INSTITUTIONALIZATION

6. Conclusion – possible steps of the mentorship support institutionalization

Previous informal institutionalization of mentorship support. The mentorship support program institutionalization process began at the moment when the problem of Roma secondary school students was recognized (low enrollment in secondary schools, high dropout rate, low educational outcomes, low graduation rate, etc.) and when an innovative project measure (mentorship support together with scholarships), which should begin to solve and eliminate that problem, was created and implemented.

The leading role in the initiation and introduction of mentorship support in secondary schools was played by the highest state institutions in the field of education – the Provincial Secretariat for Education of the Autonomous Province Vojvodina in the first seven years, and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development in the following eight years, first directly through the TARI Project, and later indirectly through other projects. This support measure thus had the necessary institutional legitimacy from the very beginning.

Furthermore, mentorship support was implemented within state secondary schools and employed school staff (funded by the state) to act as mentors (with symbolic project funding of mentor fees).

For the previous 15 years of practice, mentorship support has successfully gone through the first two phases of the institutionalization process: a) the early phase – the phase of recognizing problems and designing an appropriate active support measure that as a response to the identified problems, and b) the phase of practical implementation and internalization of mentorship support. The last phase remains – the phase of regular systemic implementation and standardization.

The informal institutionalization lasted fifteen years. During that time, this support measure achieved legitimacy in several ways to become formally institutionalized, i.e. to be legally recognized and regulated. This is evidenced by the facts that it is: a) accepted by mentors as a useful measure that provides targeted results, b) recognized in secondary schools as an effective measure of inclusion, c) recognized by Roma secondary school students and representatives of the Roma community at the local and national level as a necessary form of support, d) indicated in international and national reports as a necessary measure that contributes to the inclusion of Roma secondary school students,¹²⁷ e) listed as an example in studies that

127 National Report on Inclusive Education in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2019 to 2021. Available at: <https://prosveta.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Nacionalni-izvestaj-o-IO-2019-2021.pdf>

analyze the progress of educational inclusion of Roma children,¹²⁸ and f) included in the Operational Conclusions on the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women for the period of October 2019 – October 2021.¹²⁹ Operational Conclusion 12.1. – as part of this conclusion, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development has undertaken to develop a mentorship system for Roma students attending secondary schools with the aim of reducing the dropout rate in secondary education, with a focus on the education of Roma girls.

The analysis of the collected data show that the elements of mentorship practice are also indicators of its informal institutionalization so far:

- Indicator 1: The initiator and implementers of the mentorship support program
- Indicator 2: The purpose of mentorship support – reasons for its introduction
- Indicator 3: The essence of the mentorship support program – the program's coherence with applicable legislation and educational goals of the school
- Indicator 4: Duration of the mentorship support program
- Indicator 5: Number and type of secondary schools involved in mentorship support
- Indicator 6: Number and profile of mentors
- Indicator 7: Number of training days and number of participants in accredited trainings for mentors
- Indicator 8: The mentor's role and work methods
- Indicator 9: Number of mentored students
- Indicator 10: Outcomes and results of mentorship support

Coherence of mentorship support with applicable legal framework. Mentorship support is not prescribed by any applicable legal act of the Republic of Serbia.

Applicable laws and by-laws prescribe *individual or group additional support in teaching and learning* – LFES, Article 3; Law on Secondary Education, Article 12, Paragraph 1; IEP Rulebook, Article 2, Paragraphs 3 and 4.

The Law on Secondary Education (Article 12, Paragraph 1) prescribes that for students and adults who, due to developmental difficulties and disability, specific

128 *Dostupnost usluga i mera podrške za decu romske nacionalnosti na lokalnom nivou [Availability of services and support measures for Roma children at the local level]*, created by Jelena Marković. Available at: https://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Dostupnost_usluga_i_mera_podske_za_decu_romske_nacionalnosti_na_lokalnom_nivou.pdf

129 Report on the Implementation of the Operational Conclusions from the seminar "Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia", for the period October 2019 – October 2021. Available at: https://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Operativni_zakljucci_za_period_2019-2021.pdf
Available at: <https://www.mei.gov.rs/srl/srbija-i-eu/ko-je-ko/nacionalni-ipa-koordinator/>

learning difficulties, social deprivation, risk of early school leaving and other reasons, need additional support in education, the school shall ensure the removal of physical and communication obstacles and, depending on the needs, issue an individual education plan, in accordance with the Law. The goal of additional support in education is to achieve optimal inclusion of students and adults in regular educational work, independence in the peer group and their advancement in education and preparation for the world of work (Article 12, Paragraph 2).

Both the LFES and the Law on Secondary Education, including by-laws such as the IEP Rulebook, prescribe additional support for two groups of students – students with developmental difficulties and disability, and students with exceptional abilities. The criteria for determining students who need additional support are evidently based on the intention that all groups of students should be covered by education, regardless of the number of members of a particular group.

The Law on Secondary Education prescribes additional support due to *social deprivation, the risk of early school leaving and other reasons* – however, these reasons are not exclusively related to students with *developmental difficulties and disability*, but also to students who do not have developmental difficulties or disability, but come from a non-stimulating socio-economic environment within which they are deprived of most of the conditions necessary for regular schooling and achieving better educational outcomes.

The legal framework overlooks the group of students who do not have developmental difficulty and/or disability, but are socially excluded and come from non-stimulating socio-economic environments where they are deprived of the conditions necessary for regular schooling and achieving better educational outcomes, and are also at a great risk of leaving school early.

This group of students also needs additional support in education, and this is exactly mentorship support as a type of additional support that has proven to be an effective response to the problems faced by these groups of students.

Due to these deficiencies in both laws, among other things, Roma students have been unjustifiably classified in the group of students with developmental difficulties and enrolled in "special schools" for years. Their parents often opt for a special school as the children in these schools are provided with food and possible accommodation. The Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2022–2030 reads that the practice of enrolling Roma children in schools for the education of children with developmental difficulties (so-called "special schools") is still present: 18% of children from the total population of children in "special schools" are children of Roma nationality (IPSSOS, MPNTR and UNICEF, 2016 survey).¹³⁰ That is why it is important to start with consistent prevention of this kind of practice, as planned in the said Strategy. The Strategy also

130 Analysis of the quality of education in schools and classes for the education of children with developmental difficulties, (IPSSOS, MPNTR and UNICEF, 2016 survey). Available at: <http://defektolozi.srbije.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/UNICEF.pdf>

states that, according to the Special Report of the Ombudsman, progress has been made in terms of preventing the enrollment of Roma children in so-called "special schools", but that there are still cases where children are unjustifiably enrolled in these schools, and it is estimated that with additional support, these students could enroll in regular education. Also, the segregation of Roma children in education is a problem that persists. The ombudsman states that the data collected from school administrations show a worrying trend, i.e. that the phenomenon of segregation is not decreasing, but is actually increasing.

The mentorship support program includes students of Roma nationality, a vast majority of whom do not belong to either of these two groups referred to in both laws, although, according to the experiences of the mentors, among the mentored students there may also be some students of Roma nationality who are particularly gifted and have exceptional abilities, and some students of Roma nationality who have certain developmental difficulties.

Article 12 of the Law on Secondary Education and Article 3 of the LFES should be amended so that these articles of both laws include groups of students who, due to social exclusion and any other reasons not related to developmental difficulties or disability, are at risk of leaving school early.

Amendments to the laws based on data would allow decision-makers to normatively regulate the need for additional support for all students who need it, but who do not fall into either of the two groups referred to in the aforementioned articles of both laws.

Mentorship support is in all elements coherent with the both Laws governing secondary education – from the reasons for which it was introduced as a project measure, the selection of mentored students who need it, to the essence and scope of support, the teacher in the role of mentor, the individualized approach to the mentored student, the method of mentoring work and support goals, mentor-student relationship of trust and respect, and the representation of students' interests inside and outside the school..

Everything that is foreseen as additional support for the two groups of students within both laws, has been upgraded in mentorship support, and instead of the elements of a medical approach, there are two authorities: the authority of the teacher/mentor and the authority of the student's needs.

The significance of the informal institutionalization so far is that the decade-and-a-half long practice and the achieved legitimacy of this support measure leave no room for possible doubts about whether it is necessary to institutionalize mentorship support or not.

Completing the process of institutionalization of this support measure includes a very wide range of key arguments – from the one that is the most significant and refers to a continuous increase in the rate of inclusion of Roma secondary school students and the rate of their graduation from secondary school, to the one that refers to the country's strategic framework and arises from the Action Plan for Chapter 23 (according to which the Republic of Serbia has undertaken to increase the enrolment of children in the education system at all levels, from the compulsory preschool program to university education).¹³¹

Mapping the steps of the mentorship support program institutionalization.

Mapping the steps essentially means determining the sequence of activities that should be undertaken in order to formally complete the process of institutionalization of the mentorship support program. These are *large* steps that include groups, i.e. various clusters of activities within each individual step.

Step one. As we are talking about institutionalization as a process that enters the domain of public policies, i.e. the domain of a planning system, it is necessary **to first start with the Law on the Planning System**, (Article 2, Paragraph 3),¹³² which prescribes all elements of the management of the public policy system and medium-term planning, including: a) planning documents; b) participants in the planning system; c) the process of managing the system of public policies; d) the process of harmonizing the content of planning documents with the content of other planning documents and regulations; and e) connecting the process of adoption and implementation of public policies with the medium-term planning process.

This first of all indicates that the sequence of activities that should lead to the intended goal is not a matter of individual decision, but one of the first among numerous topics that are a matter of agreement and a joint decision of a certain (for this purpose formed) group of experts who will coordinate and lead the process of completing the institutionalization of the mentorship support program.

Accordingly, there are two options for completing the institutionalization process.

The first option refers to three central, consolidated activities: a) formation of an intersectoral team of experts from various fields, who will, based on the data from the *Recommendations* b) create a road map for the institutionalization of the mentorship support program, and c) harmonize it through a public consultative process of key actors: ministries, national bodies and councils, social partners and civil society organizations.

131 Action Plan for Chapter 23. Available at: <https://www.mpravde.gov.rs/files/Akcioni%20plan%20PG%2023%20Treci%20nacrt-%20Konacna%20verzija1.pdf>

132 Law on the Planning System of the Republic of Serbia, ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 30/2018). Available at: <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-planskom-sistemu-republike-srbije.html>

The final outcome of this option is a) an agreed Road Map that is (time- and budget-bound) in accordance with the elements of the planning system, and b) represents a strategic guidance for making/adopting a decision, including an implementation and monitoring plan for the implementation of the decision on the mentorship support institutionalization.

The second option refers to the undertaking of a series of activities of various levels aimed at the consideration, elaboration and finalization of four key, ultimately aggregated thematic units: a) initiation of the process of legal and institutional regulation of mentorship support through cooperation with key stakeholders; b) initiation of the development of appropriate normative acts in cooperation with experts in the field of education and public policies; c) initiation of the development of professional standards and guidelines for the mentoring work of teachers and other school team members, including the method of training and professional development of mentors, with experts in the field of education, and d) initiation of the process of formalizing the mentorship support program into appropriate public policy documents – from laws to by-laws acts and further to strategic documents.

The team that should coordinate activities within this option can be formed through a dialogue and cooperation with key actors, stakeholders and experts from the educational and reference sectors.

The final outcome of this option depends on the team itself – guided by predefined general and specific goals, the team should, at the very beginning of its work, determine, in addition to financial resources, a deadline and, what is particularly important, outline the expected results based on which all upcoming activities will be planned. In other words, they should use a results-driven approach in creating their work and action plan.

Step two. Once a decision is made within the REF team on one, another or a completely new, third option that is in compliance with the Law on the Planning System in all its elements, the implementation of the second most important step should be started.

The second most significant (large) step is the establishment of cooperation with the national *Coordinating Body for Improving the Position and Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women* (hereinafter referred to as: the Coordinating Body), i.e. with the Expert Group of the Coordinating Body,¹³³ which is in charge of implementing operational activities.

133 Decision on the Establishment of the Coordinating Body for Monitoring the Implementation of the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025. ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", Nos. 17/2017 and 84/2020) Available at: http://demo.paragraf.rs/demo/combined/Old/t/t2020_06/SG_084_2020_011.htm

The Coordinating Body is the first address for two reasons – the structure of the Coordinating Body members and the prescribed tasks of this body.

The members of the aforementioned body are the ministers of education, science and technological development, health, labor, employment, veterans and social affairs, state administration and local self-government, finance, construction, transport and infrastructure, justice, European integration, as well as representatives of the National Council of the Roma National Minority and the Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction.

The Coordinating Body is responsible for coordinating and directing the affairs of state administration bodies and monitoring the implementation of established measures and activities for improving the position and social inclusion of Roma men and women, in accordance with the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma Men and Women in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2016 to 2025.

It is necessary to familiarize the Coordinating Body with the findings from the *Recommendations* and to present to them the reasons testifying to the need for mentorship support to be formally introduced in the education system of secondary schools. As the *Recommendations* of the studies are based on empirical data (evidence-based policymaking), they provide a well-argued insight into the reasons for which it is necessary for mentoring support to be introduced in the education system of secondary schools.

Given the role and tasks of the Coordinating Body, i.e. its Expert Group, it is necessary to consider the ways in which the Coordinating Body, as a whole or through representatives, can and should contribute to the process of legal regulation of mentorship support.

Step three. It is necessary to form an intersectoral team of experts from various fields who, based on the expertise of individual members and data from the *Recommendations*, will manage the mentorship support institutionalization process – until the end of the process.

MENTORSHIP SUPPORT IN COUNTRIES IN THE REGION

7. Mentorship support in countries in the region

A review of education systems in countries of the region was carried out with the aim of determining a) whether and in which of the countries of the region there was mentorship support for Roma secondary school students, and b) whether it was institutionalized or the institutionalization process had begun.

The desk analysis of education systems in the countries of the region was carried out on the basis of available international and national reports, analyses, studies and official websites of competent institutions. The selection of sources, whose data will be presented in this work, was guided by two key criteria: a) current data, not older than 2–5 years, and b) the topic – secondary education of the Roma with an insight into mentorship and other types of support.

The analysis has shown that mentorship support is not formally institutionalized in any education system in the countries of the region. In North Macedonia, Montenegro and in certain cantons in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Tuzla), mentorship support is implemented as a project measure within projects supported by the REF. In Croatia and Slovenia, mentorship support for Roma secondary school students does not exist – as determined on the basis of available Internet sources.

This section provides brief analytical data on the demographics, position and educational inclusion of Roma in the countries of the region, with special reference to secondary education and possible specificities within each country.

