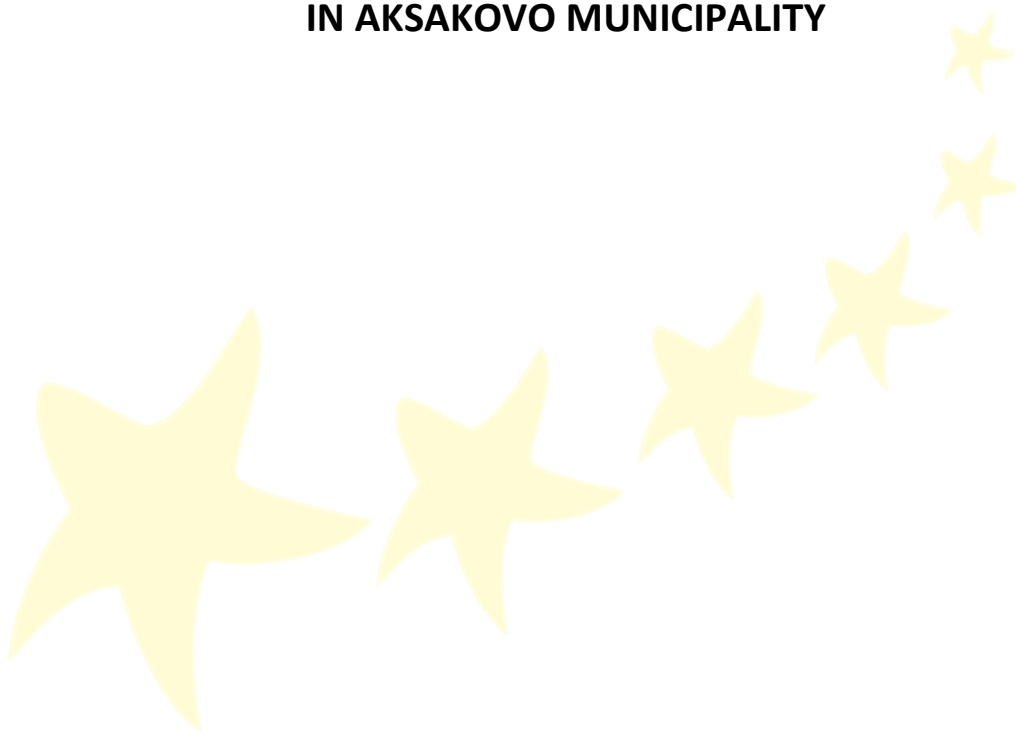




PROJECT BG051PO001-7.0.07-0049-C0001
„Partnership for Equal Opportunities ”
*The project is implemented with the financial support of
Operational Programme "Human Resources Development"
financed by the European Social Fund of the European Union*



STUDY OF THE SITUATION OF THE VULNERABLE ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN AKSAKOVO MUNICIPALITY



„AGENDA“ LLC

MAY 2014



Content

1. Introduction	3
2. Methodology.....	3
2.1 Purpose, tasks and characteristics of the study.....	4
2.1.1 Main purposes:.....	4
2.1.2 Tasks of the study:	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.1.3 Characteristics of the study	5
2.1.4 Methods and instruments for collection of information and analysis.....	6
3. Description of the situation in Aksakovo Municipality.....	7
3.1 General characteristics of the municipality	7
3.2 Demographical characteristics of the population.....	8
4. Summary of the results of the study	10
5. What do the results of the study show.....	11
5.1 Discrimination.....	11
5.2 Education and social inclusion	16
5.3 Healthcare	21
5.4 Employment.....	23
5.5 Housing provision	24
5.6 Poverty.....	28
5.7 Interaction with public authorities.....	31
5.7.1 Representatives of ethnic minorities	31
5.7.2 Representatives of the public administration	35
6. How can the results be used?.....	44
7. Reference:.....	45
8. Appendix	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8.1 Questionnaire for the citizens	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8.2 Questionnaire for the representatives of public institutions	Error! Bookmark not defined.



1. Introduction

A large part of Roma people in Europe, whose number is supposed to be 10-12 million, face prejudice, intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion in their daily lives. They are isolated from society and live in extremely difficult socio-economic conditions. This is not acceptable in the European Union (EU) at the beginning of 21st century.

The EU "Europe 2020" strategy for a new path of growth - smart, sustainable and inclusive - does not allow the continuing economic and social isolation of the Roma community, which constitutes the largest minority group in Europe.

Decisive actions in active dialogue with the Roma are needed, both nationally and at EU level. Although the main responsibility for these actions is taken by the public authorities, it remains a challenge, given that the social and economic integration of the Roma is a bilateral process, which requires a change in the attitude of the majority of people, as well as of the members of the Roma communities.

Aksakovo Municipality is a beneficiary in the project "Partnership for Equal Opportunities", contract № BG051PO001-7.0.07-0049-C0001 under a scheme for grant "No Boundaries-Component 1-Phase 2" of the Operational Programme "Development of Human Resources", co-financed by the European Social Fund of the European Union.

The main objective of the project is to build a platform for social inclusion of vulnerable ethnic groups, with focus on the Roma in Aksakovo Municipality by the exchange of experience with other EU Member States. There are two specific objectives:

- Development of a local strategy for social inclusion of vulnerable ethnic groups / "Municipal strategy for social inclusion of ethnic minorities" /.
- Creating a network of partners for cooperation in the implementation of projects and policies for social inclusion of vulnerable ethnic groups with emphasis on the Roma .

2. METHODOLOGY



Европейски съюз

PROJECT BG051PO001-7.0.07-0049-C0001

„Partnership for Equal Opportunities ”

*The project is implemented with the financial support of
Operational Programme "Human Resources Development"
financed by the European Social Fund of the European Union*



2.1 Purpose, tasks and characteristics of the study

2.1.1 Main purposes :

The purpose of this study is to establish the degree to which the needs of the vulnerable ethnic groups are satisfied in priority areas, specified in ***the Strategy for Integration of the Roma by 2020*** adopted by The European Commission: access to education, employment, healthcare, housing provision.

The study identifies the conditions in which the vulnerable ethnic communities live, with focus on the Roma. Its aim is to explore the following four priority areas: access to education, employment, healthcare and housing provision on the territory of Aksakovo Municipality, as well as in some areas predominantly populated by ethnic minorities with concentration of Roma population- the village of Izvorsko, the village of Slanchevo, the village of Karavelovo, Ignatievo and the village of Vaglen.

The results are a starting point in the search for best practices during visits abroad, while at the same time they are the basis for the development of "Municipal strategy for social inclusion of ethnic minorities."

The study makes an attempt to express the existing attitudes and expectations of the parties concerned - representatives of minorities, local authorities, territorial structures of the ASA and non-governmental organizations.

2.1.2 Tasks of the study:

- To analyze the factors which create barriers for the representatives of the ethnic minorities regarding their social integration.
- To analyze the need for establishing new social services whose aim is to improve the status of the ethnic minorities.

¹ The term "Roma" , used in the political documents of the European Parliament and European Council, is a general term for different communities with more or less similar cultural characteristics, including Sinti, Travellers, Kalé, Gens du voyage, etc. regardless of whether they have a settled lifestyle or not. It is assumed that some 80% of the Roma people have a settled lifestyle (SEC (2010) 400).

² A quote from the EU Framework for national strategies for Roma integration by 2020, Brussels, 5.4.2011COM (2011) 173 final



- To reveal the weak points in integrating the Roma people in Aksakovo Municipality and to identify areas in which to look for good practices in EU Member States.
- To provide framework for successful planning and implementation of activities supporting the Roma inclusion in Aksakovo Municipality.

2.1.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY

Period of conducting: May 2014

Object of study: representatives of ethnic minorities and employees in public institutions working with the minorities and familiar with their lives and problems : representatives of the municipal administration, Social Assistance, Labour Office , and civil society structures working in the field of Roma inclusion.

Volume of the sample: 450 representatives of ethnic minorities, 50 representatives of the municipal administration, “ SP” department, Labour Office and civil society organizations working in the field of Roma inclusion;

Representation: adult population of Aksakovo Municipality living in neighborhoods and villages predominantly inhabited by ethnic minorities;

Method of forming the sample: Quota sample formed according to the indicators of age, gender, education and origin;

Of all the respondents 33% are from 18 to 30 years old, 27% are from 30 to 40 years old, 14% are from 40 to 50 years old ,13% are from 50 to 60 years old, and 6% are over the age of sixty

Of all the respondents 46 % are men and 54 % are women.

Of all the respondents 52% have primary education , 35 % have secondary education, 8% have elementary education , 4% are without any education, and 1 % have higher education.

Of all the respondents 25% have identified themselves as Roma , 32% have identified themselves as Bulgarians, and 43% are from other ethnic groups.

Method of interviewing:

For citizens: Direct interviews in their homes or in public places.

For the employees of the public administration: standardized interviews in their offices.



2.1.4 Methods and instruments for collection and analysis of information

Questionnaire cards

Two types of questionnaire cards were prepared for the purposes of the study.

First type: Questionnaire card „ Questionnaire Employees”

The questionnaire card is a standardized questionnaire which contains questions with choice of specific answers. The questions in the survey are close type.

This type of questions suggest choosing answers from some predefined options, which facilitates data processing and compilation of analytical charts. Three of the questions in the survey allow the respondents to add their personal opinion when choosing from the listed or when they cannot find appropriate answer.

The questionnaire card contains six sections with thirteen questions.

At the beginning it addresses the respondents by explaining the objectives and expectations of the study. The purpose of the first three questions is to determine the social characteristics of the participants.

The purpose of the remaining questions is to establish the extent of awareness of the participants concerning the social situation of the ethnic minorities in Aksakovo municipality

Second type: Questionnaire card „Citizens of Aksakovo Municipality”.

This questionnaire card is standardized questionnaire which contains questions for which specific answers can be chosen. The questionnaire card is prepared in such a way that it can record the answers of twelve polled citizens.

The final form of the questionnaire card saves paper and helps to protect the environment. All questions in the survey are close type.

This type of questions suggest an answer chosen from predefined options, which facilitates data processing and compilation of analytical charts.

The questionnaire card consists of five sections containing twenty five questions with some additional sub-questions in most of them. It starts with addressing the respondents and explaining the objectives and expectations of the study.

The purpose of the questions is to establish the degree of satisfaction concerning the needs in the priority areas of Roma integration defined in the Strategy for Integration of Roma until



2020, adopted by the European Commission: access to education, employment, healthcare, housing provision, and issues related to acts of discrimination. In both types of questionnaires there are questions with similar content as the objective is to compare the different viewpoints of the respondents.

Data processing.

Data processing is done in accordance with the technical offer of the Contractor-Agenda Ltd., for a ten-day period. Activities are distributed within the period as follows:

1. Conducting surveys during the period of seven days in the following villages: the village of Izvorsko, the village of Slanchevo, the village of Ljuben Karavelovo, Ignatievo and Vaglen by polling about 70 representatives of ethnic minorities.
2. Conducting a one-day survey among representatives of the public institutions in Aksakovo by polling 50 participants.
3. Processing the results which is carried out daily starting from the second day of the award, while in the meantime the structure of the report is being finalized with graphs and charts.
4. Preparation of the report – it takes two days and includes finalization of the report, introduction of the latest data, stylistic design, conclusions and recommendations.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION IN AKSAKOVO MUNICIPALITY

3.1 General Characteristics of the municipality

Aksakovo Municipality is located in the north-eastern Bulgaria, district Varna, in the eastern part of the Danubian Plain. It occupies part of Dobrudzhansko plateau and a small part of the valley along the River Batovska. The municipality consists of 23 settlements, including two towns and 21 villages. The municipality borders with other seven municipalities -Varna, Beloslav, Aksakovo ,Suvorovo, Valchi Dol, Dobrich and Balchik. It has an outlet on the Black sea- a four-kilometer strip between Golden Sands and Kranevo. Its unique position helps the economic, social and environmental development of the municipality. Aksakovo municipality is located near Varna, which defines its territory as logistics base for many companies. The economy of



Aksakovo Municipality consists of the following sectors: trade, agriculture, processing industries, transport and storage, and construction.

