



Project
e-Roma Resource

CURRENT STATE OF ART AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

NATIONAL REPORT

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NATIONAL REPORT

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1 INTRODUCTION

The national report is a report developed by Croatian employment service Regional office Karlovac and various government institutions, non-government organizations and activists in the field of Roma. In this national report, the Roma situation in Croatia will be described. With the help of internet databases and field experts, current state has been analysed. This state shows a realistic picture of Roma population in this area. In this report, information about Roma demographics, socio-economic status, education, employment, income, living conditions and housing, health, social inclusion and Roma integration and legislation about Roma population will be described.

This report consists of several parts. The first one is introduction. Here a brief description of the national report is given. In the second one, results of the situation analysis are given. The third one presents the results of the need assessment analysis. Two last parts are main findings and recommendations. Within the chapter named main findings, a brief summary of the survey results is given. In the recommendations chapter, advice for the contents of the online platform is discussed. Given recommendations are based on the obtained information.

In order to obtain as accurate as possible information, several methods have been used. One method was the research done via internet and online databases. Many publications, books, web-pages, articles and videos have been included into this research. The second method was direct communication with Roma population and various experts that work in the Roma field. Finally, a survey was developed. This survey was given to relevant government institutions, non-government organizations and activists in the field of Roma. The survey was of great importance to the research because it gives first hand insight. The survey was conducted in two ways:

- face to face interview
- skype interview.

The importance of the national report is that it reflects upon the current state of Roma population in Croatia. Information obtained comes from sources that have experience and knowledge about the said topic. With the help of this research, needs for this field are identified and explained. The main outcome of this project is an online platform and this research will greatly improve in making the platform relevant and useful to everyone who deals with problems concerning the Roma population, whether it is a government institution, non-government organization, a member of the Roma community or an independent expert.

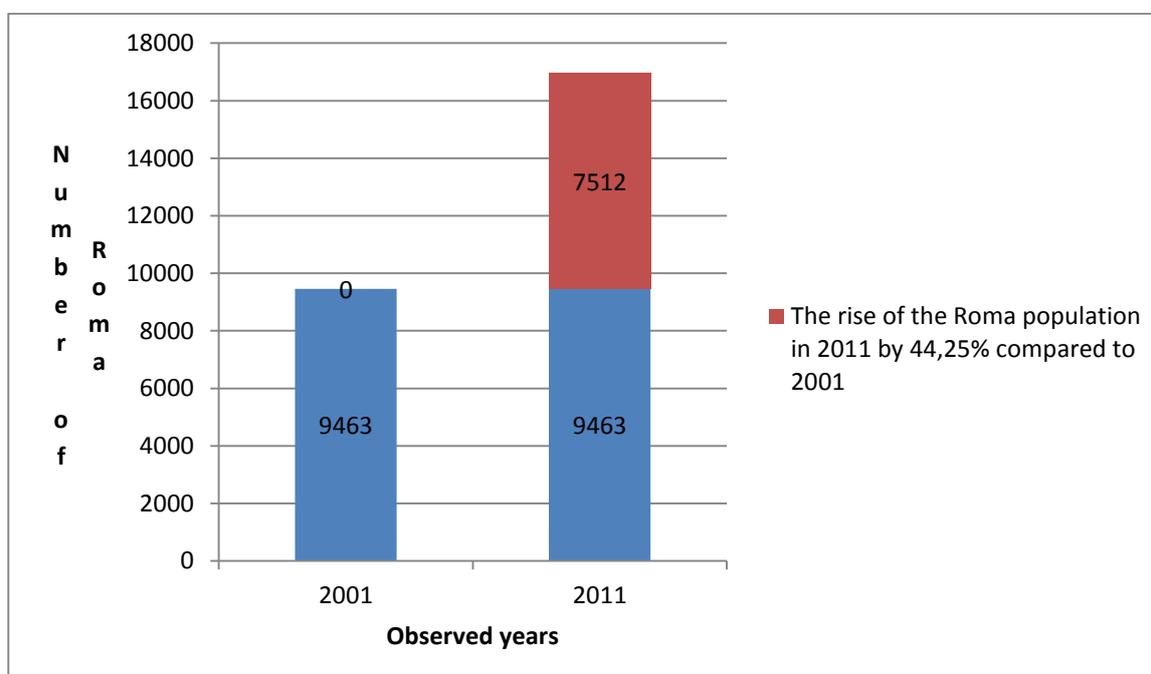
2 RESULTS OF THE SITUATION ANALYSIS

In this chapter results of the situation analysis will be given. The situation analysis is based mainly on the research done via internet and communication with the various sources that are very well informed about the discussed field. Firstly, current status of the Roma population in Croatia will be presented. Collected statistical data and first-hand experience as well as existing legislation shall be presented. After the situation has been presented, an overlay of the found resources will be given. All materials such as books, publications, videos, articles, web-pages, documents, projects and other relevant sources will be mention in this section. An excel table containing all sources will be included as an Annexe. The last subchapter of this chapter contains the information about the persons and organizations that were found during the situation analysis. All contacts will be listed in the same excel table in the Annexe to this document.