The countries of the region are listed in alphabetical order.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Demographics. According to official data, there are about 17,000 Roma living in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the data that the Ombudsman Institution has received from the Roma Association, approximately 50,000 Roma live in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, of whom about 35,000 Roma live in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than 3,000 live in the Republic of Srpska, and about 2,000–2,500 Roma live in the Brčko District.¹³⁴ In the report of the European Commission for the year 2021, it is estimated that about 58,000 Roma live in Bosnia and Herzegovina (out of a total population of 3.2 million) and that this is the most vulnerable minority and the most numerous of the total of 17 national minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/e/110497.pdf>

¹³⁵ Available at: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/bih-romi-manjina-obrazovanje-prava/31524088.html>

Specificities. The education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is extremely complex, decentralized, often non-complementary, with the absence of adequate vertical and horizontal responsibility and coordination.¹³⁶ Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a state ministry of education. This area is under the jurisdiction of the Bosnia and Herzegovina entities – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the relevant ministry of that entity has a coordinating role, and the powers for education policy are left to the cantons. Each of the total of ten cantons has a ministry of education and its own laws, as well as pedagogical institutes.¹³⁷

Inclusion of Roma. According to the 2022 European Commission report¹³⁸, anti-Roma stereotypes and prejudices, discrimination and anti-Gypsyism continue to hinder the social inclusion of Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Significant reforms are still needed to ensure non-discriminatory, inclusive and quality education for all, including overcoming the practice of "two schools under one roof".¹³⁹ Roma are discriminated against in all spheres of life, starting with housing, employment, education¹⁴⁰, health care, etc. There is not enough political will to apply for certain programs, there is disunity of the system and this prevents Bosnia and Herzegovina from using the available funds to their full capacity.¹⁴¹ Bosnia and Herzegovina has undertaken to invest greater efforts and financial resources in solving the mentioned problems in the coming period by creating new action plans for the period 2021–2025. The adoption of action plans for the social inclusion of Roma in April 2022 is a positive step in this regard.¹⁴² The authorities in the Tuzla Canton, where about 750 Roma students attend school, have also announced a pioneering step. In this canton, the process of introducing "the Romani language with elements of national culture" as a subject in elementary schools has been initiated – it is intended to be an optional subject for all children, not only for Roma, and the curriculum is

136 Available at: https://www.academia.edu/2523304/Obavezno_srednje_obrazovanje_u_Bosni_i_Hercegovini_-_Compulsory_high_school_education_in_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina_Perspectives

137 Radio Free Europe, 8 April 2022. Available at: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/bosna-i-hercegovina-jezik-romi/31791331.html>

138 Available at: <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina%20Report%202022.pdf>

139 Some of the schools operating according to the principle of „two schools under one roof” are the “Berta Kučera” Elementary School and “13. rujan” in Jajce. These are two schools located in one building. The “Berta Kučera” school is attended by Bosniaks, while “13. rujan” is attended by Croats. The division is obvious, the whole school is literally split in two. One group enters from one side, and the other enters from the other side. There are two guards, two teacher’s lounges, two cleaners, everything comes in two’s. The only thing that is the same is that the school bell sounds at the same time. Available at: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/ustavni-sud-bih-odluka-dvije-skole-pod-jednim-krovom/31391591.html>

140 Available at: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/ustavni-sud-bih-odluka-dvije-skole-pod-jednim-krovom/31391591.html>

141 In the opinion of the President of the Roma Information Center „Kali Sara”, Dervo Sejdić. Available at: <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/sejdic-romi-u-bosni-i-hercegovini-su-diskriminirani-u-svim-sferama-zivota/210408058>

142 Available at: <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina%20Report%202022.pdf>

being developed. A working group has also been formed and it has visited schools in Aleksandrovac, Serbia, that teach Romani language subjects.¹⁴³

Secondary education. Secondary education is compulsory in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There are no reliable data on the educational structure of the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to some sources, about 15% of students in Bosnia and Herzegovina leave secondary education during or after the first grade, i.e. 20% of them leave secondary education during the first two grades. Differences in finishing secondary school are noticeable from canton to canton, i.e. from entity to entity.¹⁴⁴ According to GIZ data, there were 311 secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the school year 2018/19.¹⁴⁵

Scholarships, mentorship and tutoring. EU and REF BiH contributed to the improvement of education and employment of Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the regional project *Increasing Educational Opportunities for Roma Students and Young Roma Men and Women in the Western Balkans and Turkey*, which lasted three years – from February 2019 to 30 June 2021. The project was implemented in the region of Kakanj and Visoko. The Roma Support Center "Roma-len" from Kakanj and "Euro Rom" Roma Association from Tuzla were involved in the implementation. The project worked to improve the position of members of the Roma population and increase their chances of completing quality education and employment. More than 345 Roma children, young Roma and their parents in Bosnia and Herzegovina benefited from the three-year regional project.¹⁴⁶ As part of the Project BIH 042 *Support for Roma Secondary School Students through Scholarships, Mentorship and Tutoring*, which is financed and technically supported by the REF, co-financed by the City of Tuzla, and implemented by the "Euro Rom" Roma Association from Tuzla, students who regularly attend secondary school are regularly provided with: a) financial support in the amount of **EUR 40 per month**, for a duration of 9 months, **b) mentorship** through providing additional support for scholarship holders so that they can regularly attend classes, improve their performance, and take part in additional and supplementary classes; in the preparation for continuing schooling at higher levels of education; in setting higher goals by becoming their "second parents" at school; developing skills in the field of learning, work and study planning, etc., and c) **tutoring** – through providing support in additional classes in certain school subjects, preparation for taking the matriculation

143 Available at: <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/bosna-i-hercegovina-jezik-romi/31791331.html>

144 *Obavezno srednje obrazovanje u Bosni i Hercegovini - Compulsory high school education in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Perspectives*, Nina Branković, Adis Arapović, Tuzla, January 2010. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/2523304/Obavezno_srednje_obrazovanje_u_Bosni_i_Hercegovini_-_Compulsory_high_school_education_in_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina_Perspectives

145 Available at: https://www.giz.de/en/downloads_els/Srednje%20stru%C4%8Dno%20obrazovanje%20u%20BiH%20u%20brojkama.pdf

146 Available at: <https://www.portal-udar.net/ref-eu-novi-pristup-obrazovanju-zaposljavanju-roma-u-bih/> ; <https://www.portal-udar.net/eu-i-ref-u-podrsce-obrazovanju-treba-veci-angazman-drzave-u-stipendiranju-roma/>; <https://europa.ba/?p=61870>

exam, and preparation for taking the entrance exam at the university.¹⁴⁷ In the school year 2015/16, 58 students received scholarships, of whom 53 remained in the school system; in the school year 2016/17, up to 90 Roma students attended secondary school;¹⁴⁸ in the school year 2019/20, 89 scholarships were approved in the territory of the Tuzla Canton.¹⁴⁹ During the school year 2020/2021, there were 43 students in the final grades, of whom 40 students graduated (93%), and 6 enrolled in university.¹⁵⁰ The "Euro Rom" Roma Association, whose projects have been funded by the REF Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2008, announces competitions every year for the awarding of scholarships to students of the Roma national minority who regularly attend a three- or four-year secondary school in the territory of the Tuzla Canton, ending in the school year 2020/2021.¹⁵¹ As stated by the "Euro Rom" Association, when it comes to students who attend secondary schools and are of Roma nationality, their work has led to a decrease in the secondary school dropout rate from more than 50% before their intervention to 2.35%, while in 2020/21 there were no students of Roma nationality who left secondary education. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Tuzla Canton has announced a competition for the award of scholarships to regular Roma secondary school students and other national minorities for the school year 2021/2022.¹⁵²

As a reminder, REF Serbia held two training sessions in Tuzla, one for Module 1 (4 and 5 December 2015) and the other for Module 2 (24 and 25 May 2016). The participants of the training for Module 1 in 2015 were 23 teachers from 16 secondary schools from the territory of the Tuzla Canton who were appointed as mentors for 53 students, beneficiaries of the scholarship/mentorship/tutoring program. Mentors were employed as teachers in the schools attended by scholarship holding students. All participants were mentors for the first time. They had various experience in education: some were young teachers, others were very experienced, and there were those who, in addition to teaching, performed the role of principal or were assistant principals and expert associates in the schools. The participants of the training for Module 2 in 2016 were: 18 teachers from 16 secondary schools in the Tuzla Canton who were appointed as mentors, 5 representatives of the "Euro Rom" organization from Tuzla, and the Director of the Pedagogical Institute of the Tuzla Canton. Mentors were employed as teachers in the schools attended by scholarship-holding students. One participant was a new mentor, while the other participants continued

147 Available at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/296164533788305/permalink/4197871656950887/?paipv=0&eav=AfZ64mr797198GbBHCTFHD0i3q1YCXeondogIz7gEUKOWzno3J5ZmydQt4sYztnLcE&_rdr

148 Available at: <http://www.stipendije.ba/novost/stipendije-za-ucenike-romske-narodnosti-sa-podrucja-tuzlanskog-kantona>

149 Available at: <https://www.portal-udar.net/stipendije-za-89-mladih-roma-i-romkinja-iz-tuzle/>

150 Available at: <http://www.bhstring.net/tuzlauslikama/tuzlarije/viewnewnews.php?id=104176>

151 Available at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/296164533788305/permalink/4197871656950887/?paipv=0&eav=AfZ64mr797198GbBHCTFHD0i3q1YCXeondogIz7gEUKOWzno3J5ZmydQt4sYztnLcE&_rdr

152 Available at: <https://as-tv.ba/stipendiranje-ucenika-srednjih-skola-romske-nacionalnosti-na-podrucju-tuzlanskog-kantona/>

the mentoring activities initiated in the previous school year. The instructors of REF Serbia at both training sessions were: Radmila Gošović and Borislava Maksimović. See Annex 2.

Montenegro

Demographics. According to the Montenegrin census data (2011), 6,251 persons declared themselves to belong to the Roma nationality (1.01% of the total population), while the population of Egyptians numbered 2,054 persons (0.33%).¹⁵³ The largest number of Roma live in the territory of Podgorica (3,988), followed by Berane (531), Nikšić (483), Bijelo Polje (334), Herceg Novi (258), while the largest number of Egyptians live in Podgorica (685), Nikšić (446), Tivat (335) and Berane (170).¹⁵⁴ The Council of Europe estimates that about 25 thousand Roma (and Egyptians) live in Montenegro.¹⁵⁵ In the middle of 2021, there were 619,211 inhabitants in Montenegro.¹⁵⁶

Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians. In the 2019 Report of the European Commission for Montenegro, it is stated that the Roma are still the most vulnerable and discriminated community in Montenegro. Despite some progress, which has been achieved particularly in the areas of housing and health, the Report states that Roma and Egyptians, especially those from the domicile population, have limited access to various spheres of life, while women are exposed to double discrimination. Almost all marginalized Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro (94%) face severe material deprivation, compared to 49% of non-Roma who live near them.¹⁵⁷ The *Torino Process 2018-2020 Montenegro*¹⁵⁸ report states that at the request of the European Commission related to the education of marginalized groups, particularly Roma and Egyptians (RE), the Government of Montenegro has established a special *Directorate for the Education of Members of Minority Nations* and Other Minority National Communities. A promotional campaign for the enrollment of Roma and Egyptians in pre-school education, elementary and secondary schools is carried out regularly. The ROMACTED 2019 Report¹⁵⁹ states that in terms of access to education, the development of new services and their diversification are evident, although the state still relies on project and volunteer support in providing services.

153 Available at: Statistical Office (MONSTAT), <https://www.monstat.org/cg/page.php?id=322&pageid=322>

154 Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/analiza-servisa-crna-gora-romacted/1680a01522>

155 Available at: <https://crd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/The-Wall-of-Anti-Gypsyism-%E2%80%93-Roma-in-Montenegro-Mne.pdf>

156 Available at: <https://www.monstat.org/cg/novosti.php?id=3758>

157 Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/analiza-servisa-crna-gora-romacted/1680a01522>

158 Available at: https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-01/TRPreport_2019_Montenegro_MN_0.pdf

159 *Analysis of legal and institutional mechanisms for the provision of social integration services for Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro with an analysis of uncovered competences and missing support services*, ROMACTED Program, Promoting good governance and empowerment of Roma at the local level, Joint Program of the European Union and the Council of Europe, June 2019 (Hereinafter referred to as: ROMACTED 2019) Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/analiza-servisa-crna-gora-romacted/1680a01522>

Secondary education. Secondary education is not compulsory in Montenegro and includes general secondary education, which is carried out in high schools and secondary mixed schools and lasts four years, and secondary vocational education, which is carried out in vocational secondary schools and secondary mixed schools and can last two, three or four years, and it is also carried out in secondary art schools.¹⁶⁰ The number of Roma and Egyptians who complete secondary school is growing year by year and, as stated in the *Strategy of Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021–2025*, 135 students attended secondary school in the school year 2018/19, 149 students attended secondary school in the school year 2019/20, and 174 students attended secondary school in the school year 2020/21.¹⁶¹ During the school year 2017/2018, there were 110 Roma students in secondary schools.¹⁶² There are 50 secondary schools in Montenegro, 48 state, one private and one state-private secondary school.¹⁶³

Scholarships, mentorship, tutoring and educational intermediaries (mediators). Since 2018, the Ministry of Education of Montenegro **has formally taken over the award of scholarships to secondary school students of the Roma and Egyptian community** who regularly attend three- or four-year secondary schools in Montenegro.¹⁶⁴ Scholarships were provided by the REF of Montenegro until that year. According to the 2019 ROMACTED report, scholarships are paid to all eligible secondary school and university students in the amount of EUR 60.00. i.e. EUR 150.00, respectively. For the school year 2019/20, the Ministry of Education awarded scholarships to 121 Roma and Egyptian secondary school students in the monthly amount of EUR 60.00, and to 13 university students in the monthly amount of EUR 150.00.¹⁶⁵ Mentorship support is implemented in elementary and secondary schools in Montenegro for Roma and Egyptian students.¹⁶⁶ The report of the European Commission on Montenegro for the year 2021¹⁶⁷ states that there is a slight increase in the number of students of the Roma and Egyptian population attending secondary school, by 174 children.. In the education system of Montenegro there are mentors, tutors and educational intermediaries (mediators) – only educational intermediaries have been formally introduced in the education system of Montenegro since the school year 2018/2019. Mentors are responsible for

160 Available at: <https://www.gov.me/clanak/obrazovni-nivoi-2>

161 Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights, Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021–2025. Available at: <https://wapi.gov.me/download/ac62f522-fc63-4408-b164-546aefa52a4b?version=1.0>

162 Available at: https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-01/TRPreport_2019_Montenegro_MN_0.pdf

163 Available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/7b159e59-e9fd-4bc0-b1de-553ff15637df>

164 Available at: <https://mladiinfo.me/stipendije-za-i-polugodiste-ucenicima-ama-romske-i-egipcanske-populacije/>

165 Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights, Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021–2025. Available at: <https://wapi.gov.me/download/ac62f522-fc63-4408-b164-546aefa52a4b?version=1.0>

166 MINUTES of the 16th (thematic) session of the Committee for Human Rights and Freedoms of the Parliament of Montenegro, held on 5 November 2021. Available at: <https://zakoni.skupstina.me/zakoni/web/dokumenta/sjednice-radnih-tijela/2957/7698-.pdf>

167 Available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/0aef2dec-5785-497d-8dba-527932ac124c>

monitoring students and taking care of their regular attendance and performance in school, helping them to master the subjects in which they have failing grades. For the school year 2017/18, a total of 34 mentors were employed in secondary schools in Montenegro, out of the 20 that were foreseen by the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2016–2020, while tutors were appointed for 16 students.¹⁶⁸ In the school year 2019/20, 44 mentors (teachers) were employed in secondary schools for 120 Roma and Egyptian secondary school students.¹⁶⁹ Although mentorship support has not been formally introduced into the education system of Montenegro, its importance is fully recognized by the competent institutions, and for the purposes of implementing mentorship support, the Government of Montenegro allocates funds to non-governmental organizations that deal with this issue.¹⁷⁰ In the school year 2020/2021, NGO Young Roma announced a Competition for appointing mentors for Roma and Egyptian students who are regular students in the ninth grade of elementary school, and in the same year, they announced a Competition for employing teachers/mentors for Roma and Egyptian students who are regular secondary school students.¹⁷¹ The *Torino Process 2018-2020 Montenegro*¹⁷² states that, in order to better connect schools and certain communities, the role of mediator has been introduced in the education system, who also has the role of a social worker, and is financed from the projects of REF Montenegro. The report of the European Commission for 2021 states that currently 22 educational intermediaries (mediators) for Roma and Egyptians are employed in seven municipalities and paid by the Government. However, educational mediators for Roma can only be employed in schools attended by at least 70 Roma children, and out of 22 educational mediators, only 11 are Roma. The same report states that in order to improve the quality of Roma education, 47 mentors were employed within the project to work with 169 Roma in the final grades of elementary school, and 48 mentors for 157 Roma in secondary schools. There are no official data on the total number of Roma children who should attend school.¹⁷³

As a reminder, REF Serbia has organized training for mentors in Montenegro twice, a one-day training session for Module 1 in Podgorica (13 June 2014) and a two-day training session for Module 2 in Budva: 26–27 September 2018.¹⁷⁴ A total of 19 mentors, teachers and expert associates of secondary schools from Podgorica, Tivat, Berane, Podgorac, Nikšić, Cetinje and Bar participated in the training for

168 Report on the Implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy for 2017, March 2018, page 13, Available at: <http://www.minmanj.gov.me/biblioteka/izvjestaji>

169 Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights, Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2021–2025. Available at: <https://wapi.gov.me/download/ac62f522-fc63-4408-b164-546aefa52a4b?version=1.0>

170 Available at: <https://mladiromi.me/rom/aktivnostii/1049-konkurs-za-izbor-mentora-osnovnoskolskim-ucenicima-re-populacije-2021-2022>

171 Available at: <https://mladiromi.me/rom/aktivnostii/857-konkurs-za-izbor-mentora-srednjoskolskim-ucenicima-re-populacije-2020-2021>

172 Available at: https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-01/TRPreport_2019_Montenegro_MN_0.pdf

173 Available at: <https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/0aef2dec-5785-497d-8dba-527932ac124c>

174 Available at: <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/node/26337>

Module 1 in 2014. The coordinator of the REF project "Support to Secondary School Students through Mentorship and Scholarships", Nataša Vlahović from the Institute of Education of Montenegro, also took part in the training. The training was led by instructors of REF Serbia: Marija Aleksandrović, Borislava Maksimović and Zdenka Milivojević. There were 32 participants from 10 cities in Montenegro at the training for Module 2 in 2018. These were teachers employed in secondary vocational schools attended by Roma and Egyptian scholarship-holding students. The mentors were selected from secondary schools throughout Montenegro. Among the participants, there were mentors who had been engaged as mentors for many years, and there were also mentors with little experience in providing mentorship support. The training was led by instructors of REF Serbia: Radmila Gošović and Milena Jerotijević. (Annex 2)

Croatia

Demographics. According to the data of the State Bureau of Statistics from the 2021 census, 17,980 members of the Roma national minority live in the Republic of Croatia (out of a total population of 3.8 million¹⁷⁵). The largest number of Roma live in the Međimurje, Osijek-Baranja and Sisak-Moslavina Counties and the City of Zagreb.¹⁷⁶ The Council of Europe's estimate of the number of Roma in Croatia is between 30,000 and

40,000.¹⁷⁷ According to data from the survey,¹⁷⁸ 24,524 members of the Roma national minority live in the Republic of Croatia, at 134 localities in 15 counties of the Republic of Croatia, which is the first precise indicator of the Roma population in Croatia.