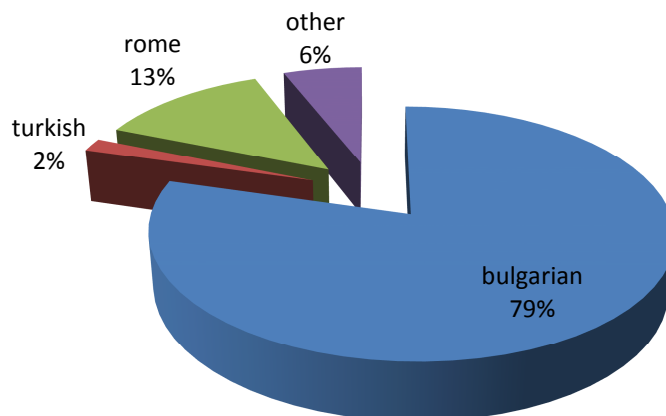
3.2 Population - demographic characteristics

The population living on the territory of Aksakovo Municipality according to Census 2011 consists of 20,426 inhabitants. In the analysis of the situation presented in the Regional Strategy for Developing Social Services in Varna District / 2011-2015 /, the Roma people are the largest and most vulnerable ethnic community in the area. The analysis has shown that ethnic minorities are concentrated in small towns, which is a precondition for social exclusion. The situation with the minorities in Aksakovo municipality is similar to that in Varna district - 9.6% are Roma, 1.5% - Turks and 1.7% - other groups. This information according to the institutions working with the minorities is not quite objective as in reality the percentage of members of the Roma community is much higher.

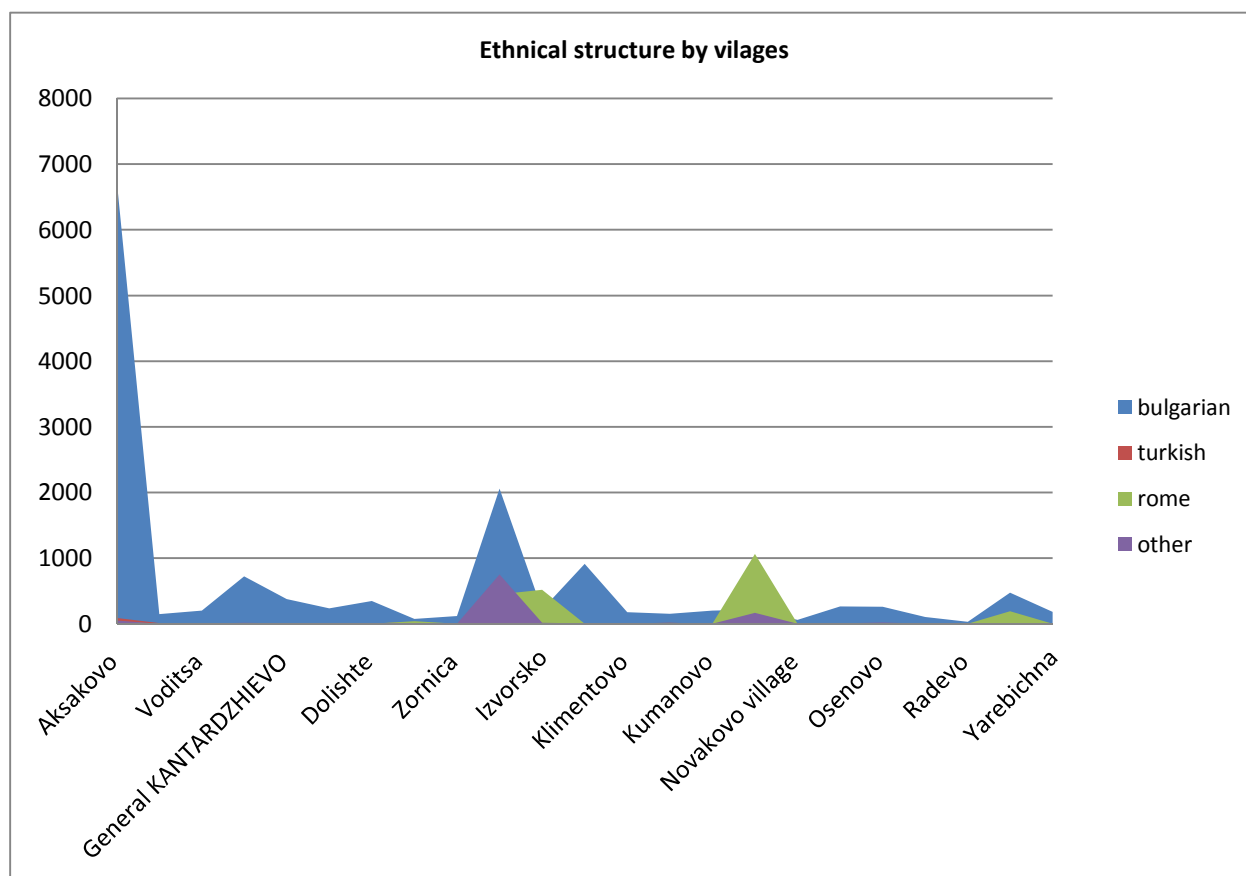
The largest number of people living in isolated ethnic communities, predominantly Roma people, are concentrated in the villages of Izvorsko, Slanchevo, Ljuben Karavelovo and Ignatievo, and constitute 32% of the total population of the Municipality. According to the latest census of 2011, 70% of the population in the village of Ljuben Karavelovo are Roma and 68% in the village of Izvorsko. The village of Ignatievo has high percentage of ethnic minorities - 36%, of which 13% are Roma. In these places there are various risk factors leading to poverty- insufficient knowledge of Bulgarian language, little or no education and qualification, irregular attendance or dropping out of school, long-term unemployment, lack of work habits and skills, limited opportunities for realization in the labour market, poor living conditions.

The ethnic composition of the population according to the last census in 2011 is shown in the following diagram:.

Municipality ethnic structure



The majority of the population in the municipality are ethnical Bulgarians. The percentage of those who identify themselves as Roma people is higher in four of the villages – in Ignatievo, Izvorsko, Ljuben Karavelovo and Slanchevo. In the town of Ignatievo we have the highest percentage of people claiming to be part of ethnic groups different from Bulgarian, Turkish or Roma.



Source: National Statistical Institute

4. SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

The survey results confirm the concerns expressed in the European Commission report that part of Roma people face discrimination and social exclusion, especially those living in marginalized areas and in bad socio-economic conditions. The situation with the Roma in the four key areas - employment, education, housing and health care is satisfactory, but it is getting worse due to the increasing illiteracy. The results also show that Roma people face discrimination and are unaware of their rights guaranteed by EU law.

HEALTHCARE

The survey shows that:

- 48 % of the respondents do not have health insurance, which deprives them of timely medical and hospital care.
- 41 % stated that lack of funds is the reason for not paying their health insurance



EMPLOYMENT

→ 42 % of the respondents work manual labor, as only it is accessible for people with low level of education and qualification.

- 30 % of the respondents are unemployed, which is high percentage compared to the average 6.5 % for the municipality. The percentage of self-employed and farmers is small- / 3% /. The lack of own land deprives these people of the opportunity to register as farmers, but being hired in agriculture can be a good opportunity for employment for people with low or no education.

EDUCATION

52 % of the respondents have primary education; 35 % have secondary education; 8 % have elementary education and 4 % are without any education, which deprives them of the ability to obtain information from sources and reduces to a minimum their chance of finding work.

HOUSING PROVISION

For 51 % of the families the number of the rooms is smaller than the number of all members of the family;

33% of the families live in three rooms, although the highest percentage of the families has four members.

As for the community services, most often there is no street drainage, the streets are not paved and the houses do not have indoor toilet and bathroom.

5. WHAT DO SURVEY RESULTS SHOW

5.1 DISCRIMINATION

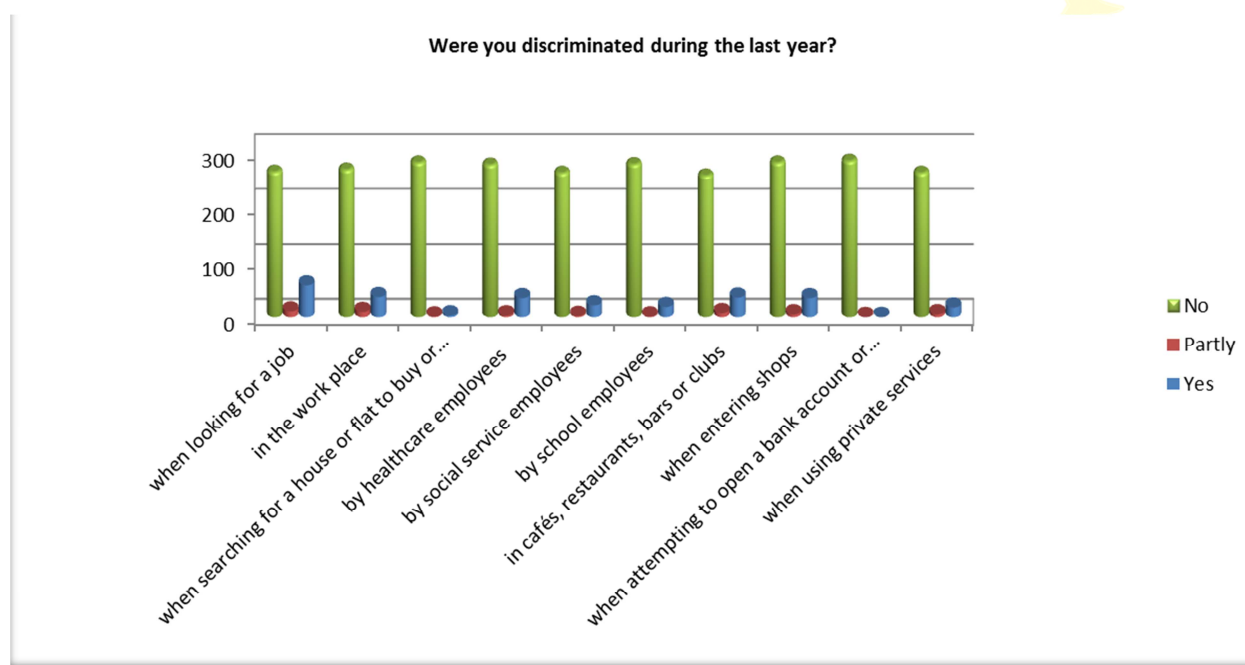
Discrimination (from Latin discriminatio - „ making distinction “) towards individuals or groups of people means treating or perceiving them on the ground of their class, age, race, ethnos, religion, sexual orientation or other, and not according to their personal qualities. There are different types of discrimination - religious, ethnic, racial, gender, sexual, etc.. depending on the feature which is being discriminated .

We have discrimination when there is formal or informal division of people into separate groups on the ground of their common feature and they are given or rejected some rights, obligations or opportunities depending on the type of group they belong to. The attitude towards people from different groups should not be different, unequal or irrational.

9% of respondents indicated that they have been discriminated on the ground of their origin.

Most often they were discriminated when they were searching for work, in their workplace, by some employees in the health institutions, in cafes, restaurants, bars or when entering stores.

About 2 % state that they have been only partly discriminated.

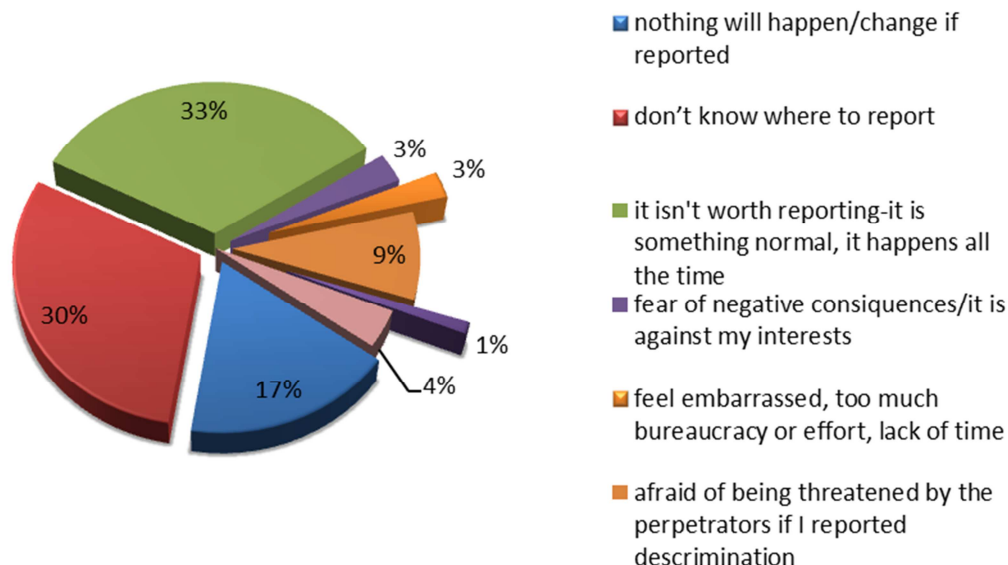


Only 2 % of the respondents have reported cases of discrimination and 6 % reported being partly discriminated.