2.1 Description of the current status of the Roma in the country

In Croatia there are 16,975 members of Roma minority according to the data collected by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics for the latest population census. That represents a total of 0.40% of overall population in Croatia for the year 2011. As shown in the following chart, the number of Roma in Croatia has increased since the last population census in 2001 by 7,512 or by 44.25%.

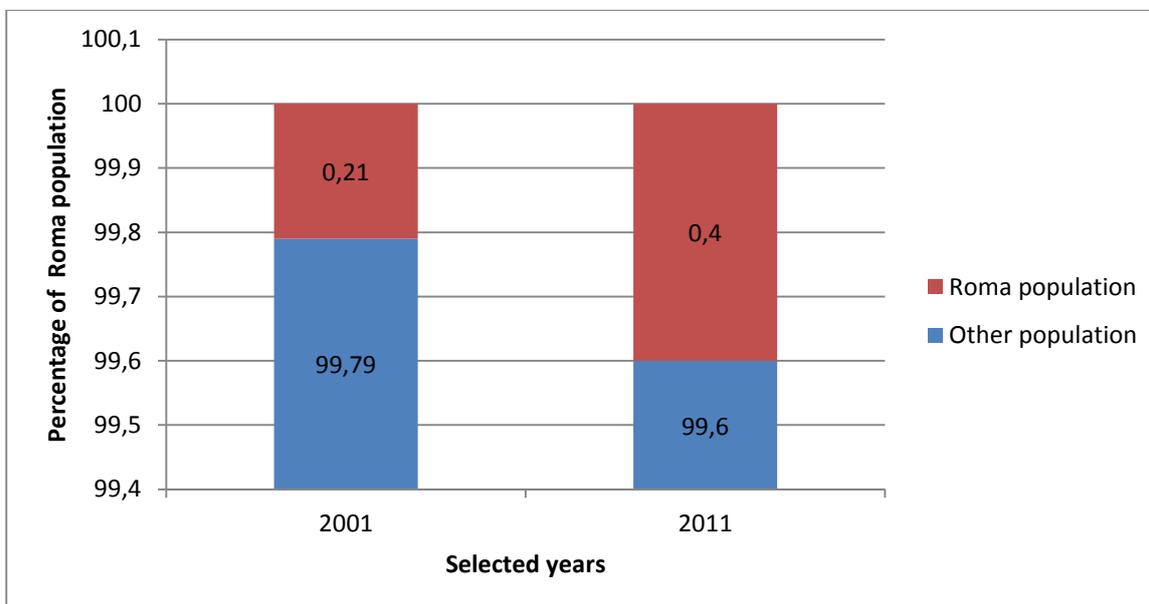
Chart 1. Number of Roma population in Croatia in 2001 and 2011.



Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistic

If we observe the percentage of Roma population in total population in these two years, we can see that there has been an increase from 0.21% in 2001 to 0.40% in 2011. This is shown in chart number 2.