Inclusion of Roma. It is estimated that more than 90% of the Roma population lives in the zone of or below the poverty threshold, and even 70% of them live in the zone of extreme poverty (which is below 20% in the general population). Only 10% of Roma have a permanent job. Only 30% of the Roma student population continues to secondary school, and the data on their university education are minor. Along with children, Roma women are in a particularly difficult position, even 17% of them are illiterate (0.13% in the general population), and almost half of Roma women who have children gave birth as minors, of which 17% were under 16 years old. The issue of discrimination is one of the most pronounced problems that

175 Croatia has 3,888,529 inhabitants, according to the results of the 2021 census. Available at: <https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2022/1/14/popis-stanovnistva-hrvatska-izgubila-oko-400-hiljada-ljudi> <https://podaci.dzs.hr/2022/hr/29032>

176 Available at: <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/nacionalne-manjine/nacionalne-manjine-u-republici-hrvatskoj/romi/371>

177 Available at: <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/ostvarivanje-prava-romske-nacionalne-manjine/584>

178 *Uključivanje Roma u hrvatsko društvo: istraživanje baznih podataka [Inclusion of Roma in Croatian Society: Research of Basic Data]*, Zagreb 2018 Available at: <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Uklju%C4%8Divanje%20Roma%20u%20hrvatsko%20dru%C5%A1tvo%20-%20istra%C5%BEivanje%20baznih%20podataka-list%202018.pdf>

accompanies the Roma population – 30 to 50% of Roma have experienced some form of discrimination (most often when looking for a job). Research by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights has shown that Croatian Roma are the third most vulnerable in the EU, i.e. that only Roma in Portugal and Greece feel a greater degree of discrimination than Croatian Roma.¹⁷⁹

Secondary education. Secondary education programs include a) programs for acquiring a lower level of secondary education; b) programs for acquiring secondary education, and c) training and development programs. Secondary schools, depending on the type of educational program, are high schools, vocational schools and art schools.¹⁸⁰ High schools prepare students for continuing education, vocational schools prepare them for inclusion in the labor market or the possibility of continuing education, and art schools allow for the acquisition of knowledge, development of skills, abilities and creativity in various artistic fields.¹⁸¹ Only 31% of young Roma aged between 15 and 18 attend secondary school, and statistically significant differences by gender have been established – 36% of boys attend secondary school, while the same is true for 26% of girls – the key reasons for girls' dropping out of secondary education are: marriage, pregnancy and motherhood.¹⁸² The Ministry of Science and Education maintains a database on secondary education of members of the Roma national minority. The data obtained from the competent administrative body of the county, i.e. the City of Zagreb, are completed, i.e. processed once a year, taking into account the data at the end of the previous school year and at the beginning of the current school year. The enrolment of students in three-, four- and five-year secondary school programs is monitored based on the data. School leaving and secondary school dropouts are also monitored.¹⁸³ In the territory of the Republic of Croatia, there were 437 secondary schools at the end of the school year 2019/2020¹⁸⁴.

Scholarships and mentorship. The Ministry of Science and Education provides scholarships for regular secondary school students – members of the Roma national minority, in order to allow for the successful education of a larger number of students and the continuation of further education.¹⁸⁵ A student who is a Croatian citizen and

179 Available at: <http://www.portal-udar.net/hrvatska-vlada-donijela-novi-strateski-dokument-za-poboljsanje-polozaja-roma/>

180 Available at: <https://cisok.hr/usluge-u-cisok-centrima/ucenici-osnovne-skole/koje-vrste-srednjih-skola-i-programa-obrazovanja-postoje/>

181 Srednjoškolski odgoj i obrazovanje [Secondary School Upbringing and Education], available at: <https://mzo.gov.hr/istaknute-teme/odgoj-i-obrazovanje/srednjoskolski-odgoj-i-obrazovanje/130>

182 National Roma Inclusion Plan for the period from 2021 to 2027, June 2021. Available at: <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/NPUR%202021-2027/Nacionalni%20plan%20za%20uklju%C4%8Divanje%20Roma.pdf>

183 Support program for the upbringing and education of members of the Roma national minority for the period from 2021 to 2023. Decision rendered on 4 March 2021. Available at: https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Obrazovanje/NacionalneManjine/Program-potpore-romi/program_potpore_u_odgoju_i_obrazovanju_pripadnika_romske_nacionalne_manjine_2021-2023.pdf

184 Available at: <https://podaci.dzs.hr/2021/hr/9956>

185 Support Program for the Upbringing and Education of Members of the Roma National Minority for the period from 2021 to 2023. Available at: https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Obrazovanje/NacionalneManjine/Program-potpore-romi/program_potpore_u_odgoju_i_obrazovanju_pripadnika_romske_nacionalne_manjine_2021-2023.pdf

a member of the Roma national minority residing in the Republic of Croatia, enrolled in the first grade of secondary school, is eligible to participate in the competition for secondary school scholarships. Exceptionally, a student who is enrolled in the 2nd, 3rd or 4th grade of secondary school, and has not previously exercised the right to a scholarship, is eligible to apply for the competition. Students could exercise the right to scholarships from September 2019 to June 2020, i.e. during the school year. The total amount of the scholarship for the school year 2019/20 was HRK (about EUR 93) a month. Students who repeat a grade in the school year are entitled to a scholarship in the amount of HRK 300 (about EUR 40) a month.¹⁸⁶ The total amount of the scholarship for the school year 2022/23 was HRK 1,000 (about EUR 133) a month. Students who repeat a grade in the school year are entitled to a scholarship in the amount of HRK 300 (about EUR 40) a month.

The only mentorship program refers to a pilot project of Roma mentors – the first of its kind in Croatia. It is being implemented by the Ministry of Justice and Administration for the purpose of employing members of the Roma national minority from Međimurje in Croatia. After the training, which will be conducted by Czech experts, Roma mentors will provide support in the work of probation services, the police, the Employment Service, the Public Health Service, the State Inspectorate, the bodies of the social protection system and educational institutions. The pilot project will be implemented as part of the project to improve the protection of human rights and public safety through strengthening the capacity of the probation service, worth EUR 2.1 million and funded by the Norwegian financial mechanism. Part of the money is intended for the employment of six members of the Roma national minority from the Međimurje County for 19 months as Roma mentors. This will enable two-way communication between institutions and Roma settlements and among institutions. The biggest problems in Roma settlements are poverty, social exclusion, poor educational structure and juvenile delinquency, which can be changed through mutual communication.¹⁸⁷

North Macedonia

Demographics. The number of members of the Roma nationality living in the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM), depending on the source, ranges from 2.53% (about 46,400) out of a total of slightly more than 1.8 million inhabitants according to the 2021 census¹⁸⁸, to 6.5–12.6%, according to the estimates of the Council of Europe of 2019.¹⁸⁹

186 Available at: <https://romi.hr/vijesti-rnv/hrvatska/srednjoskolske-stipendije-za-rome>

187 Available at: <https://www.portal-udar.net/hrvatska-predstavljen-pilot-projekat-roma-mentora/>

188 According to the last 2021 census. Available at: <https://popis2021.stat.gov.mk/#>

189 Roma Briefs Europe and Central Asia, February 2019, available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/372571554413509160/pdf/Regional-Roma-Survey-Briefs.pdf>

Inclusion of Roma. The 2022 European Commission report states that the RSM has made some progress in the inclusion of Roma. A new Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma for the period 2022–2030 has been adopted,¹⁹⁰ which includes *anti-gypsyism*, education, employment, social and health care, housing, etc. but, as stated in the report, the Strategy does not systematically deal with participation, empowerment and capacity building. An action plan for the protection, promotion and realization of human rights of Roma women and girls 2022–2024 has also been adopted. The remaining action plans in other key areas have yet to be prepared.¹⁹¹ The same report states that the segregation of Roma children in schools is still high, that the annual dropout rate of Roma children from school in elementary education is 4% per class, and 5% in secondary education. No measures have been taken to prevent irregular attendance of elementary education by Roma children, to reintegrate children who are not enrolled in education on time or who have left school without completing schooling.¹⁹² According to OECD data from 2018, the outcomes of the education system in the Republic of North Macedonia are among the weakest in Europe and the Western Balkans.¹⁹³ In 2018, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia institutionalized the profession of Roma educational mediator as a good practice and a positive outcome of the long-term cooperation with the Roma Education Fund from Budapest.¹⁹⁴ In 2022, the Ministry of Education and Science employed 40 Roma educational mediators to provide additional support for elementary school students, which is an increase of ten compared to the previous year,¹⁹⁵ which is not a lot considering the number of Roma in Macedonia.¹⁹⁶ The Directorate for the Development and Improvement of Education in the Languages of Ethnic Communities is a body within the Ministry of Education and Science responsible for ensuring better access of all marginalized ethnic groups to all levels of education, as well as for the implementation of the Roma Education Strategy and the Integrated Education Strategy. It consists of the Department for the Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, Romani, Vlach and Bosnian Languages and the Department for Peace and Rights of Children from all Ethnic Communities.¹⁹⁷ In 2018, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia recognized and institutionalized the profession of Roma educational mediator as a good practice and a positive outcome of the long-term cooperation

190 Roma Inclusion Strategy in North Macedonia 2022–2030. Available at: <https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/docs/157/strategy-for-inclusion-of-roma-in-north-macedonia-2022-2030>

191 European Commission - COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, North Macedonia 2022 Report, Brussels, 12 October 2022. Available at: <https://www.pravda.gov.mk/Upload/Documents/North%20Macedonia%20Report%202022.pdf>

192 Ibid

193 Available at: https://pisabyregion.oecd.org/north_macedonia/#section-02

194 Available at: <https://www.romaeducationfund.org/macedonian-government-institutionalizes-the-profession-of-roma-educational-mediator/>

195 Available at: <https://www.radiomof.mk/mon-angazhirani-se-40-romski-obrazovni-medijatori/#prettyPhoto>
<https://www.radiomof.mk/mon-angazhirani-se-40-romski-obrazovni-medijatori/#prettyPhoto>

196 Available at: <https://rroma.org/north-macedonia-and-roma-education/>

197 Education Strategy 2018–2025. Available at: <https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/macedonia-education-strategy-for-2018-2025-and-action-plan-strategija-za-obrazovanie-eng-web-1.pdf>

with the Roma Education Fund from Budapest. Educational mediators are needed to assist in the inclusion of Roma children in elementary education, to assist in the continuity and retention of Roma students in the educational process, and to facilitate communication between the school, parents, community, local self-government and the civil sector.¹⁹⁸

Secondary education. Since the school year 2007–2008, secondary education has been compulsory and free of charge for all citizens under equal conditions. Secondary education is divided into four parts: general secondary education (high school), secondary vocational education, art schools and education for students with special educational needs – as stated in the Education Strategy 2018–2025. Out of the 124 existing secondary schools in the RNM, 108 are state-owned, while the remaining 16 are private. Free textbooks for every student, free transport or free dormitory accommodation are provided to ensure equal access to quality education for all. In order to promote entrepreneurial education in accordance with contemporary trends, programs of two compulsory subjects for high school and secondary art education have been developed: "Business and Entrepreneurship" (for the 4th grade) and "Innovation and Entrepreneurship" (for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades).¹⁹⁹

Scholarships, mentorship and tutoring. Scholarships, mentorship and tutoring for Roma students have been provided since 2009 thanks to the technical and financial support of REF and co-financing by the Government of Macedonia.²⁰⁰ This initiative aims to improve the mobility and success of Roma students in all years of education, from all public and private secondary schools. Special scholarships have been established for students of Roma nationality from socially disadvantaged families who regularly attend classes, as well as for students from socially disadvantaged groups.²⁰¹ With the REF providing technical assistance, supervision, monitoring and evaluation, and the Ministry of Education leading the implementation, thousands of secondary school students have gone through this program, about 600 each school year.²⁰²

198 Available at: <https://www.romaeducationfund.org/macedonian-government-institutionalizes-the-profession-of-roma-educational-mediator/>

199 Education Strategy 2018–2025. Available at: <https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/macedonia-education-strategy-for-2018-2025-and-action-plan-strategija-za-obrazovanie-eng-web-1.pdf>

200 Available at: <https://www.romaeducationfund.org/macedonian-government-institutionalizes-the-profession-of-roma-educational-mediator/>

201 Education Strategy 2018–2025. Available at: <https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/macedonia-education-strategy-for-2018-2025-and-action-plan-strategija-za-obrazovanie-eng-web-1.pdf>

202 Available at: <https://www.romaeducationfund.org/macedonian-government-institutionalizes-the-profession-of-roma-educational-mediator/>

Slovenia

Demographics. According to the 2002 census, 3,246²⁰³ persons declared that they were members of the Roma community, and 3,834 persons declared that the Romani language was their mother tongue. According to the data of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia Office for National Minorities, between 7,000 and 12,000 Roma live in Slovenia, which represents 0.5% of the Slovenian population²⁰⁴ – Slovenia has a little more than 2.1 million inhabitants.²⁰⁵ Many of them live in isolated and segregated informal settlements in rural areas, in poorly constructed homes that lack security of tenure. Inadequate living conditions in informal settlements are one of the key factors contributing to Roma having a dramatically shorter life expectancy than the average Slovenians – 55 compared to 77 years.²⁰⁶

Inclusion of Roma. The situation of the Roma community in Slovenia is generally improving, but not at the desired pace. There are several policies, laws and programs aimed at the integration of Roma in Slovenia. The national program of measures for Roma of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the period 2017–2021 includes measures in all areas where Roma are most marginalized: employment, housing, health and education. The problem lies in its implementation, largely relying on EU funds, as well as in often undefined activities, time frames and budget. There is a lack of institutional cooperation and coordination, the inclusion of the Roma community in the implementation, and we often see a shifting of responsibilities between state and local authorities.²⁰⁷ The key areas of discrimination against Roma in Slovenia are education, employment, housing and access to health care. The underreporting of discrimination is due to a wide range of socio-economic and legal reasons, including insufficient understanding of the law, access to information and finance, and specialized pro-bono legal support. Language barriers, illiteracy, a lack of trust in public institutions and fear of consequences are also contributing factors.²⁰⁸ Slovenia does not collect data disaggregated by ethnicity, which is why it faces a lack of data on Roma in general, which prevents the development of (evidence-based) policies based on data aimed at the Roma community. In the ongoing project titled *Promoting the Equality of Roma in Slovenia and Slovakia* (in the period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024), it is envisaged, among other things, to prepare a *baseline* research study in order to understand the

203 There are no more recent data than those from 2002, since Slovenia does not collect data disaggregated by ethnicity, which is why it faces a lack of data on Roma in general, which prevents the development of (evidence-based) policies based on data aimed at the Roma community. Available at: <https://www.romacivilmonitoring.eu/pdf/rcm-civil-society-monitoring-report-2-slovenia-2018-eprint-fin.pdf>

204 Available at: <https://www.reyn.eu/reynnationalnetworks/reyn-slovenia/>

205 Available at: <http://ekonomskvesti.com/demografija/2021-broj-stanovnika-slovenije-smanjen-za-4420/>

206 Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/slovenia-echr-judgment-is-a-blow-to-roma-communities/>

207 *Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategy in Slovenia*, Assessing the progress in four key policy areas of the strategy, 2019, available at: <https://www.romacivilmonitoring.eu/pdf/rcm-civil-society-monitoring-report-2-slovenia-2018-eprint-fin.pdf>

208 Available at: <https://minorityrights.org/what-we-do/press/>

factors that contribute to the lack of involvement of Roma in judicial mechanisms in response to discrimination and to raise awareness of practical steps towards Roma integration, desegregation and best practices for equal access to justice.²⁰⁹ Slovenia is developing new models of preschool upbringing and education in Roma settlements and the integration of Roma assistants in kindergartens.²¹⁰ The job position of Roma assistant can be added due to changes in the MESS rulebook – the measure of introducing Roma assistants into the system is one of the new systemic measures aimed at increasing and improving the integration of Roma in the education system. Starting from the school year 2021/2022, elementary schools with over 15 Roma students can employ 0.5 full-time equivalent Roma assistants, and schools with over 30 students can employ 1 full-time Roma assistant. Roma assistants are not a novelty in the Slovenian education system, but they are a long-standing undertaking based on projects to improve the educational achievements of Roma students.²¹¹ As part of the project titled "Together to Knowledge", 25 Roma assistants have worked in 29 elementary schools in northeastern and southeastern Slovenia, and some Roma assistants have also worked in kindergartens. Among the present Roma assistants, 84% are members of the Roma community.²¹²