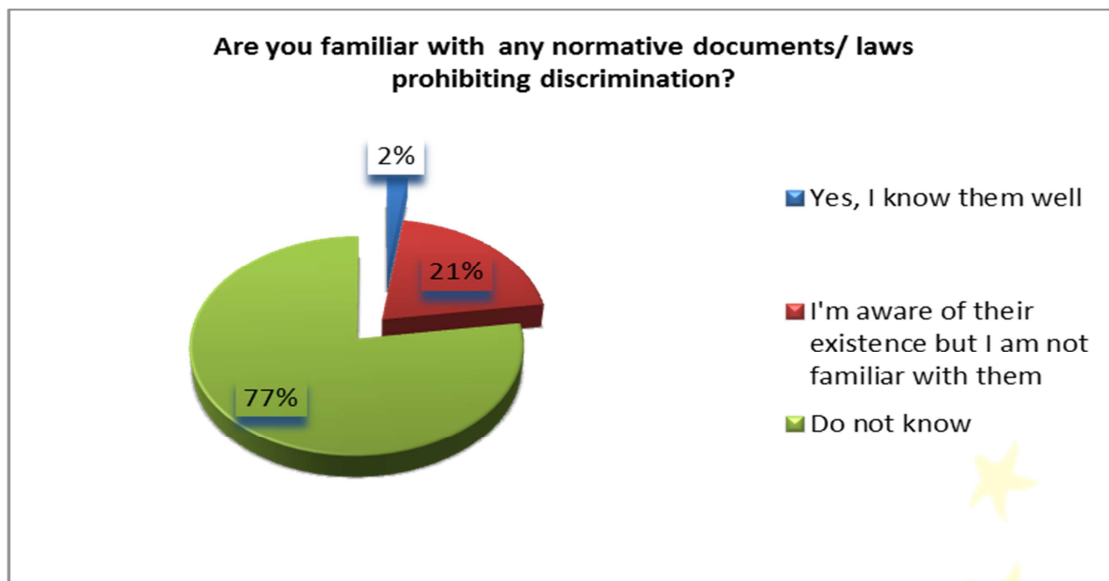
It is alarming that 33% of the respondents think that it is not worth reporting discrimination and accept it as something normal because it happens all the time. Nearly 1/3 do not know who to inform about cases of discrimination, and 17% believe that nothing will change if they complain about being discriminated. The percentage of people who are afraid to report discrimination because they are threatened by the perpetrators is not small - 9 %. A small

percentage of the respondents /1%/ admit that they have language problems, feel embarrassed to complain, think that there is a lot of bureaucracy and it will only be a waste of time.

What are your reasons for not reporting cases of discrimination?

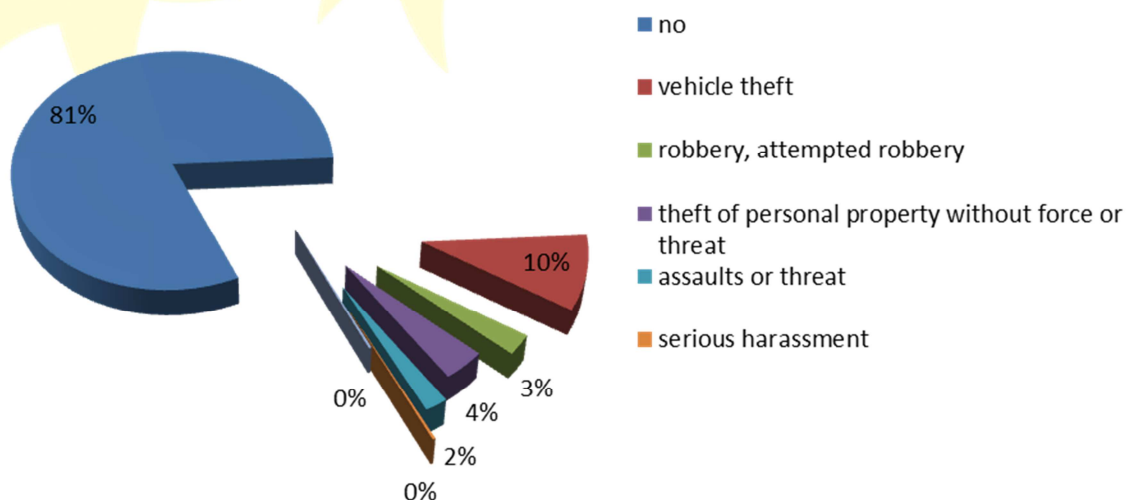


Of the few who have reported cases of discrimination 69% were satisfied with the measures taken by the authorities and only 7% were dissatisfied. It is clear from the presented data that more work needs to be done in order to raise awareness and encourage reporting cases of discrimination. At the same time some respondents are unaware of organizations that can offer support and advice to people who face discrimination; twenty-one percent have only heard about the existence of these organizations, and only 1% state that they know such organization and its name. Seventy seven percent of the respondents are unaware of the existing regulatory documents prohibiting discrimination. Only 21 percent have information about their existence, and only 2% are really aware of them.



Encroachment upon personality and high crime rate against ethnic groups is another criterion for the existence of increased discrimination based on ethnic origin. The data show that crime rate has not increased. In most of the cases the respondents have been victims of theft of personal property without force or threat. That percentage is not higher than the average for the whole country. However, there are acts of robbery, attempted robbery, vehicle theft and domestic violence and their percentage is the usual for the country.

Have you been a victim of a crime in the last 12 months?





According to a survey conducted in eleven EU Member States, including our country, the average rate of discrimination of Roma people in Bulgaria is 26%. This rate is three times higher than the rate registered on the territory of Aksakovo Municipality.

Regarding the place where discrimination has been manifested the trend at municipality level is the same as at the national , i.e the most common cases of discrimination appear when people search for a job, or when they visit the health care institutions and social services and are discriminated by the employees who work there . Ninety-two percent of those surveyed at national level reported no cases of discrimination. This percentage is the highest for Bulgaria in comparison with the other countries. The reason why such cases were not reported is because people do not believe that their situation will change. The respondents in Aksakovo Municipality share this view. Meanwhile, half of them do not know how to report discrimination, which suggests that they might give such information if they knew in what way. 44% , however, do not see any point in reporting discrimination, which they consider a regular part of their daily lives. The gravity of the situation illustrated by the digital data, is supplemented by the fact that one in five respondents did not report discrimination due to fear of intimidation from the perpetrators. Moreover, 39 % of the polled Roma people were afraid that there might be some negative consequences for them if they reported an incident. These results show a feeling of resignation that discrimination is something normal for many Roma, and that a lot of these people do not know how and where to report discrimination. All that combines with the fears of intimidation or negative consequences if people reported discrimination. At national level, 38 percent of the respondents gave negative answers to the question "Is there a law that prohibits discrimination against persons on the ground of their ethnic / immigrant background when applying for a job? Not a small percentage of them answered “ I do not know”. At national level the percentage of the victims of crime among Roma during the last twelve months is 12%, which is similar to the percentage which the respondents within Aksakovo Municipality have given.

Conclusion: The results from the survey show that the occurrence of discrimination in Aksakovo Municipality is not high. Public awareness about organizations that provide support in cases of discrimination is small and anti-discrimination regulations are not well known. The limited awareness hinders the activity of the ethnic groups.



It is necessary to take measures in order to raise awareness about anti-discrimination measures at local and national level and inform people about the organizations that would support victims of discrimination and crime, as well as all normative acts prohibiting acts of discrimination and violence.

5.2 EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Educational integration of Roma children is the starting point for equal integration of Roma in Bulgarian society. It is an integral and necessary part of the process of modernization of Bulgarian education: without educational integration of the Roma, Bulgarian education system would remain alien to a large percentage of Bulgarian citizens. It could not answer the European requirements for inclusive education or the labor market requirements for well-qualified workforce.

Inclusive education is an important prerequisite for subsequent inclusion of Roma in the labor market and for improving their health status and housing conditions.

Education determines future chances in life, and it is of crucial importance for finding a stable and well-paid job.

The right to education is a fundamental human right protected by the Convention of the United Nations on child rights (CRC) article 28, ratified by all EU countries.

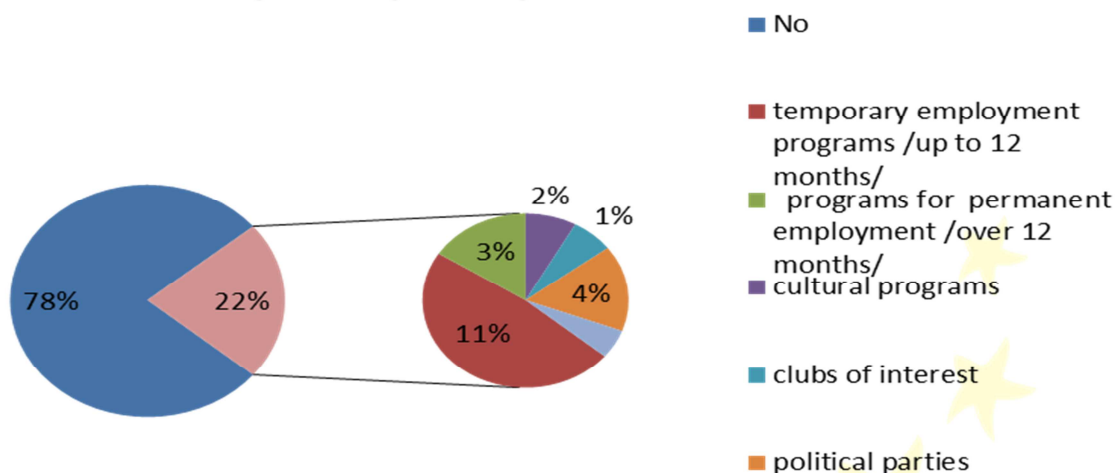
Results of studies confirm that to a large extent Roma children lag behind in educational attainment. Member States have the obligation to ensure that all children have equal access to education, especially to compulsory education.

Those who do not have at least compulsory education face a higher risk of living in poverty and have limited opportunities for developing learning skills and achieving their full potential. An important step for integration is the use of the opportunities for social inclusion that are provided by both the municipality and some national projects and programs.

The percentage (78%) of those who have not participated in any forms of social inclusion is quite high. The highest is the percentage of those included in programs for temporary employment of up to 12 months. Unfortunately this is a way to solve the problem only temporarily and cannot guarantee social inclusion or permanent position on the labor market..

Low is the percentage of those participating in programs for permanent employment / 3% /, as well as in different cultural programs, and clubs of interest. Participation in political parties is 4%, which is expression of an active civil position .

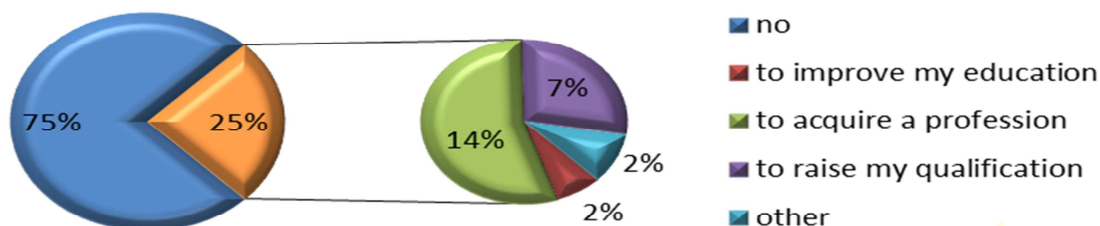
Have you taken part in any forms of social inclusion?



75 % of the representatives of the ethnic minorities, who are mostly Roma, do not participate in any forms of social inclusion after completing a certain level of education, which is usually too low-elementary or primary, and they do not attend any training courses.

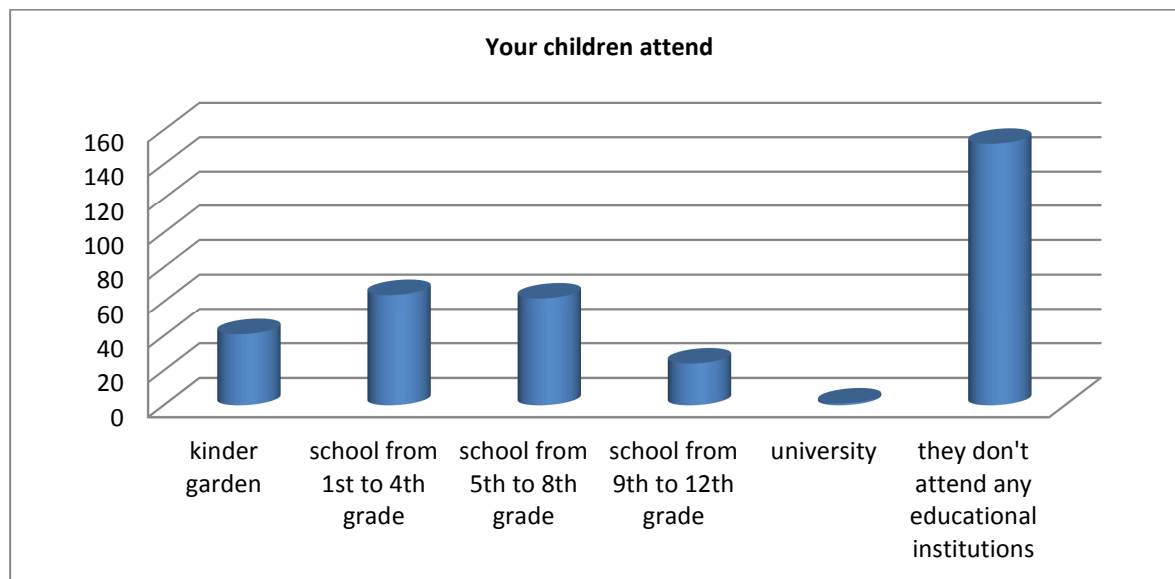
Of the remaining 25 percent the highest is the percentage of people participating in courses for acquiring profession, which shows that this part of the target group has focused properly and realizes that without qualification their chances of finding work are very small. About 7% of the respondents participate in training courses for improving their qualification.

**Have you participated in any training courses /qualification courses
 after completing your education?**



The above facts about the low level of education can also be confirmed by the following results: to the question: „ Do your children attend school?’, about 44 % have responded that their children do not go to school. One reason for that answer might be the fact that about 33 % of the respondents are above 40 years of age and they probably do not have children at school age, but the difference of 11% indicates that there are families whose children go to school. The percentage of children who attend school from 1st to 4th grade, and from 5th to 8th grade is the highest. Only twelve percent of the children go to kindergarten. It is difficult to overcome stress and language barriers when starting school in the first grade without visiting kindergarten before that because of the role that pre-school education has for preparation and smooth transition to school.

The language barriers and inability to understand the teacher leads to loss of interest in the study material, absenteeism, and later on - to dropping out of school.



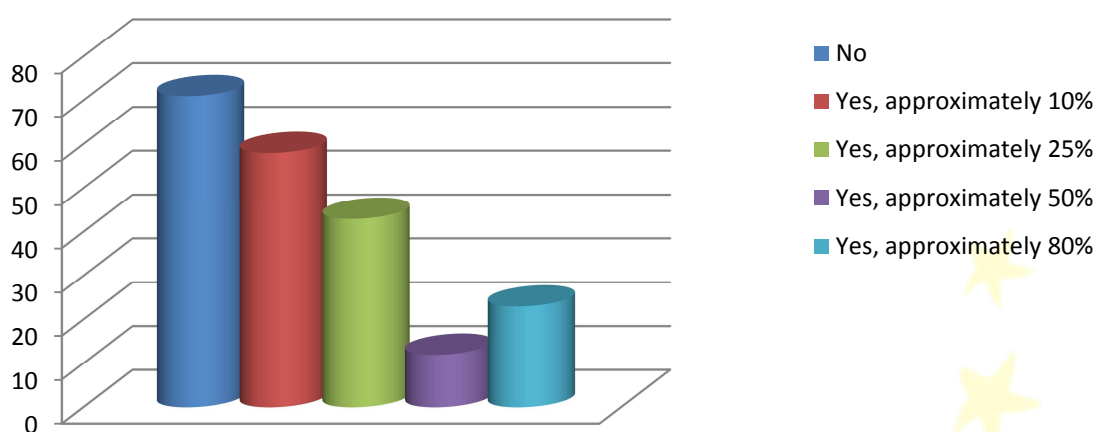
Object of the study is the environment in which children receive their education.

High is the percentage of segregated schools- in the village of Izvorsko, village of Ljuben Karavelovo, and Vaglen, where all children are representatives of the ethnic minority and virtually cannot communicate with children who have different ethnic origin.

The isolation of the group deprives the children of the opportunity to socialize with children who have another ethnic background and to integrate into Bulgarian society.

Of those surveyed the percentage of university students is almost zero.

Are there children from another ethnical group studying in the same educational establishment as your children?



According to NSI data at national level Roma community is characterized by more unfavorable educational structure in comparison with the rest of the population.

The highest level of education for 48.4 % of the representatives of the Bulgarian community is secondary education, while the highest percentage of Roma (44.8 %) have only primary education.

With higher levels of education (university or college) there is a downward trend in the share of the Roma community (only 0.3%) compared to the Bulgarian population (20.4%).

Disturbing is the share of Roma (20.5%) who do not even complete the initial stage of education compared to the Bulgarians (almost 0%) and Turks (5.6%).

Small is the share of young Roma and Roma adults with secondary and higher education and qualification or possessing certificate for some professional education.

Especially alarming is the tendency of increasing illiteracy among Roma.

The tendency at national level is also valid for the situation at municipal level.



Conclusion: From the presented data it became clear that the social isolation of both adults and children is high. It is necessary to take steps to encourage the participation of representatives of the target group in hobby clubs and to organize information campaigns among women for the prevention of early pregnancy, women trafficking and domestic violence. What needs to be done is to raise the awareness of parents about the opportunities of education for their children and their better chances of employment if they have qualification. In the future, we should conduct cultural exchange and work towards creating clubs that bring together people with the same interests. Targeted actions are needed in order to conduct activities that will encourage parents to keep their children in school and will help them realize that education can ensure better chances for the future. We should provide examples of successful career of people from the Roma community.

5.3 HEALTHCARE

Key factors which determine the level of health status and health culture of the population are education, income and the state of the residential environment.

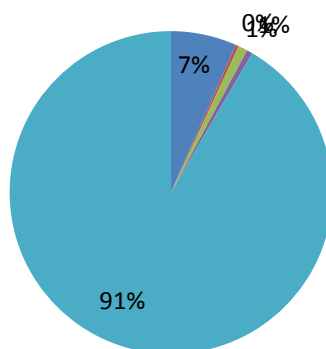
The socio-economic, housing and living conditions in which a large part of Roma representatives live have a direct impact on their health status.

Health care is another area that has strong influence on the social status of the individual.

The respondents were asked whether they have any complaints, illnesses or injuries that constrain them in their daily activities such as working, shopping or socializing with other people. At national level most of the Roma say they have such restrictions. In Aksakovo Municipality 91% reported that they do not have similar problems. Only 7% stated they have health problems which do not allow them to work. This fact demonstrates that the representatives of the target group are willing to have a job. Their bad social status is not due to health problems and they would participate if given the chance. At national level 18% of the Roma claim that they have a health problem that does not allow them to work or perform their daily activities. 12% percent of the representatives of the non-Roma population state they have such problem. The data showed that in Aksakovo Municipality this percentage is twice as low.

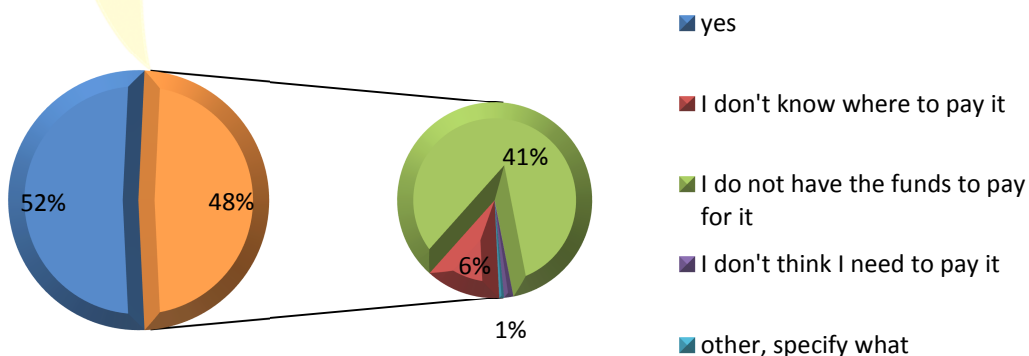
Do you have a health problem that prevents you from:

- working
- shopping
- keeping in touch with other people
- maintaining your personal hygiene
- no, I do not



In Aksakovo Municipality almost one half of the respondents / 52%/ are health insured. The main reason why the rest are not health insured is lack of money. Part of the people state they do not know where to pay the insurance. At national level 45 % of the Roma are health insured compared to 83 % for the rest of the Bulgarian society.

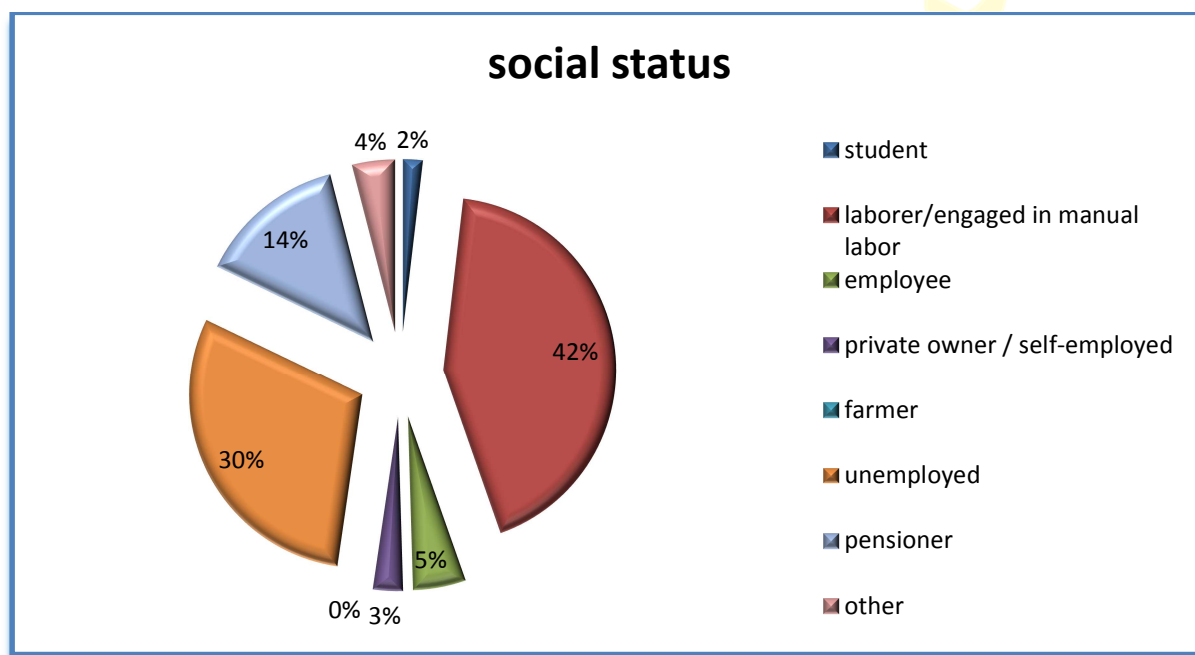
Do you have health insurance?



Conclusion: The data showed that in the municipality, the people from the target group have no health problems that restrict their social activity or prevent them from participating in the labour market. The main problem is that they do not have the money to pay their health insurance due to high unemployment among this ethnic group. They also lack of information about the insurance.

5.4 EMPLOYMENT

In their efforts to ensure full integration and participation of Roma in the labor market, the responsible institutions are governed by the European Employment Strategy, the renewed Lisbon Strategy, the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Employment, and other European, as well as national documents in the field of employment and development of human resources.



In Aksakovo Municipality 30 % of the respondents are unemployed. The percentage of unemployment here is lower than that at national level. This is also related to the level of unemployment in the territory of the whole municipality, which is almost twice as low compared



Европейски съюз

PROJECT BG051PO001-7.0.07-0049-C0001

„Partnership for Equal Opportunities ”

*The project is implemented with the financial support of
Operational Programme "Human Resources Development"
financed by the European Social Fund of the European Union*



to the overall unemployment at national level. People from the target group who are employed in the municipality are mainly manual workers or laborers as their level of education is low.

Results of surveys which were conducted nationally show that Roma are the most disadvantaged group in the labor market because most of them are illiterate or with low level of education. They do not possess any professional skills or qualifications, which to a great extent impedes their realization in the labor market. Due to these factors and the acts of discrimination towards them Roma are disadvantaged in the labor market and as a result are often employed in the "gray" economy. An essential problem of Roma employment, identified by another survey, is that nearly 24% of the employed Roma work without any contract.

In comparison, the share of Bulgarians who work under the same conditions is only 4% and the share of the Turks is 11.7%. Roma unemployment compared to other ethnic groups is still the highest - 52%.