Secondary education. Secondary education is provided by upper secondary schools and secondary schools. Secondary education is divided into general or vocational technical and secondary vocational or technical education.²¹³ Upper secondary education (secondary education) lasts 2 to 5 years (the typical age of students: 15–19). Educational programs include vocational, professional and high school (general) programs,²¹⁴ i.e. lower vocational education, secondary vocational education, secondary vocational and technical education, vocational course, secondary general education – high school and graduation course.²¹⁵ In Slovenia, there are 111 state secondary schools, 6 private schools and 6 institutes for young people with special needs. Analysis of the report as part of the targeted research project "Inclusion of Roma in secondary and university education and adult education: factors of incentives and obstacles faced by members of the Roma community in the education system in Slovenia after elementary school": among other things, the study estimates that 139–144 students of Roma nationality attended selected secondary schools in the school year 2018/2019, and two Roma were included in the secondary school program in institutions for adult education. Approximately

209 Available at: <https://minorityrights.org/what-we-do/press/>

210 Inclusion of Roma Students in Europe: A literature review and examples of policy initiatives, OECD Education Working Paper No. 228, September 2020 Available at: [https://one.oecd.org/document/EDU/WKP\(2020\)16/En/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/EDU/WKP(2020)16/En/pdf)

211 Slovenia: Roma assistants support Roma students, 17 January 2022, available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/news/slovenia-roma-assistants-support-roma-students>

212 National Programme of Measures for Roma of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Period 2021–2030. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/slovenia_-_national_roma_strategic_framework_21_30_en.pdf

213 Available at: <https://www.gov.si/en/topics/slovenski-solski-sistem-in-slovensko-ogrodje-kvalifikacij/>

214 Available at: <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/slovenia/overview>

215 Available at: <http://si.danubecompass.org/archives/situations/srednjoskolski-sistem-u-sloveniji?lang=bs>

54% of students attend secondary schools in the Pomurje region, 24% in Podravje, 19% in southeastern Slovenia, and the rest in the region of central Slovenia and Posavje. When it comes to the secondary school program, as in the previous school year, most students attended secondary vocational education (i.e. three-year schools), secondary (technical and other) vocational (four-year schools) and lower vocational education (two-year schools). Based on various data sources, the researchers came up with the highest overall estimate of the number of Roma students in the school year 2018/2019 – 172. According to where they attend secondary school, their structure is as follows: Pomurje 46.5%, Podravje 25.6%, southeastern Slovenia 24.4%, central Slovenia 2.3%, and Posavje 1.2%.²¹⁶

Scholarships and mentorship. Secondary school students in Slovenia are entitled to: subsidies for food, transport and accommodation in a dormitory; scholarships; work through student services.²¹⁷ There is no mentorship support for Roma secondary school students. The 2020 RCM (Roma Civil Monitor) report states that Roma in Slovenia are extremely excluded. Referring to the 2003 data, as RCM researchers have not found any recent studies on this issue, they state that the educational performance of Roma in Slovenia is very low. A 2003 survey by the State Employment Service showed that 98.2% of unemployed Roma in Dolenjska and 90% of those in Prekmurje had never completed elementary education. RCM researchers stated in their 2020 report that they had found no recent studies on the issue.²¹⁸

The National Program of Measures for Roma (NPUR) of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the period 2021–2030²¹⁹ aims to eliminate poverty and social exclusion of marginalized Roma communities, and this particularly relates to children's welfare, education, employment, health care and housing. The inclusion of the Roma themselves is crucial, as is the raising of general awareness and the fight against discrimination. Slovenia wants to include Roma children in the educational process as early as possible (preschool institutions) with the help of Roma assistants and mediators. The plan also includes the legalization of settlements and a pilot project for better health care. The main long-term strategic goal of the NPUR 2021–2030 is to ensure and/or contribute to real equality, inclusion and participation of Roma by 2030, following the goals of the new EU strategic framework for Roma. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of Slovenia (MESS) has been implementing systemic, special and project measures for more successful integration of Roma children and adolescents into the education system for years. The effects of these measures are not immediate, although progress has

216 National Programme of Measures for Roma of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Period 2021–2030. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/slovenia_-_national_roma_strategic_framework_21_30_en.pdf

217 Available at: <https://serbian.sloveno.com/srednje-skole-sloveniji/>

218 Available at: <https://cps.ceu.edu/article/2020-02-17/roma-civil-monitor-project-slovenias-roma-are-extremely-excluded>

219 Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/slovenia_-_national_roma_strategic_framework_21_30_en.pdf

been made step by step in the long term. There is still a large gap in the level of education between members of the Roma community in Slovenia and the general population.²²⁰

With all the specificities and differences in the availability of supporting services in the field of secondary education, a commonality of all the countries of the region is that the position of members of the Roma national community in each of the analyzed countries is still (very) unfavorable and discriminatory, that certain progress has been achieved, but that the improvement of the position of Roma is not moving at the desired pace and the inter-ethnic gap in all areas of life, including education, is still (very) pronounced.

The mentorship support program for Roma secondary school students is implemented through projects supported by the REF in Montenegro, certain cantons of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. In Croatia and Slovenia, according to the available sources, there is no mentorship support program for Roma secondary school students.

220 MESS - Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of Slovenia. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/slovenia_-_national_roma_strategic_framework_21_30_en.pdf

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of secondary schools included in the Mentorship Support Program by region from the school year 2007/08 to the school year 2021/22

Table A1: List of 216 secondary schools from which 373 mentors were appointed for the Mentorship Support Program in the period from the school year 2007/08 to the school year 2021/22²²¹

No.	Statistical region	Town/city	School
1.	Vojvodina	Sombor	"Dr Ružica Rip" Secondary Medical School
2.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
3.	Vojvodina	Vrbas	"4. juli" Secondary Vocational School, Vrbas
4.	Vojvodina	Kovačica	"Mihajlo Pupin" High School
5.	Vojvodina	Kanjiža	"Besedeš Jožef" Agricultural and Technical Secondary Education Center, Kanjiža
6.	Vojvodina	Novi Sad	"Mihajlo Pupin" Secondary School of Electrical Engineering
7.	Vojvodina	Pečinci	"Milenko Verkić-Neša" Technical School
8.	Vojvodina	Futog	Agricultural School with Student Dormitory
9.	Vojvodina	Bečej	Bečej Technical School
10.	Vojvodina	Stara Pazova	"Vuk Karadžić" Secondary School of Economics and Trade
11.	Vojvodina	Indija	"Dr Đorđe Natošević" Secondary School, Indija
12.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
13.	Vojvodina	Kikinda	"Miloš Crnjanski" Secondary Vocational School
14.	Vojvodina	Zrenjanin	Technical School
15.	Vojvodina	Novi Sad	"Pink" Secondary School of Transport
16.	Vojvodina	Vršac	"Nikola Tesla" School Center, Vršac
17.	Vojvodina	Zrenjanin	Technical School
18.	Vojvodina	Odžaci	"Jovan Jovanović Zmaj" High School and School of Economics
19.	Vojvodina	Bačka Palanka	"Dr Radivoj Uvalić" Secondary Vocational School
20.	Vojvodina	Ruma	"Stevan Petrović Brile" Secondary School of Agriculture and Food Science
21.	Vojvodina	Vršac	"Vršac" School of Agriculture
22.	Vojvodina	Pančevo	"Josif Pančić" School of Agriculture, Pančevo
23.	Vojvodina	Srpska Crnja	"Đura Jakšić" Secondary School
24.	Vojvodina	Sombor	Secondary Technical School
25.	Vojvodina	Subotica	"Ivan Sarić" Technical School
26.	Vojvodina	Sombor	Secondary School of Agriculture and Food Science
27.	Vojvodina	Subotica	Secondary Medical School
28.	Vojvodina	Zrenjanin	"9. maj" Elementary and Secondary School
29.	Vojvodina	Bačka Palanka	"Dr Radivoj Uvalić" Secondary Vocational School

²²¹ Note: There is no single list of secondary schools and mentors that have been involved in mentorship support for the last 15 years – either for the Vojvodina Project or the REF projects and documents. Despite the effort to reconstruct the total number of mentors and schools, this list cannot be considered complete – particularly given that, based on the data obtained from the mentors, it is estimated that a total of 538 mentors have been employed during all the previous years. This list has been created due to the need to a) reach as complete a number as possible of those who have been the implementers of mentorship support, namely mentors and schools, and to b) send them an online questionnaire – in order to obtain the necessary information about mentorship practice from all of them. The list was created on the basis of documentation received from the REF during December 2022 and the first two months of 2023, and data from: a) over 35 excel files, b) lists of mentors who participated in mentor meetings in Belgrade and Zlatibor during 2014/15, c) the list of mentors submitted by Marija Aleksandrović (18 March 2014) for the purposes of meeting with experienced mentors from the Vojvodina Project – and for 14 mentors from this group there are no data available on the school and the school headquarters, and as stated by Marija Aleksandrović in 2014, they had been involved in the Vojvodina Project for 6 years and gave their best. That is why their names and surnames, even without other data, should be on this list.

No.	Statistical region	Town/city	School
30.	Vojvodina	Kovačica	"Mihajlo Pupin" High School
31.	Vojvodina	Vrbas	"4. juli" Secondary Vocational School, Vrbas
32.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
33.	Vojvodina	Srpska Crnja	"Đura Jakšić" Secondary School, Srpska Crnja
34.	Vojvodina	Sombor	"Sveti Sava" Secondary School
35.	Vojvodina	Čoka	School of Chemistry and Food Science
36.	Vojvodina	Subotica	"Ivan Sarić" Technical School
37.	Vojvodina	Žabalj	"22. oktobar" Secondary School
38.	Vojvodina	Apatin	Technical School with Student Dormitory
39.	Vojvodina	Bački Petrovac	"Jan Kolar" High School with Student Dormitory
40.	Vojvodina	Vrbas	"4. juli" Secondary Vocational School, Vrbas
41.	Vojvodina	Kovin	"Branko Radičević" High School and School of Economics
42.	Vojvodina	Čoka	Čoka Secondary School of Chemistry and Food Science
43.	Vojvodina	Žabalj	"22. oktobar" Secondary School
44.	Vojvodina	Žabalj	"22. oktobar" Secondary School
45.	Vojvodina	Irig	"Borislav Mihajlović Mihiz" Secondary Vocational School
46.	Vojvodina	Vrbas	"4. juli" Secondary Vocational School, Vrbas
47.	Vojvodina	Šid	"Sava Šumanović" High School
48.	Vojvodina	Crvenka	Secondary Vocational School, Crvenka
49.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
50.	Vojvodina	Pančevo	"Stevica Jovanović" Medical School
51.	Vojvodina	Pančevo	"Pančevo" School of Mechanical Engineering
52.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
53.	Vojvodina	Novi Sad	"Pinkí" Secondary School of Transport
54.	Vojvodina	Bečej	Bečej Technical School
55.	Vojvodina	Stara Pazova	"Vuk Karadžić" Secondary School of Economics and Trade
56.	Vojvodina	Bečej	Bečej Technical School
57.	Vojvodina	Vršac	"Vršac" School of Agriculture
58.	Vojvodina	Zrenjanin	"Uroš Predić" School of Chemistry, Food Science and Textile
59.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
60.	Vojvodina	Kikinda	Technical School, Kikinda
61.	Vojvodina	Zrenjanin	"Jovan Trajković" Secondary School of Economics and Trade
62.	Vojvodina	Ruma	"Milenko Brzak – Uča" Secondary Technical School, Ruma
63.	Vojvodina	Sombor	Secondary School of Economics
64.	Vojvodina	Senta	Secondary School of Economics and Trade
65.	Vojvodina	Novi Sad	"Svetozar Miletić" Secondary School, Novi Sad
66.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
67.	Vojvodina	Sombor	"Dr Ružica Rip" Secondary Medical School
68.	Vojvodina	Temerin	"Lukijan Mušicki" Secondary School
69.	Vojvodina	Futog	Agricultural School with Student Dormitory
70.	Vojvodina	Ruma	"Branko Radičević" Secondary Vocational School
71.	Vojvodina	Vrbas	"4. juli" Secondary Vocational School, Vrbas
72.	Vojvodina	Subotica	"Bosa Miličević" Secondary School of Economics
73.	Vojvodina	Subotica	Subotica Music School
74.	Vojvodina	Subotica	Secondary Medical School
75.	Vojvodina	Bač	Bač School of Agriculture
76.	Vojvodina	Subotica	Secondary Medical School
77.	Vojvodina	Vršac	School of Chemistry and Medicine

No.	Statistical region	Town/city	School
78.	Vojvodina	Bečej	Secondary School of Economics and Trade
79.	Vojvodina	Srpska Crnja	"Đura Jakšić" Secondary School, Srpska Crnja
80.	Vojvodina	Subotica	School of Chemistry and Technology
81.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
82.	Vojvodina	Žabalj	"22. oktobar" Secondary School
83.	Vojvodina	Zrenjanin	"Nikola Tesla" School of Electrical Engineering and Construction
84.	Vojvodina	Kula	Secondary School of Economics and Trade
85.	Vojvodina	Bačka Palanka	"Dr Radivoj Uvalić" Secondary Vocational School
86.	Vojvodina	Subotica	"Svetozar Marković" High School, Subotica
87.	Vojvodina	Bečej	Bečej Technical School
88.	Vojvodina	Pečinci	"Milenko Verkić-Neša" Technical School
89.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
90.	Vojvodina	Novi Bečej	Novi Bečej Secondary School
91.	Vojvodina	Bečej	Technical School, Bečej
92.	Vojvodina	Vršac	"Jelena Varjaški" School for Elementary and Secondary Education
93.	Vojvodina	Pečinci	"Milenko Verkić-Neša" Technical School
94.	Vojvodina	Novi Sad	Secondary School of Mechanical Engineering
95.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
96.	Vojvodina	Pečinci	"Milenko Verkić-Neša" Technical School
97.	Vojvodina	Novi Sad	"7. april" Secondary Medical School
98.	Vojvodina	Pančevo	"23. maj" Technical School, Pančevo
99.	Vojvodina	Zrenjanin	Medical School
100.	Vojvodina	Stara Pazova	Technical School
101.	Vojvodina	Odžaci	Technical School in Odžaci
102.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
103.	Vojvodina	Pančevo	"Stevica Jovanović" Medical School
104.	Vojvodina	Kovin	"Vasa Pelagić" Secondary Vocational School
105.	Vojvodina	Kikinda	Technical School
106.	Vojvodina	Novi Sad	"Pavle Savić" Technical School
107.	Vojvodina	Sombor	Secondary School of Agriculture and Food Science
108.	Vojvodina	Sombor	Secondary School of Economics
109.	Vojvodina	Sombor	Secondary Technical School, Sombor
110.	Vojvodina	Sombor	"Sveti Sava" Secondary School
111.	Vojvodina	Kovin	"Vasa Pelagić" Secondary Vocational School
112.	Vojvodina	Sombor	"Sveti Sava" Secondary School
113.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
114.	Vojvodina	Bačka Palanka	"9. maj" Technical School
115.	Vojvodina	Zrenjanin	"9. maj" Elementary and Secondary School
116.	Vojvodina	Bela Crkva	"Sava Munčan" Technical School, Bela Crkva
117.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
118.	Vojvodina	Novi Sad	Secondary School of Mechanical Engineering
119.	Vojvodina	Novi Sad	"Milan Petrović" School for Elementary and Secondary Education with Student Dormitory
120.	Vojvodina	Alibunar	"Dositej Obradović" Secondary School of Economics and Trade
121.	Vojvodina	Novi Kneževac	"Dositej Obradović" High and Vocational School, Novi Kneževac
122.	Vojvodina	Stara Pazova	Technical School

No.	Statistical region	Town/city	School
123.	Vojvodina	Titel	"Mileva Marić" Secondary Technical School
124.	Vojvodina	No data	No data
125.	Vojvodina	Bela Crkva	"Sava Munčan" Technical School, Bela Crkva
126.	Vojvodina	Bela Crkva	"Sava Munčan" Technical School, Bela Crkva
127.	Vojvodina	Bečej	Secondary School of Economics and Trade
128.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Mladenovac)	Mladenovac High School
129.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Obrenovac)	Obrenovac School of Agriculture and Chemistry
130.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Voždovac)	Secondary School of Beauty Care
131.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Stari Grad)	"Drvo Art" Technical School
132.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Savski Venac)	Secondary School of Shipping, Shipbuilding and Hydro-Engineering
133.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Savski Venac)	Catering and Tourism School, Belgrade
134.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Stari Grad)	"Drvo Art" Technical School
135.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Zvezdara)	School of Pharmacy and Physiotherapy
136.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Zvezdara)	"Belgrade" Secondary Medical School
137.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Vračar)	GSP Technical School
138.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Zvezdara)	Belgrade Secondary Medical School
139.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Savski Venac)	Catering and Tourism School, Belgrade
140.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Palilula)	Railway Technical School
141.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Vračar)	GSP Technical School
142.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Savski Venac)	Catering and Tourism School
143.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Voždovac)	The Second Secondary School of Economics
144.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Novi Beograd)	"Novi Beograd" Technical School
145.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Voždovac)	Secondary School of Beauty Care
146.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Vračar)	Technical School of Architecture
147.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Savski Venac)	Catering and Tourism School, Belgrade
148.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Obrenovac)	Technical School, Obrenovac
149.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Lazarevac)	"Kolubara" Technical School
150.	Belgrade	Belgrade	"Kosmaj" School of Mechanical Engineering