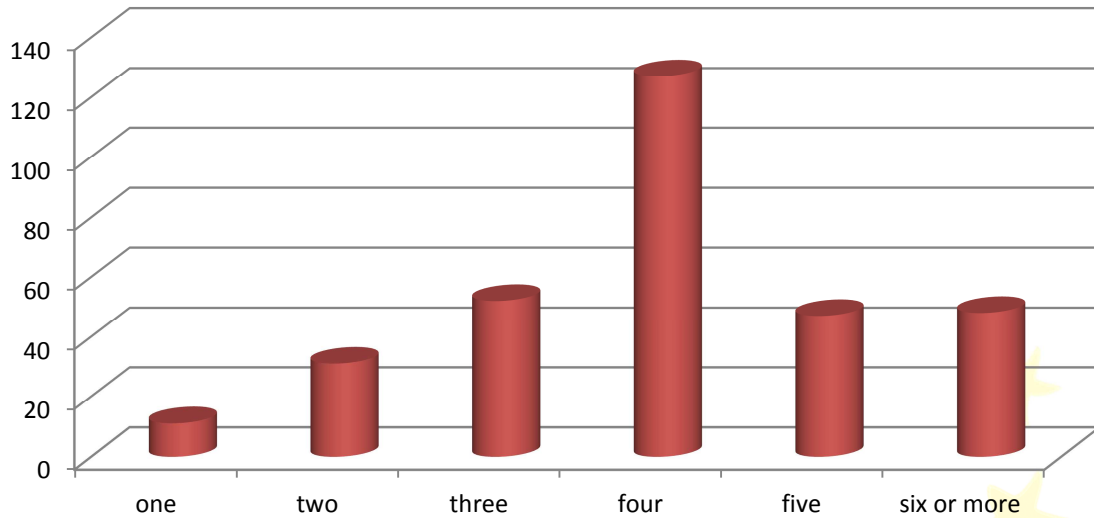
Conclusion: The unemployment rate among ethnic minority groups in Aksakovo Municipality is lower than the unemployment rate of the same groups at national level. Roma mainly exercise manual labor and the trend is the same at national level. Representatives of this group exercise unskilled labor so they need to raise the level of their education in order to increase the rate of employment.

5.5 HOUSING PROVISION

Sufficient personal space in a household is a key indicator for the quality of life. This survey calculates the ratio between number of family members and number of rooms, not including kitchen, hallway, bathroom and all rented rooms. In order to make the correlation some supplementary questions were asked concerning the number of all family members.

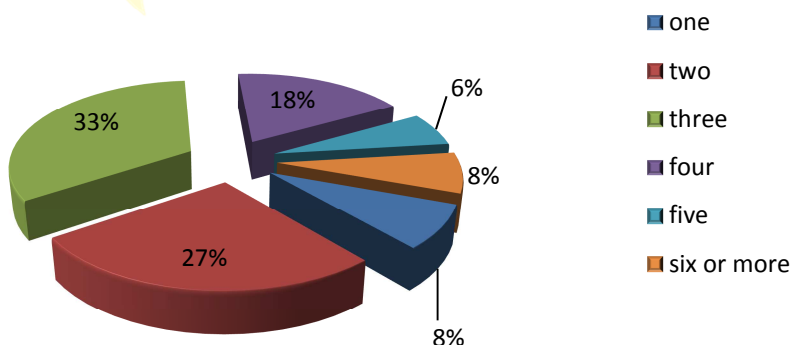
The highest is the percentage of the families with four members. The percentage of the families with five or six members is higher than the percentage of families with three members. There is still a trend among the Roma to have large families.

How many members does your family have?



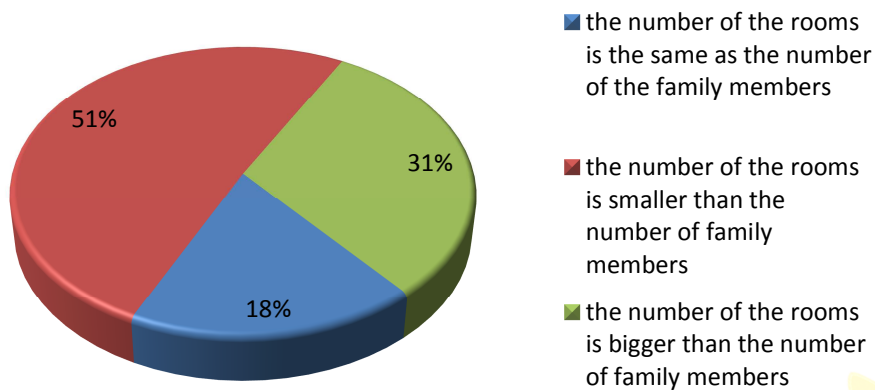
Although the number of the family members is high, the number of the rooms they live in is small. Most families /33%/ live in three rooms excluding the bathroom, toilet and corridors. Approximately 27% live in two rooms, 18% live in four rooms, and just 8% live in six or more rooms.

How many rooms do you have in your home?/excluding corridors,bathroom and toilet/



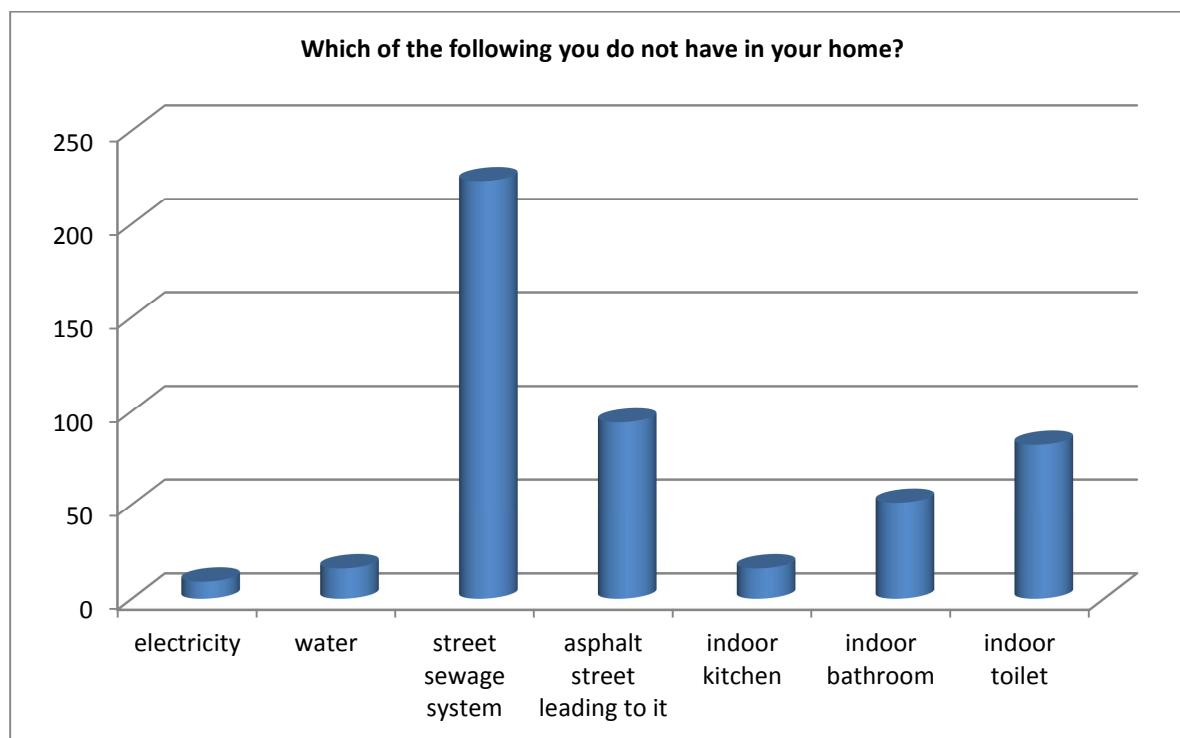
The results clearly show inverse correlation between the number of family members and the number of the rooms they occupy. It is a fact that the quality of life of this target group is not good.

Ratio between number of rooms and number of family members :



Regarding communal living conditions, in most cases there is no street sewerage, no paved streets or toilet and bathroom inside the Roma homes.

Electricity and water are provided for all households in Aksakovo Municipality.



According to the information provided by NSI at national level about 46% of the Roma live in rural areas and 54% - in towns and cities. Most of the Roma live in the so called "Roma neighborhoods" where the housing conditions are simply unacceptable. Those neighbourhoods continue to be one of the main impediments to the full integration of Roma in the society. The living conditions in them increase isolation, reduce the chances of improving the educational, social, economic and health status and lead to marginalization of a significant part of the community. The most common problems in the so called "Roma neighborhoods" or "Roma hamlets", are lack of cadastral maps, general or detailed structure plans, unauthorized construction, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to social and public services and overcrowding.

There are buildings constructed with available materials in violation of the urban development plans. In more than half of the Roma homes there is no sewerage system and about 10% of Roma households do not have running cold water. The low socio-economic status of the inhabitants of Roma neighborhoods further aggravates their vulnerability as users of public utilities.



Европейски съюз

PROJECT BG051PO001-7.0.07-0049-C0001

„Partnership for Equal Opportunities ”

*The project is implemented with the financial support of
Operational Programme "Human Resources Development"
financed by the European Social Fund of the European Union*



Study on urbanization and housing in Roma neighborhoods in 88 settlements with a total population of about 400 thousand people observed the following: overcrowding, substandard accommodation, missing or poorly maintained street network and technical infrastructure, lack of buildings for public services, lack of green areas, street lighting and telephone network, disorganized and chaotic construction of illegal buildings. As a result of all this there is illegal connection to the infrastructure, unclear land ownership, lack of updated cadastre and detailed development plans, inapplicability of the Law on Spatial Planning for more than 70% of the Roma neighborhoods. The ethnic minorities in Aksavo municipality are concentrated in several small settlements. The national trend for the living conditions of Roma people is also valid for the municipality.

Conclusion:

Data show that housing provision is not enough to ensure normal life. The basic needs of electricity and water are satisfied but measures need to be taken for constructing street sewers and asphaltting the streets. However, this is typical of the whole municipality, not only of the neighborhoods and settlements inhabited by representatives of the ethnic minorities.

5.6 POVERTY

This section focuses on income poverty measured in terms of the distribution of income within the family. Poverty or its absence, is essential for the minimum standard of living and is a wider term than monetary poverty. It also includes access to essential social resources such as education and healthcare.

Material privations are the key indicators of Europe 2020. According to Eurostat data, poverty includes indicators related to economic stagnation, deprivation of durable goods, housing and its environment.

Individuals who are "poor" live in restricted conditions and acute lack of resources so that they are unable :

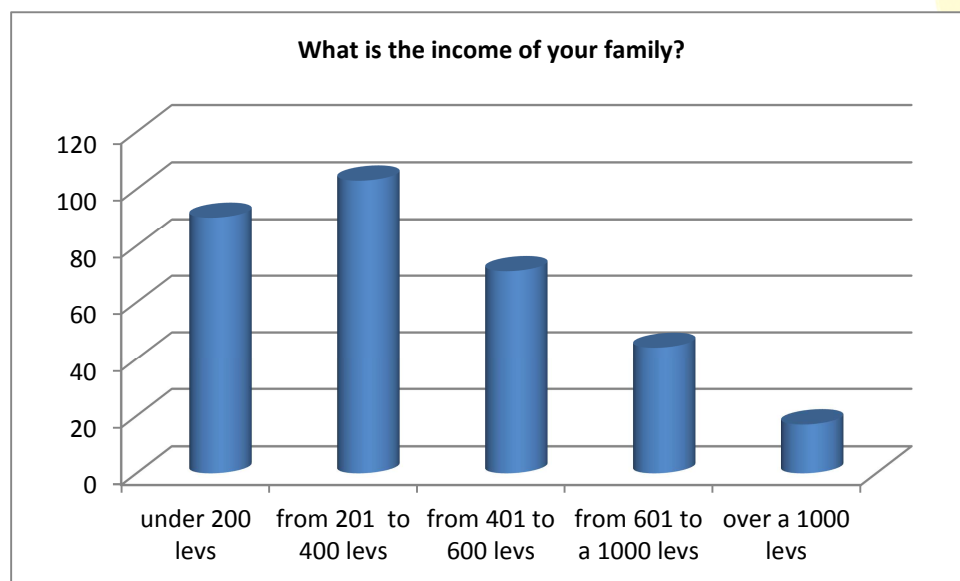
- to pay rent or utility bills;
- to keep their homes adequately warm;
- to cover unexpected expenses;