No.	Statistical region	Town/city	School
		(Sopot)	
151.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Stari Grad)	Trade School
152.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Voždovac)	The Second Secondary School of Economics
153.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Novi Beograd)	"Polytechnic" – School for New Technologies, Novi Beograd
154.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Čukarica)	Technical School of Chemistry and Food Science in Belgrade
155.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Stari Grad)	Law and Business School
156.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Palilula)	PK Beograd Agricultural School with Student Dormitory
157.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Zvezdara)	School of Pharmacy and Physiotherapy
158.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Stari Grad)	Trade School
159.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Stari Grad)	Law and Business School
160.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Zvezdara)	School for Dental Technicians
161.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Vračar)	GSP Technical School
162.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Zemun)	"Nadežda Petrović" Secondary Medical School
163.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Grocka)	Secondary School, Grocka
164.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Novi Beograd)	Belgrade Secondary Tourism School
165.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Zvezdara)	School of Pharmacy and Physiotherapy
166.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Savski Venac)	Catering and Tourism School, Belgrade
167.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Rakovica)	Secondary Apprentice School
168.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Savski Venac)	Catering and Tourism School, Belgrade
169.	Belgrade	Belgrade (Čukarica)	Technical School of Chemistry and Food Science in Belgrade
170.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Aleksinac	"Prota Stevan Dimitrijević" Technical School, Aleksinac
171.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Aleksinac	Aleksinac High School
172.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Aleksinac	"Prota Stevan Dimitrijević" Technical School, Aleksinac
173.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Aleksinac	"Šumatovac" School of Biotechnology (former School of Agriculture)
174.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Babušnica	Babušnica Technical School
175.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Babušnica	"Vuk Karadžić" High School

No.	Statistical region	Town/city	School
176.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Babušnica	Babušnica Technical School
177.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Bačka Palanka	"Niketa Remezijanski" Secondary School
178.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Bačka Palanka	"Niketa Remezijanski" Secondary School
179.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Boljevac	"Nikola Tesla" Secondary School, Boljevac
180.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Bor	School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering
181.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Bor	School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering
182.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Bor	Technical School
183.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Bor	Secondary School of Economics and Trade
184.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Bujanovac	"Sveti Sava" Vocational School
185.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Bujanovac	"Sveti Sava" Vocational School
186.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Bujanovac	"Sveti Sava" Vocational School
187.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Bujanovac	"Sveti Sava" Vocational School
188.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Bujanovac	"Sveti Sava" Vocational School
189.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Dimitrovgrad	"Sveti Kirilo I Metodije" High School
190.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Dimitrovgrad	"Sveti Kirilo I Metodije" High School
191.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Grdelica	Grdelica Secondary School
192.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Grdelica	Grdelica Secondary School
193.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Grdelica	Secondary School
194.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Knjaževac	Technical School
195.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Kostolac	"Nikola Tesla" Technical School with Student Dormitory
196.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Kostolac	"Nikola Tesla" Technical School with Student Dormitory
197.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Kostolac	"Nikola Tesla" Technical School with Student Dormitory
198.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Kostolac	"Nikola Tesla" Technical School with Student Dormitory
199.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Kostolac	"Nikola Tesla" Technical School with Student Dormitory
200.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Kuršumlja	"Đuro Đaković" Technical School

No.	Statistical region	Town/city	School
201.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Kuršumljia	Kuršumljia School of Economics
202.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Lebane	High School
203.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Lebane	“Vožd Karađorđe” Technical School
204.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Lebane	“Vožd Karađorđe” Technical School, Lebane
205.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Leskovac	Textile and Design School
206.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Leskovac	Trade and Catering School
207.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Leskovac	“Božidar Đorđević Kukar” School of Chemistry and Technology
208.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Leskovac	Leskovac High School
209.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Leskovac	“Rade Metalac” Technical School
210.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Leskovac	Textile and Design School
211.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Leskovac	School of Agriculture
212.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Medveđa	“Nikola Tesla” Technical School
213.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Medveđa	“Nikola Tesla” Technical School
214.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	Niš Law and Business School
215.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	Art School
216.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	Niš School of Mechanical Engineering
217.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	Music School
218.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	“Dr Milenko Hadžić” Medical School
219.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	Fashion and Beauty School
220.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	School of Economics
221.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	Niš School of Mechanical Engineering
222.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	School of Economics
223.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	“Mija Stanimirović” School of Electrical Engineering, Niš
224.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	Fashion and Beauty School
225.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	Niš School of Food Science and Chemistry

No.	Statistical region	Town/city	School
226.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	Fashion and Beauty School
227.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	Trade School, Niš
228.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	“Milutin Milanković” First Technical School (until 2016, its name was “15. maj” Technical School of Mechanical Engineering)
229.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	Fashion and Beauty School
230.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	“Nikola Tesla” School of Electrical Engineering, Niš
231.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	“12. februar” Technical School
232.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Niš	Niš Law and Business School
233.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Technical School
234.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Pirot Technical School
235.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Pirot School of Economics
236.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	“Dr Obren Pejić” Dairy School with Student Dormitory
237.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Pirot Technical School
238.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Pirot Secondary Vocational School
239.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Pirot Secondary Vocational School
240.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Pirot School of Economics
241.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Pirot Secondary Vocational School
242.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Pirot Technical School
243.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Pirot School of Economics
244.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Technical School
245.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Pirot School of Economics
246.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Pirot Technical School
247.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Pirot	Pirot Technical School
248.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Preševo	“Preševo” Secondary Technical School
249.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Preševo	“Preševo” Secondary Technical School
250.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Preševo	“Preševo” Secondary Technical School, Preševo

No.	Statistical region	Town/city	School
251.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Preševo	“Skenderbeu” High School, Preševo
252.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Priština	School of Economics and Trade from Priština in Laplje Selo
253.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Priština	School of Economics and Trade from Priština in Laplje Selo
254.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Prokuplje	“15. maj” Technical School, Prokuplje
255.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Prokuplje	“15. maj” Technical School, Prokuplje
256.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Prokuplje	“Dr Aleksa Savić” Medical School
257.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Prokuplje	“Radoš Jovanović – Selja” School of Agriculture, Prokuplje
258.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Prokuplje	“15. maj” Technical School, Prokuplje
259.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Prokuplje	“Radoš Jovanović – Selja” School of Agriculture, Prokuplje
260.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevo	Technical School
261.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevo	Smederevo High School
262.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevo	“Branko Radičević” Elementary and Secondary School
263.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevo	Technical School
264.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevo	Secondary School of Economics and Trade
265.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevo	Technical School
266.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevo	Secondary School of Economics and Trade
267.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevska Palanka	Palanka High School
268.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevska Palanka	Palanka High School
269.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevska Palanka	Palanka High School
270.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevska Palanka	“Žikica Damjanović” Secondary School
271.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevska Palanka	“Žikica Damjanović” Secondary School
272.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevska Palanka	“Goša” School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering
273.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevska Palanka	“Žikica Damjanović” Secondary School
274.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Smederevska Palanka	Palanka High School
275.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Sokobanja	“Branislav Nušić” Secondary School

No.	Statistical region	Town/city	School
276.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Surdulica	"Nikola Tesla" Technical School, Surdulica
277.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Surdulica	"Josif Pančić" School of Agriculture and Forestry, Surdulica
278.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Svrljig	"Dušan Trivunac Dragoš" Secondary School
279.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Trstenik	Trstenik Technical School
280.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Velika Plana	"Vuk Karadžić" School of Economics and Catering
281.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Velika Plana	"Vuk Karadžić" School of Economics and Catering
282.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Velika Plana	"Nikola Tesla" Technical School
283.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Velika Plana	"Vuk Karadžić" Secondary School of Economics and Trade
284.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vladičin Han	Technical School
285.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vladičin Han	"Jovan Skerlić" High School
286.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vladičin Han	Technical School
287.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vladičin Han	Technical School
288.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vladičin Han	"Jovan Skerlić" High School
289.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vlasotince	Technical School
290.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vlasotince	Technical School
291.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vranje	School of Chemistry and Technology, Vranje
292.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vranje	Technical School
293.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vranje	Technical School
294.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vranje	"Stevan Sindelić" School of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine
295.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vranje	Technical School
296.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vranje	Technical School
297.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vranje	Technical School
298.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vranje	"Stevan Sindelić" School of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine
299.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Vranje	"Dr Izabel Emsli Haton" Medical School
300.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Zaječar	Medical School

No.	Statistical region	Town/city	School
301.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Zaječar	Secondary School of Economics and Trade
302.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Zaječar	Technical School
303.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Zaječar	Medical School
304.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Žitorađa	Secondary School
305.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Žitorađa	Secondary School
306.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Žitorađa	Secondary School
307.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Žitorađa	Secondary School
308.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Požarevac	Secondary School of Economics and Trade
309.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Požarevac	Medical School
310.	Southern and Eastern Serbia	Požarevac	Medical School
311.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Arilje	“Sveti Ahilije” Secondary School
312.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Čačak	School of Economics
313.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Čuprija	Music Talent School
314.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Čuprija	Technical School
315.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Čuprija	Čuprija Secondary Medical School
316.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Čuprija	Technical School
317.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Čuprija	Technical School
318.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Gornji Milanovac	“Knjaz Miloš” School of Economics and Trade
319.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Guča	“Dragačevo” Secondary School
320.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Jagodina	“Svetozar Marković” High School
321.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Jagodina	“Nikola Tesla” School of Electrical Engineering
322.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Koceljeva	Secondary School
323.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kragujevac	First Technical School
324.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kragujevac	“Toza Dragović” Trade and Catering School
325.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kragujevac	“Sestre Ninković” Medical School with Student Dormitory

No.	Statistical region	Town/city	School
326.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kragujevac	“Sestre Ninković” Medical School with Student Dormitory
327.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kragujevac	Secondary Vocational School
328.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kragujevac	“Sestre Ninković” Medical School with Student Dormitory
329.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kraljevo	Forestry School
330.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kraljevo	“Dr Đorđe Radić” School of Agriculture and Chemistry
331.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kraljevo	“Ivo Lola Ribar” School for Elementary and Secondary Education, Kraljevo
332.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kraljevo	Medical School
333.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kraljevo	“Dr Đorđe Radić” School of Agriculture and Chemistry
334.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kraljevo	“Ivo Lola Ribar” School for Elementary and Secondary Education, Kraljevo
335.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kraljevo	“14. oktobar” Technical School of Mechanical Engineering
336.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Krupanj	Secondary School
337.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kruševac	First Technical School
338.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kruševac	“Milutin Milanković” Polytechnic School
339.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kruševac	Medical School
340.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kruševac	School of Chemistry and Technology, Kruševac
341.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Kruševac	First Technical School
342.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Loznica	Secondary School of Economics
343.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Loznica	“Sveti Sava” Secondary School
344.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Loznica	Technical School
345.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Loznica	Technical School
346.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Loznica	“Sveti Sava” Secondary School
347.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Mali Zvornik	Mali Zvornik Secondary School
348.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Mionica	Mionica Secondary School
349.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Mionica	“Mionica” Secondary School
350.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Mionica	“Mionica” Secondary School

No.	Statistical region	Town/city	School
351.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Paraćin	School of Technology
352.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Paraćin	Secondary School of Economics and Trade
353.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Paraćin	School of Technology, Paraćin
354.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Priboj	School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering
355.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Rekovac	Rekovac School of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine
356.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Svilajnac	“Svilajnac” School of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine with Student Dormitory
357.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Svilajnac	“Svilajnac” School of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine with Student Dormitory
358.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Šabac	Technical School
359.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Šabac	Technical School
360.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Šabac	Technical School
361.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Šabac	Secondary School of Economics and Trade
362.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Šabac	“Šabac” Vocational Chemistry and Textile School
363.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Šabac	“Dr Andra Jovanović” Medical School
364.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Šabac	“Šabac” Vocational Chemistry and Textile School
365.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Ub	“Ub” Technical School
366.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Ub	“Ub” Technical School
367.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Valjevo	“Valjevo” School of Economics
368.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Valjevo	“Valjevo” School of Economics
369.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Valjevo	“Valjevo” School of Economics
370.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Valjevo	“Valjevo” Agricultural School with Student Dormitory
371.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Valjevo	Technical School
372.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Valjevo	“Dr Miša Pantić” Medical School
373.	Šumadija and Western Serbia	Varvarin	Secondary School

Appendix 2: Meetings with mentors – part of the modular training preparation process

It needs to be pointed out that the creation of modular training sessions is primarily based on the experience of mentors from the Vojvodina Project, the experience of mentored students, but also the experience of the mentors involved in the ongoing REF project. The content of the training program is based on three main pillars: a) the mentors' experience gained during the Vojvodina Project, when the number of students who drop out of school decreased by 24% during the seven years of the project's implementation, and b) the collected insights and evaluations of experienced mentors and scholarship-holding students about the role of mentors and the needs for strengthening the competencies of newly employed mentors based on organized meetings with these two groups, and c) data from the *Report on the Analysis of Mentor Training Needs* (Appendix 3).

Since the very beginning, the REF team has held regular meetings with scholarship holding students and special one-day meetings with mentors. Brief information about four meetings with mentors only are provided below, and these meetings, particularly the first three of them, had a special significance as they contributed to the creation of modular trainings:

1. **Meeting in Belgrade, held on 27 March 2014**, central topic *Mentorship – my experience*.²²² The objectives of the meeting were to gather experiences and discuss: a) the role/s of mentors in providing support to Roma secondary school students-scholarship holders, particularly when it comes to cooperation with the students, families, the school and local community; b) challenges during mentoring work and mechanisms for overcoming them; c) necessary mentorship skills/individual mentorship skills; and d) willingness to take part in strengthening the capacities of new mentors in Serbia. The meeting participants were experienced and evaluated by the Vojvodina team as the best mentors from the Vojvodina Project. There were a total of 16 participants. This was the first introductory meeting for the preparation of Module 1.
2. **Meeting - expert meeting in Zlatibor, held on 20–22 August 2014**. Central topic: *Experienced mentors as a resource to support new mentors*.²²³ At the initiative of the OSCE, an expert meeting – consultative and educational workshop, organized by the REF and supported by MoESTD, was held; it was attended by experienced mentors involved in the program *Inclusion of Roma Students in Secondary Schools of the Autonomous*

222 Moderators: Borislava Maksimović and Zdenka Milivojević. Mentors from the Vojvodina Project who participated in the meeting were: Evica Vujičić, Željka Kovačev, Marica Kresoja, Zorica Rodić, Ines Bereš, Nevenka Žeželj, Snežana Radišić, Zdenka Vojnić Tunić, Jelena Šabanović Nedić, Ljubica Radišić, Ana Tomić, Suzana Turović.

223 Moderators: Borislava Maksimović, Zdenka Milivojević, Aleksandra Pejatović, Dubravka Mihajlović and Marija Aleksandrović

Province of Vojvodina. The participants were mentors from the Vojvodina Project (31), representatives of the MoESTD (3), representatives of a similar project of the Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro (3), and one representative of an NGO from Kosovo.*²²⁴ The goal was to analyze and consolidate mentorship experiences in work with Roma scholarship holding students in Vojvodina in the function of developing support for new students and mentors within the TARI project.

3. **Meetings** in Niš, for the mentors from Southern Serbia (16 December 2017), Belgrade, for the mentors from central Serbia (23 December 2017), and Novi Sad, for the mentors from Vojvodina (23 January 2018). Central topic: *Employment of young Roma, barriers and support*.²²⁵ There were a total of 155 participants-mentors: 55 in Niš, 48 in Belgrade, and 52 in Novi Sad. The meetings had three main goals: a) exchange of experiences on the employability of young Roma secondary school students, b) strengthening the capacity of mentors in the deconstruction of stereotypes and prejudices, and c) familiarization with the concept of "Examples of good practice" and how to describe them.
4. **Meetings** in Novi Sad, for the mentors from Vojvodina (16 September 2019), Belgrade, for the mentors from central Serbia (17 September 2019), and Niš, for the mentors from southern Serbia (18 September 2019). Central topic: *Improving the competencies of mentors for working with Roma secondary school students, scholarship holders*.²²⁶ The participants were mentors who were employed in the previous year to support scholarship-holding students – and the plan was for these mentors to be appointed by the REF in the school year 2019/2020 as well. The goal was to inform the mentors about further cooperation through the implementation of the ongoing REF Project. There were a total of 103 participants-mentors: 30 in Novi Sad, 29 in Belgrade, and 44 in Niš. At the same time, this was the last meeting with the mentors – as the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in 2020, and in August 2022, the REF suspended mentorship support.