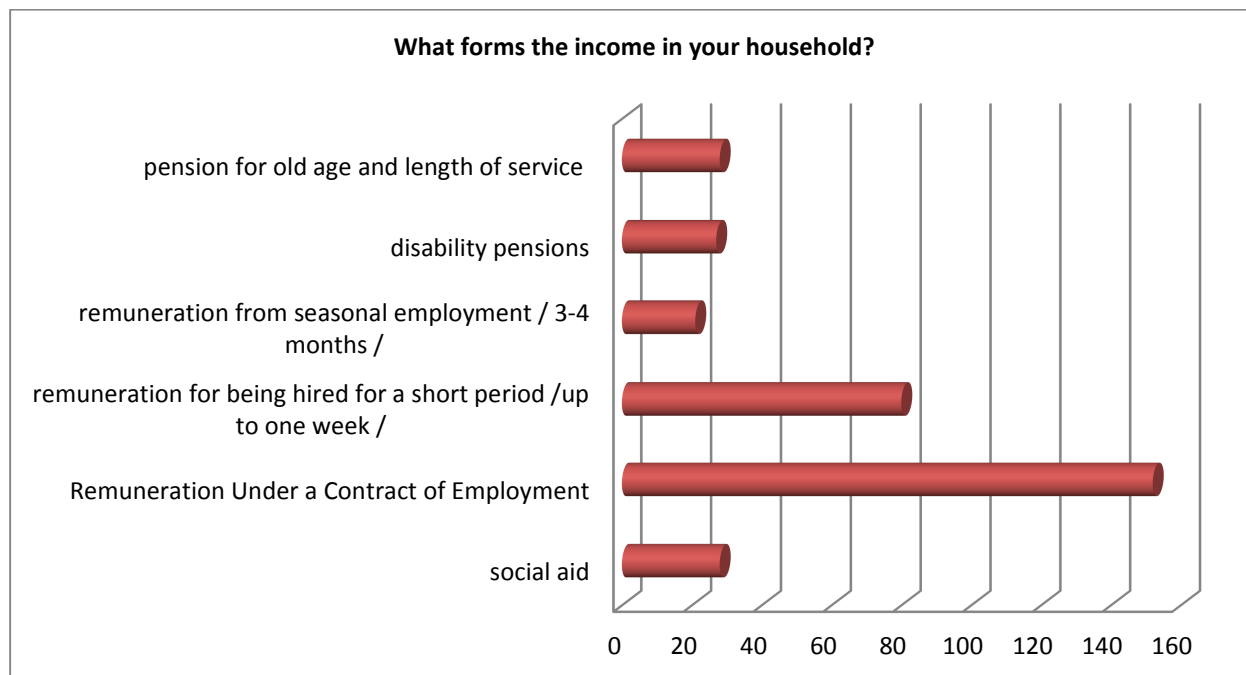
- to eat fish, meat or the equivalent proteins every other day;
- to have a one- week holiday away from their homes ;

to have:

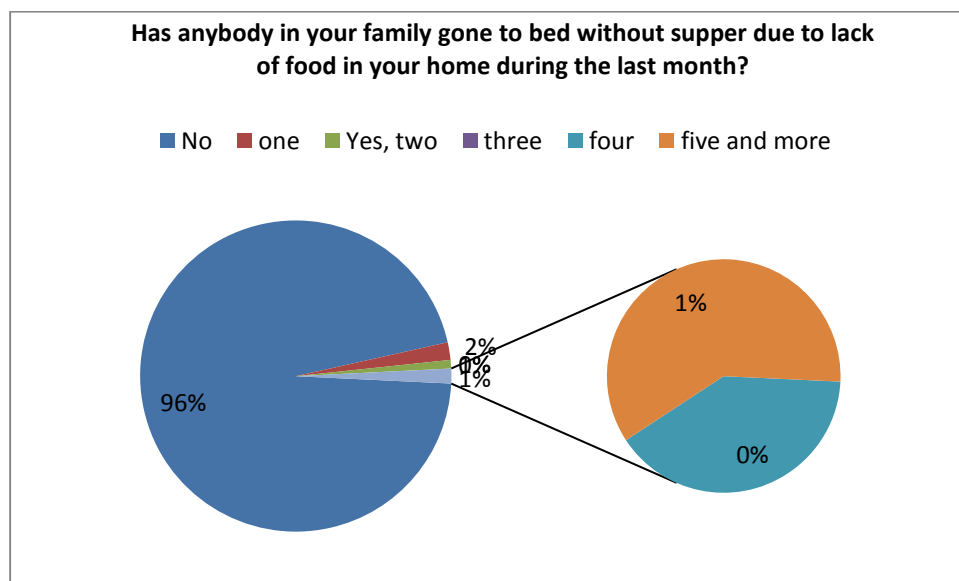
- a car;
- a washing machine;
- a color TV ;
- a telephone.

High is the percentage of the families who live on income much lower than the specified for the country / approximately 2000 levs for a family of four /. The income of the respondents per family is from 201 to 400 lev or less than 200 levs. With the increase of income limits decreases the number of families who have it, which speaks of low income and inability to lead normal life. Only 5% have income above 1000 Levs.





A positive trend seen from this survey is that 45% of the respondents have employment contract which is the main source of their income. The percentage of respondents with health insurance is almost the same. Another major source of income for 24 % of the people is temporary work which lasts not more than a week. Six per cent of the respondents are over the age of sixty. For eight per cent their income is their Disability Support Pension, and for another 8 per cent – their pension for old age and length of service. Eight per cent of the respondents rely on family benefits. The percentage difference is not very large and is within the normal variation. 99 % gave negative answers to the question whether they have children under the age of sixteen who work in order to provide a living for the family. Ninety-six percent of the respondents state that they did not happen to be without food. There are few cases in which people went to bed without dinner due to lack of food in the home



Conclusion: The results show that the representatives of ethnic minorities have low income far below the minimum standards. Unfortunately this situation is typical for the whole country and not only for the ethnic group. The family members have food but this is not the only criteria for poverty according to the European standards. The low level of education and respectively lack of work influence the quality of life of the Roma.

5.7 INTERACTION WITH PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

Interaction with public authorities is essential for solving ethnic minorities' problems.

The survey traced the situation by reflecting the view point of :

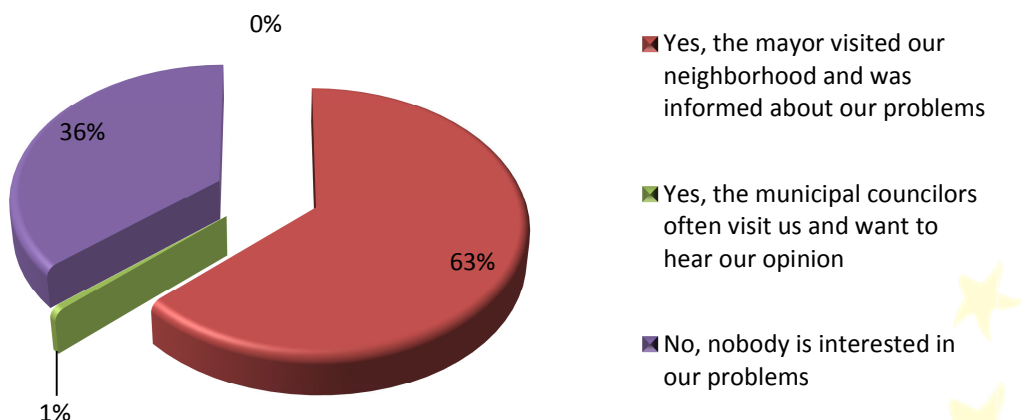
1. Ethnic minority representatives;
2. Representatives of the public administration, municipality employees, social policies administration, Labour Office and others.

5.7.1 Ethnic minority representatives

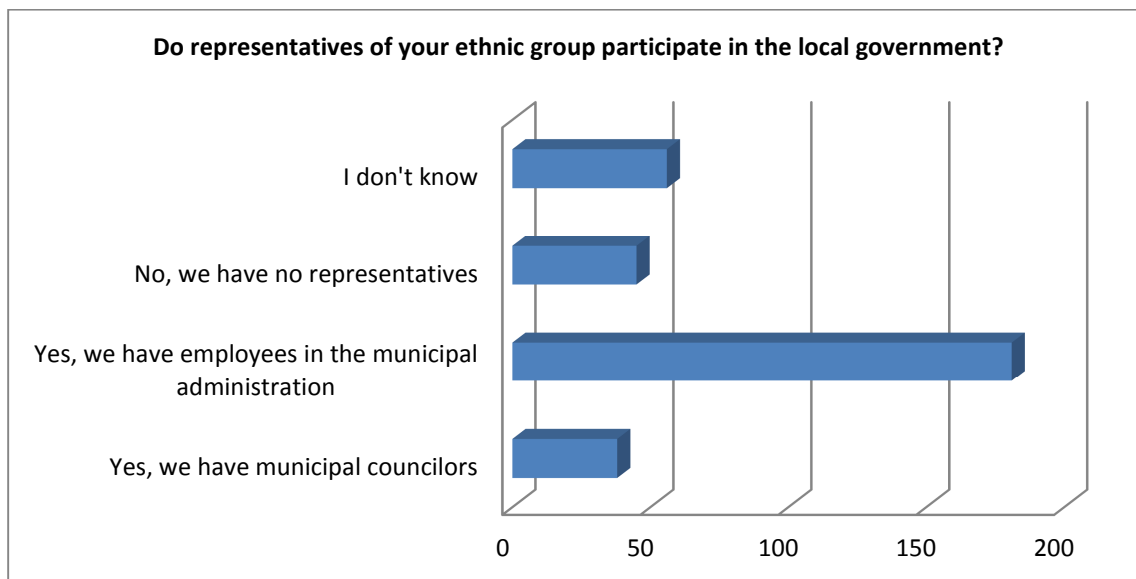
The purpose of the survey questions was to reflect the attitudes towards public institutions:

What do people expect from the public institutions? Do they still think that the state is responsible for everything? Do Roma people know what the state is and who it consists of?

Do you think that the local authorities are familiar with your problems?

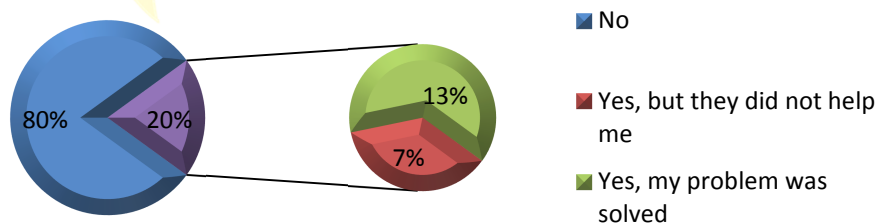


Sixty six per cent of the respondents state that the Mayor has visited their neighborhood and is aware of their problems. Low is the percentage of those who confirmed that some municipal councilors have visited them. Thirty six percent think that the authorities do not care about them. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents state that their community participates in the local governance through their representatives in the municipal administration. However, the municipal counselors who represent them do not visit the neighbourhood where they live.



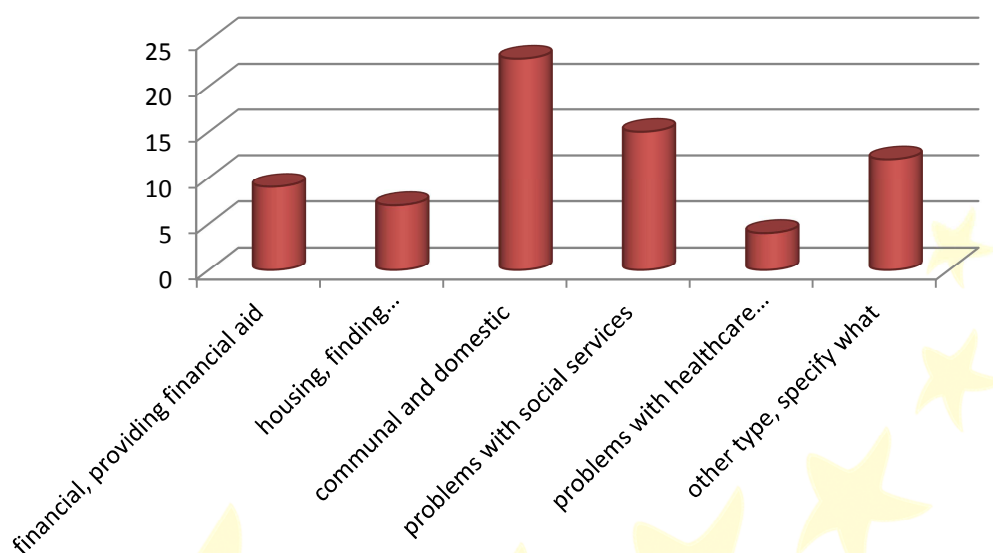
The local authorities pay attention to the problems of the ethnic minorities. Twenty per cent of the respondents have asked for assistance and the municipal administration solved the problems of 13 per cent of them. Eighty percent of the respondents have not turned to the local government for help which may mean they did not need assistance.

In the last 12 months have you asked the local authorities for assistance in order to solve your problems?



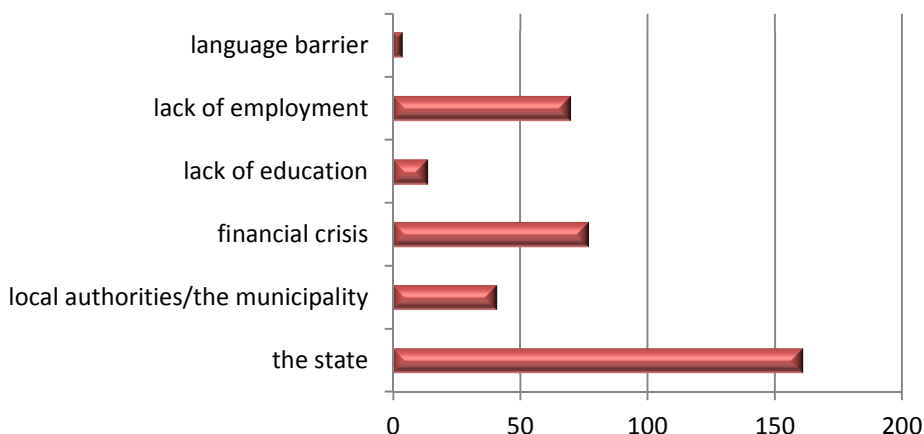
Most problems are connected with the living standards and community services. The role of the Municipality here is vital. Other problems are related to the social services and the provision of financial assistance.

With what problems do you most often turn to the local government?



Unfortunately people still don't realize that „ they are the state” and that they should not blame only the authorities for all problems. The respondents think that the lack of employment is the reason for their misfortune. They do not consider some other reasons such as lack of education, the financial crisis, local government and the municipality. According to them all these factors are beyond their control.

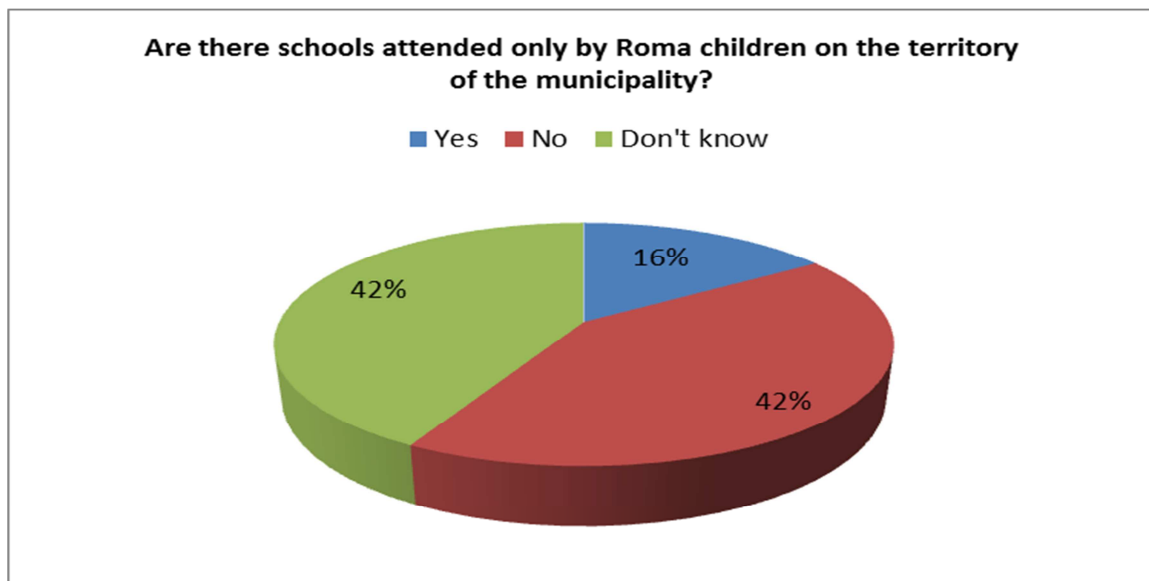
Who or what do you think is the reason for the problems you encounter?/ surveyed citizens /



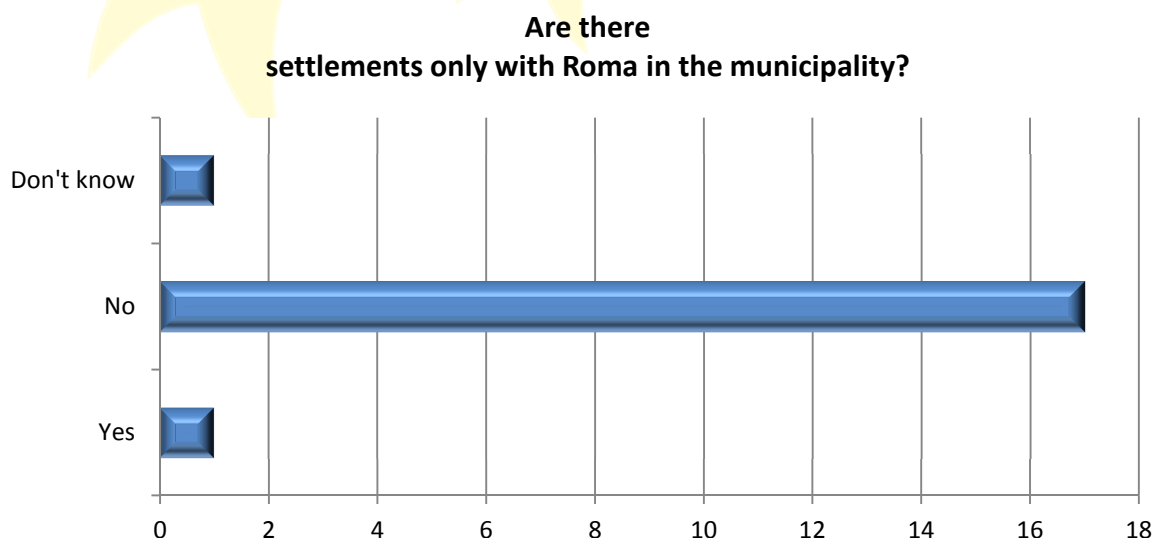
Conclusion: The interaction with the local government is good. The problems that people raise connected with the living standards and community services are usually solved. A negative tendency is that the respondents blame the state for all their problems and do not try to cope with the difficulties themselves. They do not make effort to improve their education or find a job.

5.7.2 Representatives of the public administration

The aim of the survey of the public authorities representatives is greater comprehensiveness of the raised problems. The everyday contacts of the municipality employees provide information on the situation of the ethnic minorities and greater thoroughness in presenting the results. Meanwhile it is important to find out whether the employees are aware of the real situation regarding the state of the ethnic groups in four areas - education, housing provision, employment and healthcare. Thirty eight per cent of the representatives have been informed about the ethnic composition of the child population in the schools and can give their answer. The answers vary depending on the direct observations of each of the respondents.

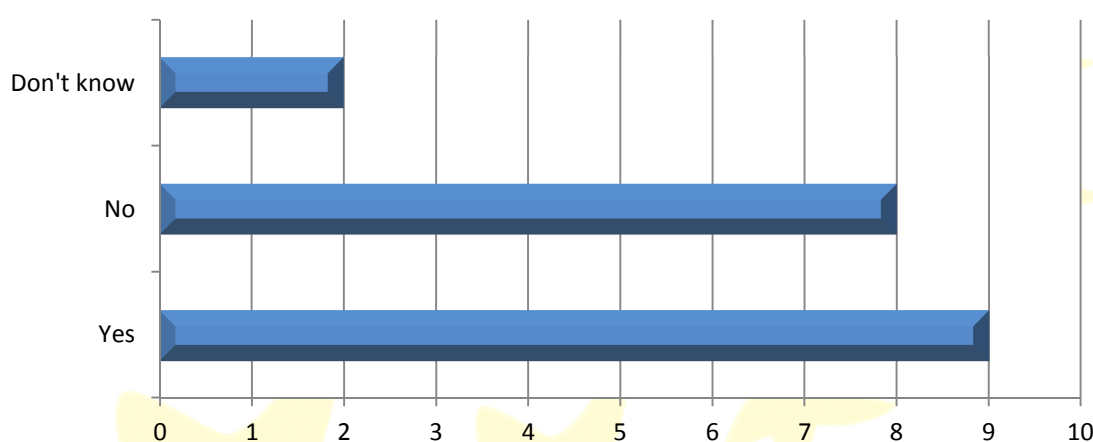


At present in a number of settlements there are only one or two families of elderly people who represent Bulgarian ethnos. The isolation of Roma has become greater through the years because Bulgarian population moved away from these villages while the number of Roma people increased. Although responses show that there are no settlements with only Roma, the percentage of ethnic representatives is so high that we can talk about isolation and inability to integrate Roma.



In the settlements with mixed population there are areas with only Roma people. This division is different for the specific settlement. In the bigger settlements there are separate Roma hamlets, while in the smaller places the population is mixed. In some villages, like the village of Izvorsko and the village of Ljuben Karavelovo the concentration of Roma is very high.

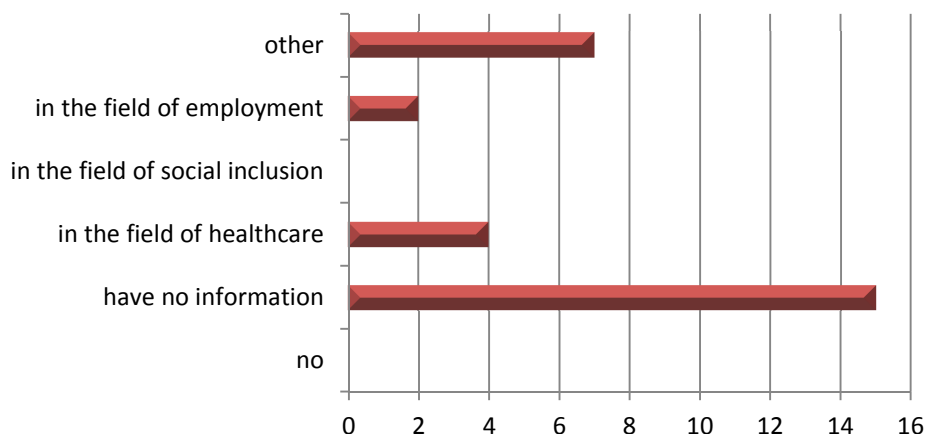
In the settlements with mixed population, are there separate neighborhoods only with Roma?



Roma women are in danger of isolation due to the specific views of the ethnic group. Roma women do not usually go to work. They look after the children and do the housework. Very often their human rights are violated as they become victims of domestic violence.

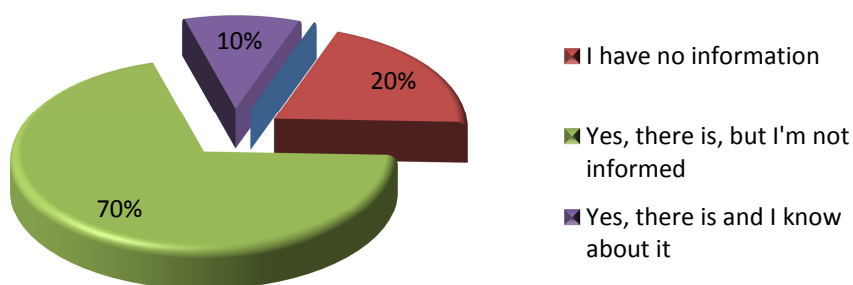
There are very few information campaigns and initiatives that support Roma women. So far work has been done mainly in the field of healthcare. Social inclusion and participation in hobby clubs are very important for overcoming that isolation.

**Are there initiatives and/or information campaigns
supporting Roma women?**



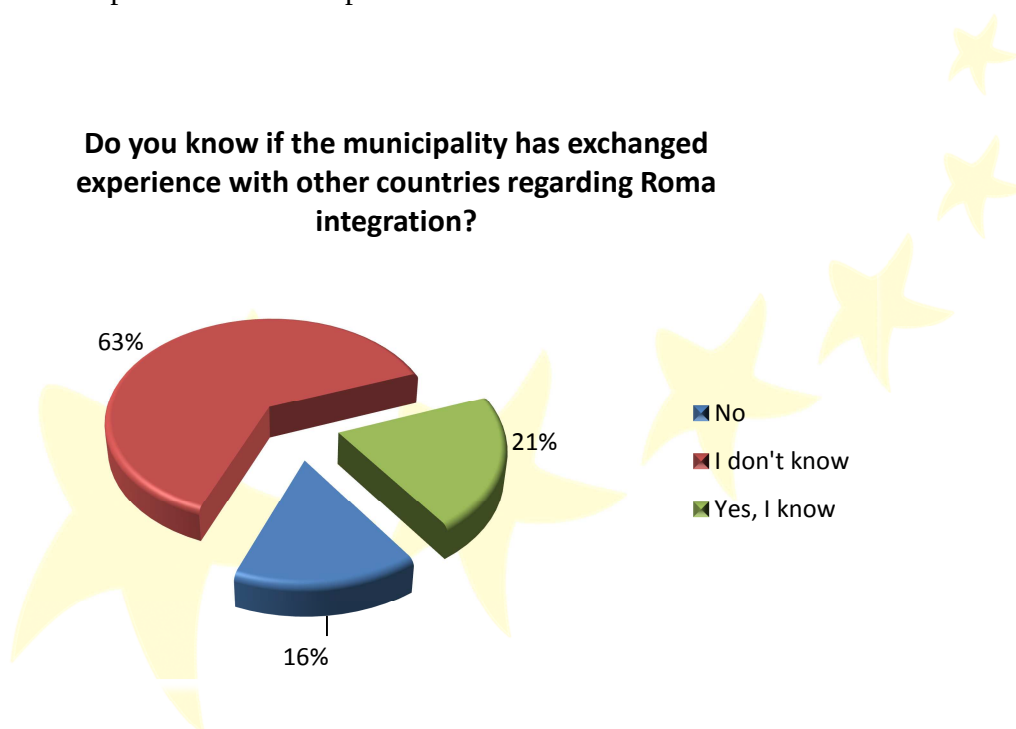
A large number of the respondents state that they know of the existence of a legal document for the integration of Roma. Only a small percentage are well aware of such document but the high percentage of those who know about it is reassuring because it means that if interested they can get acquainted with its content.