224 Without prejudice to any views of the status and in accordance with Resolution 1244 and the opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

225 Moderators: Radmila Gošović, Zdenka Miličević, Milena Jerotijević, Borislava Maksimović, Ljiljana Tošić-Radovanović and Valentina Rančić.

226 Moderators: Radmila Gošović, Milena Jerotijević and Milena Vasić.

Appendix 3: Mentor's job description – operational roles of mentors

The *Report on the Analysis of Mentor Training Needs*²²⁷ provides an overview of all types of mentorship support, based on the data obtained from the survey of the Vojvodina Project participants (mentors, students and parents) and the analysis of project documentation – all the listed types of support have been provided by mentors to students in the previous fifteen years, which is confirmed by the data analyzed in this study. This report was prepared for the purposes of creating modular trainings within the REF (Table A2).

Table A2: Mentor's job description

Operational roles of mentors	Frequency
Educational role of a mentor with the encouragement of students' personal development: Personal support, particularly psychosocial support; mutual commitment between the mentor and the mentee to the long-term development of the latter, during which there is an exchange of values, knowledge, experience, etc.; socialization; emotional support; psychosocial support; socio-emotional support; assistance in developing specific skills and knowledge that will improve the professional and personal development of the person with less experience; facilitates the person's development using resources and networks; challenges the person to step out of their comfort zone; creates a safe environment for taking risks; focuses on the overall development of the person; providing critical feedback in key areas such as communication, interpersonal relations, technical skills, etc.; shares frustrations as well as successes with the person they are mentoring; mentor as a model...; mentor as a friend; needs to be positive and praise the student; Support for everyday life – to improve self-esteem, where to spend free time, to establish a proper relationship with all people, to improve communication skills; prevention of negative behavior of young people; promoting positive social attitudes and relationships; Modifying behavior; helping the young person define individual goals and find ways to achieve them; creating new ideas; helps in making healthy choices in everyday life; helps to think about problems at home or at school; support; guidance; strives for mutual respect; Building self-esteem and motivation; Helps to set goals for achieving personal success; Character, social and leadership development; Building self-esteem; Building trust (self-confidence); Accepting the student – respects the student as an individual; Needs to be positive and praise the student – helps the student understand that they have the ability to succeed in life – (listens to the student; understands the obstacles that the young person perceives and helps them find a solution...); Mentor as a role model (demonstrating the values of accuracy and reliability); a positive model; a positive role model; Mentor as an advisor (as a person who advises).	45
The role of a mentor in encouraging the professional and career development of students:	27

²²⁷ Report on the Analysis of Mentor Training Needs, author: Aleksandra Pejatović, Belgrade, September 2014. The analysis was carried out as part of the TARI Project – "Technical Support to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development in Establishing and Strengthening the Dropout Prevention Program for Roma Secondary School Students", a sub-component of the Project "Technical Assistance for Roma Inclusion" – IPA 2012 Social Development Program. Source: REF documentation.

Operational roles of mentors	Frequency
<p>Counseling and modeling the behavior related to career development; providing opportunities for acquiring career-related experience; providing youth with career-enhancing features, such as finding sponsorships, teaching, facilitating exposure and visibility; offers challenging work or protection; serves as a role model, provides support, direction and feedback to younger persons in terms of career plans and interpersonal development, and increases the visibility of the mentee to decision-makers in the organization, which can influence careers; assists in the vertical mobility and provides support to the mentee's career (4); sponsoring the younger person's career (2); facilitating professional development and career advancement for younger colleagues; professional development; supervises the career and development of another person, usually younger, through lectures, counseling, providing psychological support, protection, and sometimes by promoting or sponsoring; develops specific career-related competencies; helps guide professional development in a meaningful and continuous way; personally advises, trains and promotes the development of the mentee's career; informal transfer of knowledge, social capital and psychosocial support that the recipient perceives as relevant for work or professional development; assistance in developing specific skills and knowledge that will improve the professional and personal development of a person with less experience; developing a long list of goals for the student's academic and personal life (helps the student to reduce their goals to short-term, feasible weekly activities); Support in the workplace – helps in setting career goals and taking the initial steps to achieve them, using their personal contacts helps students meet professionals from practice, do internships, etc., introduces the student to professional opportunities and organizations that they may not know, can teach them how to find and keep a job; Career preparation; Helping young people explore their career direction (career exploration, work/life skills, post-secondary education); career counselor; professional support; Transition to further education or the workforce.</p>	
The role of a mentor in education, teaching and training of students:	
<p>Informal transfer of knowledge; trains, teaches about specific issues; teaches special skills; training; provides knowledge about organizational culture and unwritten rules that can be important for achievement; teaching students if materials are provided by teachers or school staff; support in education (to stay in school, with homework, to develop academic skills...); helps with school project planning; Mentor as a coach;</p>	10
The role of a mentor in monitoring and raising the level of the student's school achievement:	
<p>Assistance with academic (school) tasks – checking homework, helping with test preparation, giving suggestions regarding research; regular checking of the list of student tasks; teaching students if materials are provided by teachers or school staff; Academic achievement; Helps develop and enrich positive academic, career and personal goals; Helps set goals for achieving academic and personal performance; helps students complete the program...</p>	6
The role of a mentor in the establishment and development of the mentorship relationship with the student:	
<p>Establishing mentorship goals; setting measurable outcomes;</p>	2

Operational roles of mentors	Frequency
The role of a mentor in preventing early school leaving and the student's dropping out of further education:	2
Reducing the likelihood of potential school leaving by the student; encouraging the student to stay in school (so that the student understands the significance of education, both personal and professional)	
The role of a mentor in representing students:	
Being an advocate, advocating for the student (while the student has a need to secure certain resources and services; showing students how to access certain resources on their own, thereby forming one of the "life skills");	2
The role of a mentor in providing social support to the student in order to achieve various life needs:	1
Providing social support	

Appendix 4: Number of days of mentor training sessions held and number of training participants for Modules 1, 2, and 3 in Serbia and countries in the region

Table A3: Number of days of mentor training sessions held and number of training participants for Modules 1, 2, and 3 in Serbia and countries in the region

	Number of training sessions held for:						Total number of training days:
	Module 1		Module 2		Module 3		
	Town/city and date	Number of participants	Town/city and date	Number of participants	Town/city and date	Number of participants	
Serbia	Niš: 22–23 May 2015 Subotica: 29–30 May 2015 Belgrade: 13–14 June 2015	197	Belgrade: 26 June 2016 Belgrade: 2 July 2016 Niš: 3 July 2016	125	Belgrade: 15–16 May 2018 Belgrade: 17–18 May 2018 Niš: 23–24 May 2018	130	M1=9 M2=6 M3=16
	Belgrade: 25 June 2016	57	Novi Sad: 14 April 2022 Belgrade: 18 April 2022 Piro: 20 April 2022	49	Belgrade: 26–27 August 2020 Niš: 22–23 September 2020 Vrdnik: 8–9 October 2020	63	
	Belgrade: 15–16 December 2021	35			Belgrade: 18–19 June 2021	37	
					Vrnjačka Banja: 27–28 August 2022	18	
Kosovo* and Metohia	Priština: 31 October – 1 November 2015	31					M1=5
	Priština: 25 June 2016	5					
	Priština: 10–11 December 2016	34					

Bosnia and Herzegovina	Tuzla: 4–5 December 2015	23	Tuzla: 24–25 May 2016	18			M1=2 M2=2
Bulgaria ²²⁸	Sofia: 8–11 February 2017	107					M1=4
Montenegro	Podgorica: 13 June 2014	19	Budva: 26–27 September 2018 ²²⁹	32			M1=1 M2=2
Albania			Draç: 11–13 May 2018	41			M2=2
Total days of training and number of participants:	21	508	12	265	16	248	49

Source: REF documentation

*Without prejudice to any views of the status and in accordance with Resolution 1244 and the opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

²²⁸ Two rounds of two-day training for Module 1 were held from 8 to 11 January 2017 in Sofia for two groups of participants (47 and 53) out of a total of 107 secondary school teachers appointed as future tutors (100) and mentors (7).

²²⁹ Available at: <https://repale.ec.europa.eu/en/node/26337>

Appendix 5: Skills and knowledge acquired during the REF training sessions

Table A4: Skills and knowledge acquired during the REF training sessions – original responses of mentors

Skills and knowledge acquired during the REF training sessions – multiple responses:	Mentors:
Communication skills – active listening and successful communication techniques <i>Better communication with students, parents, colleagues at school; Better communication with students who are provided with mentorship support; Better communication with parents; Techniques of active listening and successful communication; Assertiveness;</i>	34
Better understanding of sensitive/marginalized groups: <i>New knowledge about vulnerable groups and ways to best help them; Working with students from vulnerable groups; Working with parents of students from marginalized groups; Greater understanding of the problems of vulnerable social groups; Better understanding of the Roma population and the problems they face; Better understanding of their problems; Sensitivity to their problems; The importance of cooperation with the student's family; Workshops to raise awareness of the functioning of individual Roma (living conditions, hunger, poverty, collection of secondary raw materials...) and that for most students scholarships are the only source of permanent income in the family; I have learned many new methods of supporting students from sensitive groups, received interesting materials for work and texts with useful information; I have familiarized myself with the laws concerning minority groups, rulebooks at the local level concerning the socially vulnerable segments of the population, adopted new methods and skills that I use in classes; Better understanding of their needs; Empathy;</i>	22
Better acquaintance with the Roma tradition, history, culture and customs: <i>Better understanding and acquaintance with Roma culture; Intercultural sensitivity; access to Roma culture; First and foremost, we have got to know the characteristics of the Roma population, which differentiates them from other target groups dealt with by mentors-psychologists or pedagogues; The School of Romology has contributed to a better understanding of the culture and tradition of the Roma community; Assistance in adaptation with the Roma group; Eliminating prejudices, stereotypes; Recognizing the phenomenon of discrimination; Tolerance, accessibility;</i>	20
Improvement of mentor competencies <i>for meeting the educational needs of students; Improvement of all mentorship competencies necessary for working with students from sensitive categories; Improvement of cross-curricular competencies;</i>	4
Better organization of work: <i>Recording, planning, realization, reports; Experiences in mentorship work, knowledge and tools that have been passed on to us by great lecturers; Ways of creating a plan for learning, advancement, etc.; Procedures;</i>	7
Mentor's role and work methods: <i>The training sessions have helped me to better understand the role and significance of mentors in the process of student education; They</i>	16

Skills and knowledge acquired during the REF training sessions – multiple responses:	Mentors:
<i>have only directed me to implement the mentorship more successfully; The very concept of a mentor and their role; Empowering students for an active role in the mentor-student relationship; Better understanding of the concept of mentorship; I was more confident in the correctness of my actions as a mentor; At the training sessions, we learned how to be a successful advisor, collaborator and leader; Effective mentorship support for the student; Principles, functions and characteristics of mentorship; principles of effective mentorship; Understanding the principles of mentorship; familiarization with the mentorship form of work; Roles of mentors; Knowledge of mentorship work with secondary school students; Skills of additional support for students; Roles of mentors; I have expanded my knowledge and horizons, innovation, teaching skills;</i>	
Ensuring better achievements of students: <i>Ways to achieve better academic performance of students; New methods for motivating students; Student motivation; First of all, it helped me understand how to motivate and empower students to finish school; Encouraging female students to attend school; Theory of motivation; Motivational skills; Peer support; How to develop peer support in learning; Using mind maps; Self-regulated learning;</i>	12
Dropout reduction techniques: <i>With a little commitment to students, teachers can do a lot to reduce student dropout; Activities aimed at preventing dropouts; How to reduce student dropout; Impact on reducing dropouts; Techniques for preventing early school leaving;</i>	6
Better understanding of students of that age: <i>Gaining trust, developing better cooperation between mentors and students and mutual trust; The skill of gaining the trust of mentored students; I have learned to create a relationship based on trust with the students; Gaining trust and confidence; Better understanding of verbal and non-verbal cues by mentored students;</i>	9
New approach to students – cooperation, trust and respect: <i>Building cooperation and trust, better stimulation of students for learning; Appreciation of students; Psychological support for students; All the necessary skills and knowledge that I did not have until then and which are important for supporting and working with students; Lots of good advice on how to create a relationship of trust in the student-mentor relationship; The easiest way to approach the student; How to approach the student and give them more attention; New opportunities for students; Enabling students to participate in school and extracurricular activities; Ways of supporting students; Involvement in extracurricular activities; Developing direct work with the student; Identification of educational needs; removing obstacles in children's learning; Support for continuing education; Techniques and methods of working with students; Understanding different approaches; Empowering and supporting the students I mentor; Encouraging students to ask questions;</i>	21
Crisis management skills – solving problems and conflict situations: <i>Crisis management skills in elementary and secondary schools; Strategies and procedures for adjusting teaching - inclusive education; Solving various problems; Way of overcoming problems;</i>	10

Skills and knowledge acquired during the REF training sessions – multiple responses:	Mentors:
<p><i>I had the opportunity to present specific situations at work where I was not sure how to solve the problem, and the lecturers helped me; Practical experience/examples of how to solve certain problems; Problems faced by children during schooling; Identifying problems and ways to solve them; Adaptability to any situation; Mediation;</i></p>	
<p>Applying the acquired skills to all other students: <i>It is different, but something can be applied to both regular students and your child; I acquired knowledge and skills that I could later apply in work with other children from sensitive groups (who are not of Roma nationality), Application to other children;</i></p>	10
<p>Exchange of experience – experience of other mentors: <i>Experience of colleagues, exchange of opinions, training sessions themselves; Particularly the exchange of experiences with other mentors; The most important part of the training was the exchange of experiences with my colleagues, as a result of which I have a greater range of options for dealing with different situations; These are not new skills, but exchanging experiences with other mentors is always useful; By exchanging experiences with other mentor colleagues and working in thematic workshops, I got new ideas on how I can further improve my mentorship competencies; Exchange of experiences with other schools; Exchange of experiences with colleagues; It's always important to exchange experiences with colleagues who do the same job, I couldn't single out any specific skills, but I personally think that these live trainings are very useful for many things. I can say that after the training I was more sure whether I was doing my job well or not; Experience and examples of good practice from other colleagues and lecturers, which can be very important for some future situations in which we may find ourselves as mentors and, most importantly, knowing how to position ourselves in the same; In addition to the lectures I listened to, the opinion of other mentors was very useful to me; Examples of good practice, especially from Loznica; Examples of good practice of other mentors; Sharing experiences of colleagues;</i></p>	18
<p>Pedagogical profile of students: <i>During the training, I learned how to create a pedagogical profile of a student, based on which I could best assess the strengths and weaknesses of the mentored student and, on that basis, undertake appropriate activities in further work with the student; Creating a pedagogical profile; Student profiling; Pedagogical approach to various growing-up problems experienced by scholarship holders; A positive approach to monitoring student work; Adoption of protocols, application of new knowledge, empowerment; Forming a pedagogical profile of students; SWOT analysis;</i></p>	9
<p>Self-confidence of students: <i>Impact on the self-confidence of students; How to increase the self-confidence of students; Strengthening the self-confidence of students; I learned how important it is to build a student's self-confidence; Strengthening the self-confidence of students. I learned some new methods of gaining and strengthening the self-confidence of students, but also heard and applied some examples of good practice in my work; How to help the student gain self-confidence; Encouraging self-confidence</i></p>	10

Skills and knowledge acquired during the REF training sessions – multiple responses:	Mentors:
<i>in students; Self-confidence of students; Continuous work on strengthening the self-confidence of students;</i>	
Career guidance: <i>I have improved the career guidance and counseling skills that I apply in supporting students for further education and employment; Skills to support students' career planning; Career guidance and counseling of students from vulnerable groups; Career guidance, guiding students towards their rights and opportunities offered for employment, training, and improvement; Good examples to support learning and choosing a future occupation/education and much more; Training students to write CVs; I learned a lot about the possibilities for continued education of Roma and their employment. The role of mentors in learning life skills for the world of work of scholarship holding students (held on 17 and 18 May 2018 in Belgrade); Entrepreneurship;</i>	13
Cooperation with colleagues at school and evaluation of one's own work: <i>Skills for cooperation with colleagues at school; Involvement of other school employees; Evaluation of one's own work;</i>	4
Individualization of relationships and learning processes: <i>Individual approach to students from socially disadvantaged environment; Individual work with students and parents; Individualization in work; Access to the student in individual work; Individual work - I took some workshops in working with students - civic education; Development of individual educational plans; Developing a learning plan with students in order to raise their achievement on knowledge tests; development of individual educational plans;</i>	13
Total:	238

Source: Questionnaire for mentors (base: 259)

Appendix 6: Suggested topics for future mentor training

Table A5: Suggested topics for future mentor training – original responses of mentors

Suggested topics for future mentor training – multiple responses:	Mentors: number of responses
History, tradition, culture and customs of the Roma – better understanding of the Roma way of life, impact on the education of students, health, life in the Roma community, getting to know the basic characteristics of family relationships, children's development in a non-stimulating environment, understanding the culture of the people, etc.;	19
Communication skills – assertive communication, communication with students, communication in the modern age (advantages, disadvantages), etc.;	11
Motivation of students – the student motivation, which is increasingly difficult to achieve today, motivation for learning and work, for attending classes, learning, advancement, further education, motivation for a higher quality of life, motivation for the involvement of students of the Roma population in programs of developmental and educational workshops, etc.	19
Learning techniques – what makes learning difficult and what makes learning easier, methods of individualized learning, how to teach students to learn, lifelong learning as a function of well-being, making learning easy, fun and successful, etc.;	10
Strengthening the self-confidence of students – strengthening and forming the personal identity of students, students' lagging behind, raising self-confidence and the will to achieve greater success, psychological development characteristics of adolescents, socio-emotional competencies, raising the level of aspiration, etc.;	14
Roles and tasks of mentors – the frequency and types of support, precisely stated obligations and monitoring methods, organization of time in providing support, setting personal, challenging goals, examples of good practice from Serbia and the region, suggestions for addressing specific situations, support for students with problems in behavior, involvement of students in extracurricular activities, work with children with physical impairments (hearing impairment), which are among the mentored students, orientation to results, social topics, access to new technologies, gender equality, support for continuing education, topics related to student enrollment in universities, greater support for continuing education, affirmative measures for greater access to education, etc.;	49
Legal protection and social protection of children – domestic violence, gender-based violence, how to avoid student violence with other students, etc.;	5
Cooperation with parents and family – work with the family, the relationship of the family and student with the education system, the influence of the family on the continuation of education, education of students' parents for better cooperation, education on the subject of early marriages, the place of women in the Roma culture, prevention of early marriages,	31

<i>starting a family, minor pregnancies, early entering into a marriage union - how to oppose tradition, etc.;</i>	
Socialization of students – <i>how to socialize students, socialization of Roma children in the school environment, inclusion of students in a new environment and how to overcome social barriers, etc.;</i>	11
Inclusive education – <i>working as per IEP 1 and 2;</i>	6
Prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination – <i>discrimination in education and employment, discrimination by employers, prejudices and what to do with them, gender stereotypes, creating equal conditions for everyone in education and employment, affirmation of cultural differences, tolerance, rights of citizens, social justice, support systems, sensitization for work with vulnerable groups of young people, etc.;</i>	16
Career guidance – <i>counseling, professional orientation, developing entrepreneurship, preparing students for the world of work, including children in profiles with dual education, etc.;</i>	13
Students' dropout prevention – <i>dropout prevention measures;</i>	3
Involvement of the local community – <i>how to involve the local community and/or relevant organizations in cases where mentored students need some special support, how to encourage cooperation with other institutions in the city, environmental sensitization, better cooperation with the social work service, with the municipality for free transportation, etc.;</i>	7
Exchange of mentors' experience – <i>how they helped certain students, how they motivated them to continue their education, but also problems that could not be solved, etc.;</i>	2
Other topics – <i>grading and possible methods of grading, a psychological lecture, development of children in a non-stimulating environment, implementation of teaching oriented to student outcomes, understanding the people's culture, etc.;</i>	4
Proposals of activities to improve the position of Roma secondary school students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>the introduction of the Romani language in schools – the basics of the Romani language, learning the basics of the Romani language;</i> - <i>intercultural student exchange;</i> - <i>involving children in programs of developmental and educational workshops;</i> - <i>scientific workshops in which students and mentors can participate;</i> - <i>workshops - training for employees.</i> 	10
Total:	230

Source: Questionnaires for mentors (base: 259)

Appendix 7: Types of mentorship support

Table A6: Number of students who received **two types** of mentorship support in the school year 2018/19

	Type of mentorship support	Number of students
1.	a) Learning support e) Including students in extracurricular activities	4
2.	a) Learning support b) Checking grades and the quality of students' homework	3
3.	a) Learning support d) Including students in supplementary classes	3
4.	a) Learning support c) Checking students' performance and achievement	8
5.	b) Checking grades and the quality of students' homework c) Checking students' performance and achievement	30
6.	b) Checking grades and the quality of students' homework d) Including students in supplementary classes	3
7.	c) Checking students' performance and achievement e) Including students in extracurricular activities	10
8.	c) Checking students' performance and achievement d) Including students in supplementary classes	9
9.	d) Including students in supplementary classes e) Including students in extracurricular activities	3
Total:		73

Source: REF documentation – Analysis of Mentors Reports for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20

Table A7: Number of students who received **three types** of mentorship support in the school year 2018/19

	Type of mentorship support	Number of students
1.	a) Learning support b) Checking grades and the quality of students' homework c) Checking students' performance and achievement	11
2.	a) Learning support b) Checking grades and the quality of students' homework d) Including students in supplementary classes	5
3.	a) Learning support c) Checking students' performance and achievement d) Including students in supplementary classes	14
4.	a) Learning support	2

	c) Checking students' performance and achievement e) Including students in extracurricular activities	
5.	a) Learning support d) Including students in supplementary classes e) Including students in extracurricular activities	2
6.	b) Checking grades and the quality of students' homework c) Checking students' performance and achievement e) Including students in extracurricular activities	10
7.	b) Checking grades and the quality of students' homework c) Checking students' performance and achievement d) Including students in supplementary classes	16
8.	c) Checking students' performance and achievement d) Including students in supplementary classes e) Including students in extracurricular activities	8
Total:		68

Source: REF documentation – Analysis of Mentors Reports for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20

Table A8: Number of students who received **four types** of mentorship support in the school year 2018/19

	Type of mentorship support	Number of students
1.	a) Learning support b) Checking grades and the quality of students' homework c) Checking students' performance and achievement d) Including students in supplementary classes	9
2.	a) Learning support c) Checking students' performance and achievement d) Including students in supplementary classes e) Including students in extracurricular activities	5
3.	a) Learning support b) Checking grades and the quality of students' homework c) Checking students' performance and achievement e) Including students in extracurricular activities	2
4.	a) Learning support b) Checking grades and the quality of students' homework d) Including students in supplementary classes e) Including students in extracurricular activities	1
5.	b) Checking grades and the quality of students' homework c) Checking students' performance and achievement d) Including students in supplementary classes e) Including students in extracurricular activities	10
Total:		27

Source: REF documentation – Analysis of Mentors Reports for the school years 2018/19 and 2019/20

Appendix 8: The essence of mentorship support as assessed by mentors

Questions from the online questionnaire for mentors: Based on your mentorship experience, what would you say is the essence of mentorship support?

Original responses of 63 mentors:

1. *The essence of mentorship support is the mentor's sincere desire to provide support and monitor the development and growth of the students he mentors. A teacher must have internal motivation and a desire to help students successfully graduate from secondary school and overcome the problems and challenges they face while growing up. (Mentor, 38 years of age, teacher of the economic group of subjects, Belgrade).*
2. *Inclusion in the education system, monitoring and supporting students during the education process and the future to leave the system successfully - with a diploma, which will enable them to enter the labor market and employment. (Mentor, 45 years of age, teacher of mechanical engineering subjects, Vrbas).*
3. *Creating preconditions for easier integration of marginalized groups into the entire community. (Mentor, 64 years of age, teacher of mechanical engineering subjects, Babušnica).*
4. *Raising the quality of education of Roma students. (Mentor, 47 years of age, coordinator for the education of adults, Zrenjanin).*
5. *A mentor is someone who helps students overcome the obstacles of the educational and social system, who empowers students in their efforts to become fully integrated into society, helps students realize their potential. (Mentor, 50 years of age, teacher of the economic group of subjects, Bečej).*
6. *A mentor is a person who is always present in the students' school life, supports and encourages them, sees their strengths, all through an open conversation and with a lot of understanding and affection. (Mentor, 48 years of age, philosophy, logic with ethics, logic and civic education teacher, Belgrade).*
7. *A mentor supports, advises, teaches and guides the student. (Mentor, 52 years of age, teacher of the economic group of subjects, Laplje Selo - Plemetina).*
8. *A mentor advises, but should know e.g. ways to overcome life's problems, how to deal with disappointments... A mentor is someone who monitors the work of their mentored student, can anticipate the difficulties they will encounter and help them overcome and address such difficulties as much as they can. (Mentor, 44 years of age, health care teacher, Zaječar).*

9. *Mentorship is a special relationship in which an older and more mature person helps a younger person by providing support, advice and encouragement. A teacher-mentor is a very important link in the life of the school and its students. The key characteristics of mentorship are: confidential conversations, counseling, professional guidance, motivation, overcoming problems, support, etc. (Mentor, 49 years of age, expert associate – pedagogue, southern and eastern Serbia).*
10. *I think the support of mentors is very important, as with our help, these students gain self-confidence, they have someone to rely on, who to ask for help, who to turn to when they have any problem, who to instruct them about their rights... (Mentor, 52 years of age, teacher of vocational subject practical exercises, Belgrade).*
11. *The motivation to really accept the student and constantly motivate and encourage them to work and develop self-confidence. The mentor must know the pedagogical and psychological profile of the student and in that manner they can jointly make an achievement. The main obstacle in my mentorship work was individuals who in their work and in their daily communication did not build trust and acceptance for their own and professional responsibility. (Mentor, 49 years of age, expert associate – pedagogue, Bujanovac).*
12. *Support for students and their parents/guardians to understand the importance of education, help in mastering the teaching process and achieving the expected outcomes, help from classmates in learning, increasing self-confidence, inclusion of Roma children in various extracurricular activities of the school, guiding students about continuing their education after secondary school... (Mentor, 57 years of age, teacher of vocational subjects, Prokuplje).*
13. *Creating awareness about the importance of education, guiding students in the right way, socialization, trust in their mentor, praise and criticism of mentors, involvement in extracurricular activities, monitoring progress and setting higher goals, working with parents, consulting with teachers. (Mentor, 61 years of age, teacher and librarian, Bela Crkva).*
14. *The essence of mentorship support is that the mentor has a MOTIVE to do this work. I have been a mentor to a large number of students and I know how demanding it is to work with each student in a quality way, especially because in the role of a mentor you cooperate not only with the student, but also with a large number of teachers, as well as with the student's family, which is sometimes a really demanding job. The number of hours in the working week for the work of a mentor cannot possibly be an adequate motive to do this job in a quality way. (Mentor, 42 years of age, expert associate – psychologist, Šabac).*

15. *It is more than the help of a teacher; most of my students were in very bad financial, family, life situations. With the help of teachers, the Fund, the municipality, we always found solutions to problems that seemed insurmountable. (Mentor, 47 years of age, teacher of philosophy, ethics with logic, medical ethics, civic education, Kraljevo, Šumadija and Western Serbia).*
16. *The establishment of a partnership relationship that is reflected in the mutual interaction of students and teachers, where knowledge, experience and skills are exchanged in order to strengthen the student's personality in the educational process. (Mentor, 52 years of age, English language teacher, Kovin, Vojvodina),*
17. *Greater involvement of students in the teaching process, students' self-confidence is built together with their belief in themselves that they can do more and better, they feel safe because they have support and have the desire to continue their education, which is the ultimate goal. (Mentor, 39 years of age, Serbian language and literature teacher, Mionica).*
18. *The essence of mentorship support is first of all human individual support for students, students feel that they are not alone, that they always have someone to turn to. Stimulating students to regularly attend classes, study regularly and achieve the best possible performance. (Mentor, 38 years of age, teacher of the economic group of subjects, Belgrade).*
19. *The essence is that the children know that they have support and financial security at the same time, and therefore a greater motivation not to leave secondary school early. (Mentor, 48 years of age, chemistry teacher, Pirot).*
20. *The essence of mentorship support is reflected in continuous and comprehensive assistance to students in socialization, acquiring knowledge and achieving success, and in encouraging them to continue their education. (Mentor, 33 years of age, Serbian language and literature teacher and librarian, Vladičin Han).*
21. *The essence of support is providing help to children in the form of postponing examinations, reducing the number of lectures, and providing additional deadlines. (Mentor, 43 years of age, English language and literature teacher, Šabac).*
22. *It is certainly raising self-confidence and acquiring skills necessary in the fight against discrimination, as well as improving opportunities for the integration of Roma. The focus is on their education and then empowering them to apply for jobs. (Mentor, 64 years of age, expert associate – pedagogue, Belgrade).*
23. *Cooperation with the student, monitoring the regularity of class attendance, achieving the best possible performance, providing support if there are*

- difficulties in mastering the lectures, cooperation with parents. (Mentor, 48 years of age, teacher of health care and first aid, Valjevo).*
24. *Working to raise the student's expectations of themselves, as well as to develop their self-confidence and build values and attitudes. Mentorship work will be successful when the mentor manages to raise the level of expectations in their student and create a feeling of satisfaction with themselves and the environment. Both the mentor and the student grow, develop and progress through mentorship. (Mentor, 56 years of age, expert associate – pedagogue, Paraćin).*
 25. *Understanding, daily advisory work, cooperation with family, cooperation with teachers, helping students master the curriculum through peer support, appointing a Roma assistant, motivating students to participate in extracurricular activities, projects, activities of the Student Parliament. (Mentor, 49 years of age, expert associate – pedagogue, Kraljevo).*
 26. *Providing assistance to the student in overcoming various difficulties, strengthening their confidence and awareness of the importance of education for their future and a relationship of mutual trust. (Mentor, 49 years of age, school secretary, Smederevska Palanka).*
 27. *Providing support for students in order to improve their performance, monitoring regularity of their class attendance, including students in supplementary and additional classes. (Mentor, 57 years of age, physical education teacher, Pećinci).*
 28. *For the student to be in the education system until they secure an appropriate diploma, a better job and a secure future, as well as career advancement. (Mentor, 56 years of age, teacher of food science subjects, Kruševac).*
 29. *I was lucky that the student I mentored was very motivated to work and cooperate. This kind of project is a solution for the dropout of Roma students. (Mentor, 42 years of age, English language teacher, Svilajnac).*
 30. *Acceptance, understanding, cooperation, readiness to work on increasing the level of prior knowledge, strengthening self-confidence and acceptance of identity, involvement in extracurricular activities, promotion of Roma cultural heritage, cooperation with organizations dealing with Roma support (e.g. socio-economic, educational); teamwork within the school. (Mentor, 57 years of age, expert associate – pedagogue, Subotica).*
 31. *Promotion of equality, access to education, encouraging students to be motivated, to fight for better living conditions with their achievements, strengthening their self-confidence and empowerment. (Mentor, 32 years of age, subject teacher - philosophy, logic with ethics, civic education, Vršac).*
 32. *Acceptance, support, conversations on a wide variety of topics, advisory assistance, assistance in learning, socialization, raising self-confidence, level*

- of aspiration and, of course, scholarships as part of the support within the Project. (Mentor, 59 years of age, expert associate – pedagogue, Sombor).*
33. *Making students understand that they should not allow anyone to discriminate against them and that other people's opinions should not influence their choices in education, work and similar important choices. (Mentor, 26 years of age, teacher, Ub).*
 34. *Raising motivation, encouraging regular class attendance and excellent inclusion in society, working on solving problems related to teaching, but also interpersonal relationships. (Mentor, 33 years of age, expert associate – psychologist, Bečej).*
 35. *Educational inclusion of students. (Mentor, 42 years of age, expert associate – psychologist, Babušnica).*
 36. *Ability to detect problems faster and to act faster. (Mentor, 46 years of age, subject teacher, organizer of practical classes, Boljevac).*
 37. *Selfless support for students, particularly girls. (Mentor, 39 years of age, biology teacher, Bor).*
 38. *Identifying needs for additional support for each student. Cooperation with the homeroom teacher and subject teachers in order to design a plan of activities to support the student. Education of teachers. (Mentor, 56 years of age, expert associate – pedagogue, civic education teacher, Belgrade).*
 39. *Empowerment of students, development of students' self-confidence and their positive attitude towards school. (Mentor, 37 years of age, fine arts teacher, Bela Palanka).*
 40. *Providing additional support to the student to learn, come to school regularly, finish secondary school and provide for themselves. (Mentor, 62 years of age, practical classes teacher, Kraljevo).*
 41. *Providing continuous support through various activities for students who are at some kind of risk. (Mentor, 49 years of age, expert associate – pedagogue, Kragujevac).*
 42. *A mentor is an interlocutor and a guide through personal and professional development. (Mentor, 44 years of age, expert associate – pedagogue, Kragujevac).*
 43. *Listening, understanding, acceptance, support and assistance. (Mentor, 52 years of age, expert associate – psychologist, Pančevo).*
 44. *Constant care, interest, supervision, support. (Mentor, 59 years of age, computer and information science teacher, Bečej).*
 45. *Constant contact with students, cooperation with parents, finding solutions for different types of support. (Mentor, 46 years of age, expert associate – pedagogue, Kraljevo).*