**Is there a municipal normative document, strategy,
action plan or other for Roma integration?**



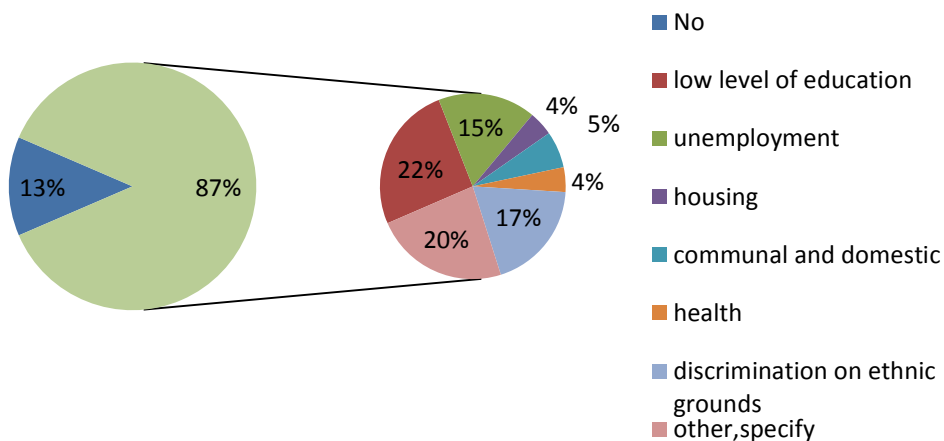
Roma integration is a problem shared by all EU member states so the purpose of this project is the study and exchange of good practices and experience in this area. Due to the upcoming working visits to some of the EU member states within the framework of the project, the awareness of the officials regarding the project is not very high despite all efforts to popularize it.

Until now, the municipality has not had the opportunity to share such information with other countries. 21 % of the respondents have information about the efforts of the municipal authorities to cope with the Roma problems.



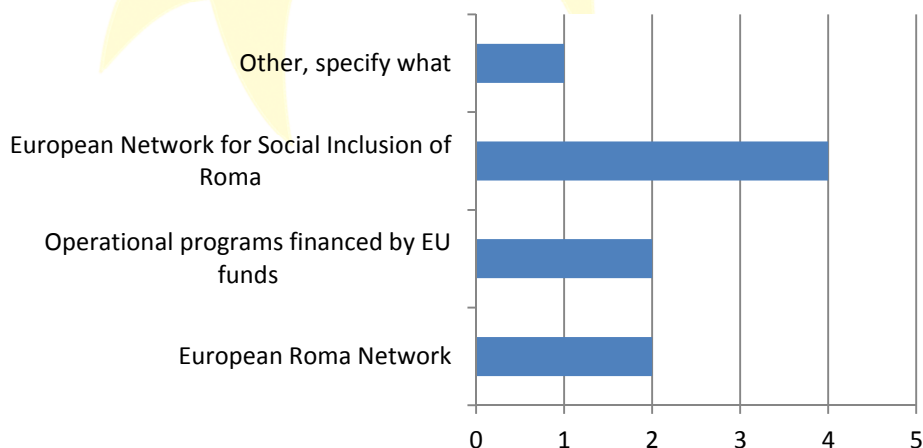
The viewpoint of the surveyed employees is different from the citizens' viewpoint regarding ethnic issues. Naturally, the employees are aware that poor education is connected with the low standard of life of the Roma as it does not allow them to find employment. Eighty eight per cent of the respondents state that they are familiar with the Roma problems which are mainly connected with poor education and high unemployment.

Do you think you are well aware of Roma problems?



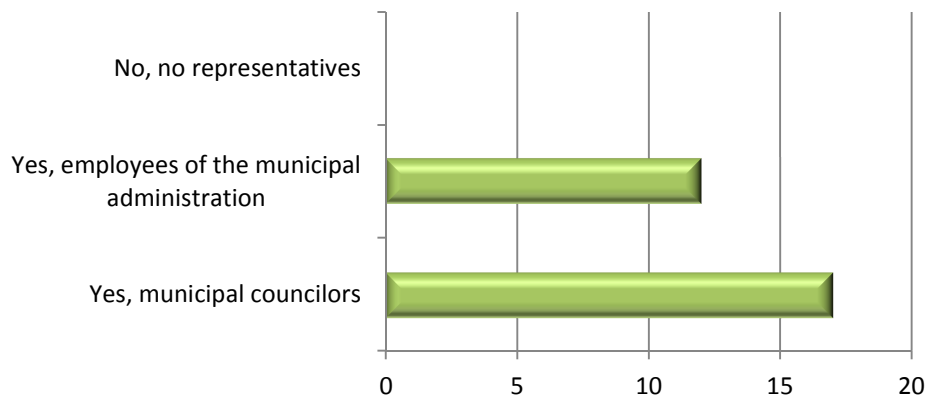
The employees look for information that will help them deal with the problems of minorities in various sources such as the European Network on Social Inclusion of Roma, the Operational Programmes and the European Roma network.

In order to deal with the Roma problems you looked up information in:



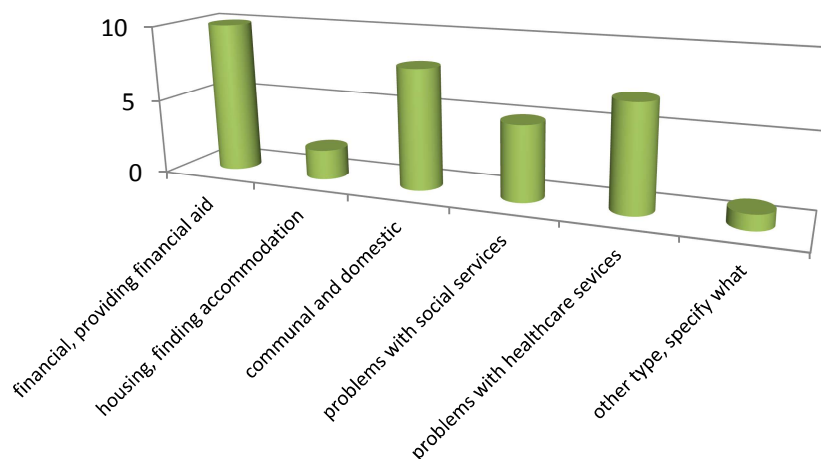
Both Roma representatives and municipality employees know that the minority has its representatives in the municipal administration as well as in the municipal council of Aksakovo.

**Do Representatives of the Roma ethnic group
 participate in local government?/ interviewed
 employees /**



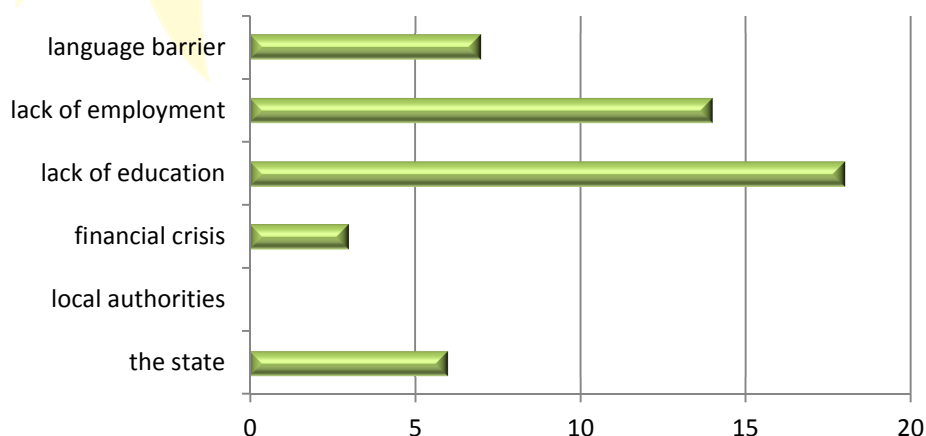
Municipality employees gave the same answers as the Roma representatives which means they know the Roma ethnos well. Most of the problems of Roma are connected with the public and communal services and they often ask for financial support.

**With what problems do Roma turn to the local government/
municipal administration, municipal council /**



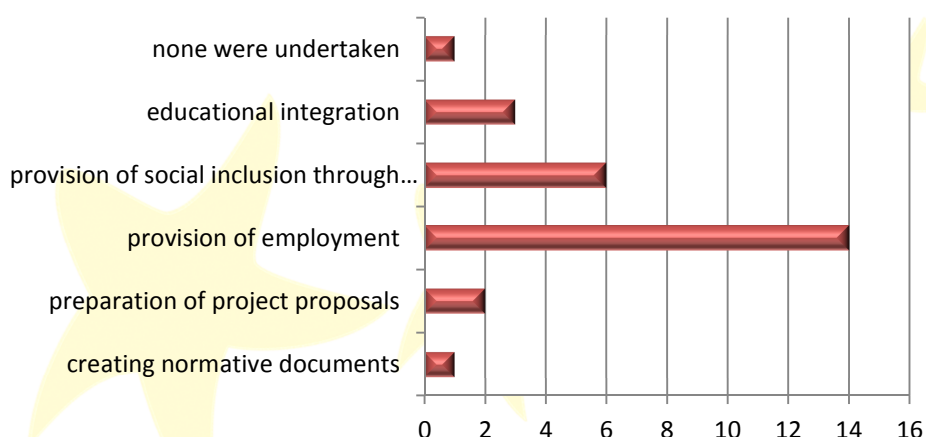
The employees consider the lack of education and employment, as well as the language barrier, the main reasons for Roma problems. There are also some answers about the blame of the state but it is mainly connected with the normative basis for providing opportunities and solving problems.

**Who or what is the reason for the Roma problems ?
/interviewed employees /**



The municipality is not indifferent towards the problems of Roma. In the period 2012-2014, it carried out two projects with focus on this group. The first project called “Hand in Hand Looking at the World ” was orientated towards the educational integration of the children under a scheme for providing grants: BG051PO001-4.1.05 "Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities". The second project "Partnership for Equal Opportunities", "No Boundaries - Component 1 - Phase 2" budget line: BG051PO001-7.0.07., was directed towards the elderly. Despite having different target groups, both projects seek to create conditions for social inclusion of ethnic minorities.

What actions and initiatives has the municipality taken for Roma inclusion?



CONCLUSION: The representatives of the public institutions are aware of the Roma problems. This can be seen from the answers they have given because they match the answers of the target group. Municipal employees are searching for ways to solve the problems of the minority group and proof of this are the projects implemented within the municipality. More effort is needed to secure additional information and financial sources in order to overcome the problems of minorities, and to develop integrated plan for Roma inclusion, covering four areas: access to education, employment, healthcare and housing provision.



6 How to use the results

The results of the survey can be used:

- When searching for best practices for the inclusion of Roma in other EU Member States in the field of education, healthcare, access to the labor market and housing provision
- When developing, implementing and monitoring strategic documents at local level concerning the integration of ethnic minorities, including measures aimed at:
 - Inclusion of children from the ethnic minorities in the educational system from early childhood;
 - Ensuring smooth transition from primary to secondary education ;
 - Tackling unemployment among ethnic minorities by concentrating efforts on improving education and acquiring professional qualification;
 - Struggle against discrimination and anti-Roma sentiments to ensure equal access to education, employment, housing provision and health services;
 - Raising awareness of fundamental human rights;
 - Establishing mechanisms for ensuring a secure environment where people can feel confident and calm to report cases of discrimination and abuse of human rights.
 - Minority communities awareness regarding their rights, the normative documents dealing with equality, non-discrimination and organizations protecting victims of discrimination.
 - Achieving social inclusion through understanding the culture of the majority and effective communication.
 - Overcoming social exclusion of Roma women not only by providing employment but also by informing them about trafficking of women and its prevention, women's exploitation and domestic violence.



7 References :

1. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.
2. EU framework for National Roma integration strategies by 2020
3. Framework Programme for Roma Integration in Bulgarian Society (2010-2020)
4. EU-MIDIS, European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, 2010
5. The situation of Roma in eleven EU Member States, research, 2011
6. Website of Aksakovo Municipality www.aksakovo.net/



PROJECT BG051PO001-7.0.07-0049-C0001
„Partnership for Equal Opportunities ”
*The project is implemented with the financial support of
Operational Programme "Human Resources Development"
financed by the European Social Fund of the European Union*