46. *The essence is that students get advice and share experiences. (Mentor, 52 years of age, mathematics teacher, Bačka Palanka).*
47. *The essence is in guiding young people towards getting an education. (Mentor, 44 years of age, teacher of economic subjects, Bujanovac).*
48. *Students have a support with the help of which they overcome problems. (Mentor, 42 years of age, Serbian language and literature teacher, Pećinci).*
49. *Guiding students to the right path and pointing out the importance of education, as well as full support in overcoming problems during learning. (Mentor, 32 years of age, Serbian language teacher, Babušnica).*
50. *Guidance, assistance, care, understanding... (Mentor, 52 years of age, teacher of textile subjects, Inđija).*
51. *Establishing a relationship of trust, close contact, cooperation and support. (Mentor, 63 years of age, expert associate – psychologist, Niš).*
52. *Protection, safety, affirmation, care, normalization of the relations and status of students and families. (Mentor, 50 years of age, health psychology and psychology teacher, Pančevo).*
53. *Providing all kinds of support and assistance so that the student can finish school and feel good about it. (Mentor, 62 years of age, organizer of practical classes, Niš).*
54. *Providing support to all students who need it. (Mentor, 48 years of age, sociology teacher, Medveđa).*
55. *Informing, assistance, understanding, cooperation with the student and their family, cooperation with colleagues. (Mentor, 59 years of age, expert associate – psychologist, Loznica).*
56. *Honest, dedicated and continuous work with students and providing full support and necessary assistance to achieve results. (Mentor, 58 years of age, teacher of vocational trade subjects and organizer of practical classes, Grdelica).*
57. *Constant work, support and encouragement. Equality in everything. For children to understand. (Mentor, 56 years of age, teacher of textile subjects, Arilje).*
58. *Regular work and control of students' grades and absences, and cooperation with parents. (Mentor, 42 years of age, teacher of agricultural subjects, Sombor).*
59. *Organizing mentorship support is the community's response to the targeted problem. (Mentor, 52 years of age, sociology teacher, Belgrade).*
60. *Constant support for students, presence in all aspects. (Mentor, 43 years of age, computer and information science teacher, Novi Kneževac).*

61. *An ongoing supportive relationship. (Mentor, 61 years of age, expert associate – psychologist, Belgrade).*
62. *Individualized approach. (Mentor, 63 years of age, expert associate – pedagogue, Kikinda).*

Appendix 9: Strengths of mentorship support

Table A9: The most significant advantage/strength of mentorship support – original responses of mentors

Advantage/strength of mentorship support – multiple responses:	Mentors:
Students' feeling of security, the feeling that they have someone to turn to, that they have support – students know at every moment that they are not alone, that they have someone to support them in and out of school; students know that they are accepted; the significance of mentorship support is that the students who are its beneficiaries develop positive qualities over time and change their attitude towards obligations and school; security that the mentor provides students with; it would mean that the student has someone who is especially concerned with them and to whom they can turn if they encounters difficulties of either an educational or social nature; the fact that the student has a person of trust who monitors them and whom they can turn to when they encounter obstacles; the fact that the student has support at school; the fact that, within the school system, the student has a trusted person (a significant adult); the fact that at any moment the student has someone to rely on; students have a person they can always turn to for assistance, which means that it is easier to solve their problems at the family level; It is important for students to have a trusted adult who will support and encourage them; the student has a trusted person available to them; The student knows that someone cares about him, it is important for the student to know that there is someone who believes in them and to whom they can always turn for help; Students know that they are accepted, have confidence in their mentor; the mentor is a support and trustworthy person for the student; students' awareness that someone else is taking care of them; Having someone by your side who you can ask for advice and opinion when you don't know how best to solve a problem is a big deal; Students who do not have family support for continuing their education see a mentor as support and encouragement to fulfill their capacities, develop abilities and talents, while feeling safe and confident along the way; students feel that someone especially cares about them, that someone follows them in the realization of their plans, and that they have a trustworthy person they can rely on at all times	65
Assistance and support for the student in every sense, and guidance for them to successfully complete secondary school and become capable of independent life	43
Trust between the mentor and the student and understanding	41
Continuous and systematic control of the student's achievement and active monitoring of the student's results and progress and the acquisition of a secondary school diploma; continuous monitoring of the student's overall development and the ability to react as soon as a possible problem is identified, as the mentor-student relationship of mutual trust has been developed; continuous and direct assistance to the student in the process of adapting to the new environment and carrying out the set tasks and goals during schooling; continuity and consistency in providing assistance; control - why control? - because parents often have no insight into their children's achievements and rarely	31

Advantage/strength of mentorship support – multiple responses:	Mentors:
<i>know how to critically observe their child's place in the education system within the context.</i>	
Motivation for learning , regular class attendance, better performance and encouraging students to persevere; <i>encouragement aimed at mastering the learning strategy, recognizing and overcoming obstacles in learning; a strength is in raising motivation, greater student motivation for better performance, encouraging students to stay in school</i>	28
Development of the student's self-confidence and encouragement of their independence in work and learning – <i>respect between the mentor and the student contributes to the strengthening of self-confidence, self-esteem and belief in one's own abilities and values</i>	24
Open communication of the students and parents with the mentor , <i>open relationship with mentored students in solving problems; closeness and understanding and cooperation with parents; regular conversation with students; regular problem solving, mediation in problem solving between students and teachers; students develop a greater closeness than with the homeroom teacher, pedagogue or psychologist because it is the mentor who helps only them</i>	24
Better student's achievement and continuation of education ; <i>improvement of the educational situation; training students to acquire better living conditions</i>	20
Improving the level of inclusivity of schools and exchange of good practice examples – <i>mentorship makes every child a visible and equally important member of the community; direct work with students, a better understanding of the problem; professional development; excellent training sessions and their applicability in practice; the mentor can better understand socially disadvantaged groups; recognizing the importance of education for Roma students.</i>	18
Individual approach and individualized way of working with the student , <i>and family involvement; individual access - confidential conversations; mediation between students and teachers, peers; individual approach to the student and work on strengthening the student's self-confidence, looking at the wider context in which the student is educated; joint planning; professional guidance; overcoming problems; when the student knows that there is someone who can and has time to continuously be a support, advisor, listener, leader... therefore, the strength is in the continuous and dedicated educational action and guidance</i>	17
Raising the student's social competences , <i>the student's socialization and inclusion in social life, in the community; the student's adaptation to the environment; assistance in mastering social skills; involvement in social life, development of the student's communication skills</i>	14
Student's perception that they can manage their development , <i>through mentorship, we encourage the development of the student's existing potential; mentorship support is a support for students to develop their potential, which students do not show sufficiently during regular schooling</i>	17
Getting to know the student better – <i>a better knowledge of children and their families, which means quality assistance; insight into the entire personality (social, economic,</i>	7

Advantage/strength of mentorship support – multiple responses:	Mentors:
emotional, health); in the capacity of the student's homeroom teacher and the mentor, insight into the student's overall attitude towards school, work, learning, attitude towards friends, life; interest in the personality of the student and their family, getting to know them in more detail; the advantage is that we can get to know the students better	
Empowering the student and developing faith in their own potential, abilities and values, the student gets the opportunity to realize their own potential, interests and knowledge; indicating opportunities and developing potential	7
Developing responsibility, fostering ambition and developing faith in one's own abilities and values, students gain a better insight into their own capacity and a better understanding of their own strengths; enabling students to set goals in their learning and personal development	6
Empathy, understanding and care for the student, one should clearly show that they care about each student who is mentored; the mentor is a support and interlocutor for the student in difficult life moments, shifting the focus to school; sincere empathy and belief that all children deserve the same opportunities in society, the struggle to put those ideas into practice every day	6
Reducing the student dropout, preventing school dropouts	5
Financial support, if the child does not have money for travel and food, we cannot discuss other forms of support; if the child's primary needs are not met	5
Working in a small group enables closer cooperation with students	2
NA	30
Total:	403

Source: Questionnaires for mentors (base: 259)

Appendix 10: Weaknesses/deficiencies of mentorship support

Table A10: Weaknesses/deficiencies of mentorship support – original responses of mentors

Weakness/deficiency of mentorship support – multiple responses	Mentors: number of responses
No weaknesses, mentorship support does not have any weaknesses – <i>I do not think there are any, or at least I have not had any negative experience regarding my mentorship work and the structure of the students I have mentored; I did not notice any weaknesses, everything was fine; in my opinion, the program is excellent</i>	41
Scholarships: conditions, small amount, irregular payments – <i>requirements of the competition for the award of scholarships; currently, the fact that students do not have scholarships that were a significant incentive; small amounts of scholarships for children;; the impossibility of obtaining a greater number of scholarships for all students from vulnerable groups; the inability to influence the regularity of scholarship payments; this year, none of the students received a scholarship, and there are also those who received it last year, and are now in the fourth grade; often short deadlines are set before the students (here I am primarily referring to the competition for scholarships), which is a huge amount of documentation that they need to fill out (in earlier years it was much simpler); small amount of the scholarship, the average grade should be returned to 2.5</i>	10
Lack of time for mentorship support – <i>insufficient time for work as expert associates are overloaded with many other tasks; more time should be allocated for each individual student; other tasks that prevent a more dedicated work; lack of time due to too much paperwork and report preparation; the mentor must be relieved of some school duties or have a reduced number of hours in order to deal with their students better and every day; lack of teachers' time; too many obligations at the same time; considering all the school obligations of both students and teachers, it is difficult to find time for meetings; too many administrative requirements</i>	20
Mentorship work is not valued enough – <i>incomplete assessment of the work invested with the students; lack of funds; lack of resources, human, material; regulation of mentorship work - compensation through contracts or solutions as a mandatory element; inadequate support and financial compensation for someone who works beyond working hours; it was not financially supported for the mentors, it is too much work to do without any salary supplement; no financial benefit; an additional obligation of the teacher that is not additionally valued</i>	13
Insufficient/poor cooperation with parents – <i>partially poor accessibility of parents in cooperation; lack of cooperation with parents; the fragmentation of small and rural environments, which makes it difficult to have constant contact with families and the environment in which the student lives; absence of parental support; sometimes we need a lot of time and energy for parents to understand the significance of education; inappropriate and difficult cooperation with certain parents/guardians; parents must</i>	19

Weakness/deficiency of mentorship support – multiple responses	Mentors: number of responses
<i>understand how important education is and together with the mentor influence a positive outcome; inability to influence the family; lack of understanding of individual members of students' families and lack of knowledge about the advantages that their children can get at school; weaknesses are shown in the inability to act on families, their values, and the undervaluing of the education system, students leave school and parents approve it; sometimes the social conditions in which they live prevail as negative influences; girls often marry and drop out of school; parents' lack of education and their unwillingness to cooperate</i>	
It is not institutionalized – the fact that it was not a systemic measure and there is no institutional support; which depends on the project; termination of the project; the weakness/deficiency is that it loses the continuity and thus the effect that has been achieved so far; insufficient support of the MoESTD; it is not systematized; mentorship support should be a systemic solution; it is not recognized in the system; the slowness of state authorities in noticing the importance of such projects and insufficient utilization of the capacities that mentors have in solving problem situations in schools; lack of funds and system support; insufficient systemic organization of the mentorship program; it is something that every school should have as a position, and the mentor should work with all children of Roma nationality, and not only with those who receive scholarships	26
Insufficient interest of a number of students – students sometimes may be less interested; the problem is high student absenteeism; refusal of support; lack of motivation among students; prejudices of individual students; too much reliance on the mentor; mistrust; non-cooperation	12
The fact that not all vulnerable groups of students are included – mentorship support should be extended to non-Roma students as well; mentorship support should include all students who need support; in some cases it does not include those students who need help the most; perhaps the fact that in some cases it does not target those students who need help the most; it should be included for all vulnerable groups	14
A small number of students covered by the support – the biggest weakness is the limited number of students who are provided with mentorship support; insufficient coverage of all students who need mentorship support; the impossibility of including a large number of members of the Roma nationality; perhaps mentors should be assigned to students who have a lot of failing grades to motivate them to improve	8
The fact that the schools are left to appoint the mentors themselves – instead of the schools choosing, a public competition should be announced so that people with the best human and professional references are appointed as mentors; mentor's support is hard to reach; more people should be involved; limiting the number of mentors in the school based on the number of students they mentor, there is not enough support for all students who need it	10

Weakness/deficiency of mentorship support – multiple responses	Mentors: number of responses
Weak ability to influence traditional behavior – <i>the impossibility of solving problems as the impact on students' attitudes is limited; it was difficult for me to influence decisions on starting a family earlier; weak influence on continuing education</i>	7
Lack of interest of some mentors – <i>inconsistency and unmotivated individual teachers; weak motivation of some mentors; lack of empathy; the lack of interest of some mentors as this work has been imposed on them; an approach to individualization that is not implemented and is not visible; a process of individualization that is not implemented and is not visible</i>	10
Insufficient cooperation with non-school institutions and the local community – <i>unwillingness, uncooperativeness of the broader social environment; weak coordination and communication with all factors that contribute to the Roma education system in the local community; impossibility for students to get a job in the profession after school; weak support regarding employment in the conditions we have been in for a long time that do not depend on the will and expertise of mentors; insufficient awareness of the environment and institutions as to how important mentoring support is for certain students; lack of support from the environment; lack of support for mentors; unwillingness, uncooperativeness of the broader social environment; there is no support from the broader social milieu; I think that, in addition to supporting students, society as a whole should provide support to parents, i.e. students' families, in order to raise their awareness of the significance of education for their children, and thus reduce student dropout, early school leaving</i>	18
It is not adequately designed, students with a lower average grade (2.5–3.5) are excluded – <i>which was originally the idea because they are at the highest risk of early school leaving, and only excellent and very good students received support, and they basically do not need such an incentive to finish school, they certainly want it; the criteria for selecting students were different in the previous period, I think that students who achieve lower results and come from socio-economically disadvantaged families need more support. Certainly, the school provides support to all students who need it. Support for students who achieve higher academic results is also necessary, but it is different, it requires less time and perseverance for the mentor; mentors are largely left to their own devices; a weakness is that sometimes we do not teach those students, so we have to get to know them in other ways, or we do not see them enough; a weakness is shifting attention to better students, separating students from other students who also need additional mentorship support; turning the mentor into a kind of service, and the belief of some students that he/she will help them have better performance without much effort; perhaps mentors should be assigned to students who have a lot of failing grades, to motivate them to improve</i>	18
Lack of training – more specific contents of work with students are needed – <i>lack of education on the topic of mentorship; competencies for mentorship work should be possessed; more initial information about the scholarship holder and more didactic</i>	7

Weakness/deficiency of mentorship support – multiple responses	Mentors: number of responses
<i>material are needed; support is mostly focused on external evaluation, self-evaluation would be useful; we work a lot with children with special needs through IEPs, but I think we lack education for all types of support</i>	
Mentorship support is developed in the north, but not in the south of Serbia	3
Non-acceptance by some colleagues, frequent discrimination, prejudices – lack of understanding by some colleagues, lack of understanding by the environment, lack of understanding by others; I have not seen that mentorship support is taken seriously in the school where I work, all other members of the collective, the team, just turn off and transfer all activities and responsibilities to the mentor; I have not seen it being taken seriously in the school where I work; full support for students and secondary lack of understanding by some colleagues; sometimes lack of understanding by some colleagues; insufficient information of everyone in the education system and frequent discrimination, prejudices	11
Lack of continuity of support, we do not have sufficient information about the program – I thought the program did not even exist anymore, we did not receive any information, and I would have a student for mentoring, it does not exist in the form it had until June 2022; lack of continuity and education, cooperation in this project suddenly stopped in my school, but even today I do not know the reasons; for a long time no one has officially issued an invitation to continue the mentorship work, for a long time there has been no organized form of such support as it was at the beginning of the project; we have no information on how that project works now	8
The family and the student are not sufficiently informed about the importance of mentorship support – they do not know what it is about; attitude towards education; I had a student who had very good performance, but at the end of her schooling, her parents took her to Germany	2
Mentorship support is not visible in the public, in the media	2
It is difficult to maintain continuity in work, difficulties are encountered when implementing mentorship – it is difficult to maintain continuity in work, more meetings between mentors and children are needed; if the mentor does not support the student in solving a problem, it is an even bigger problem; inability of the mentor to continuously help the student from a socially vulnerable family to attend classes regularly (when they live in the city); observing the entire project through the money received by the mentors, as reducing the work to school activities only, it should be more extensive, with visits to the family, which we did; lack of familiarity with the Romani language; the task of mentoring is not easy and requires serious commitment, and sometimes too much attachment to the mentored students	8
NA	64
Total:	331

Source: Questionnaires for mentors (base: 259)

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