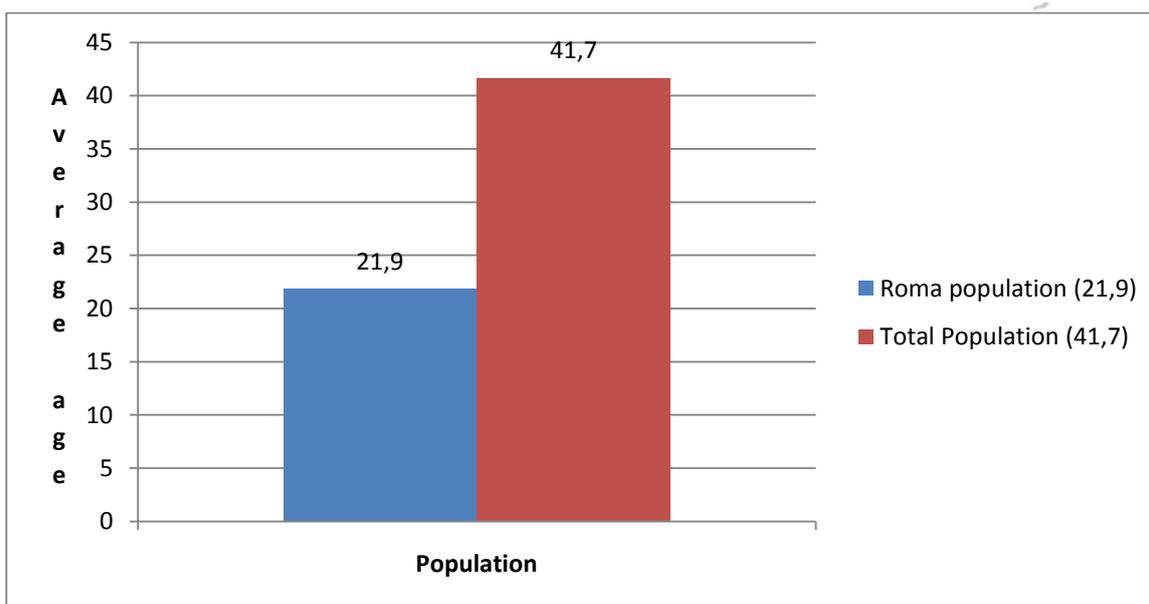
Chart 2. Percentage of Roma population in total population in Croatia in 2001 and 2011



Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics

If we analyse the Roma minority by age, it can be observed that the Roma minority consist of younger people rather than old. The average of years of all the Roma population is 21,9 as the average of total population in Croatia is 41,7 years. That data can be seen in chart 3.

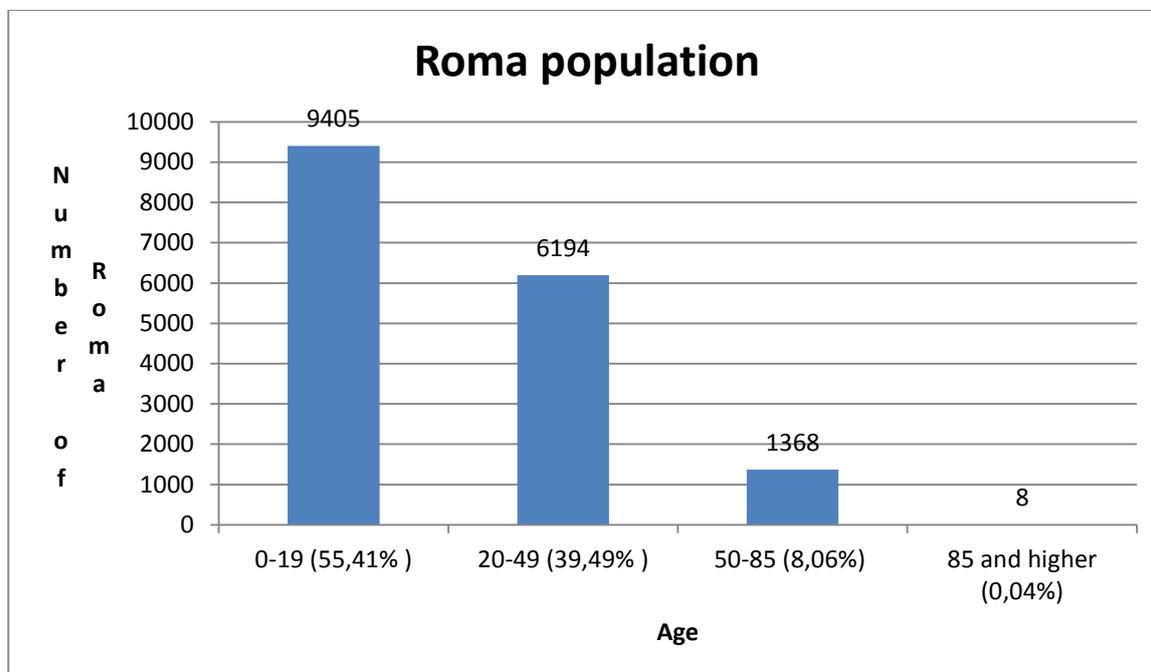
Chart 3. Average of years for Roma minority and total population in Croatia in year 2011



Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics

We can divide the total Roma population by age. 55,41% or 9,405 of total Roma population has 0-19 years, 39,49% or 6,194 are 20-49 years old, 8,06% or 1368 are 50-85 years old and only 0,04% or 8 Roma are above 85 years old. This is shown in chart 4.

Chart 4. Roma population by age in 2011



Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics

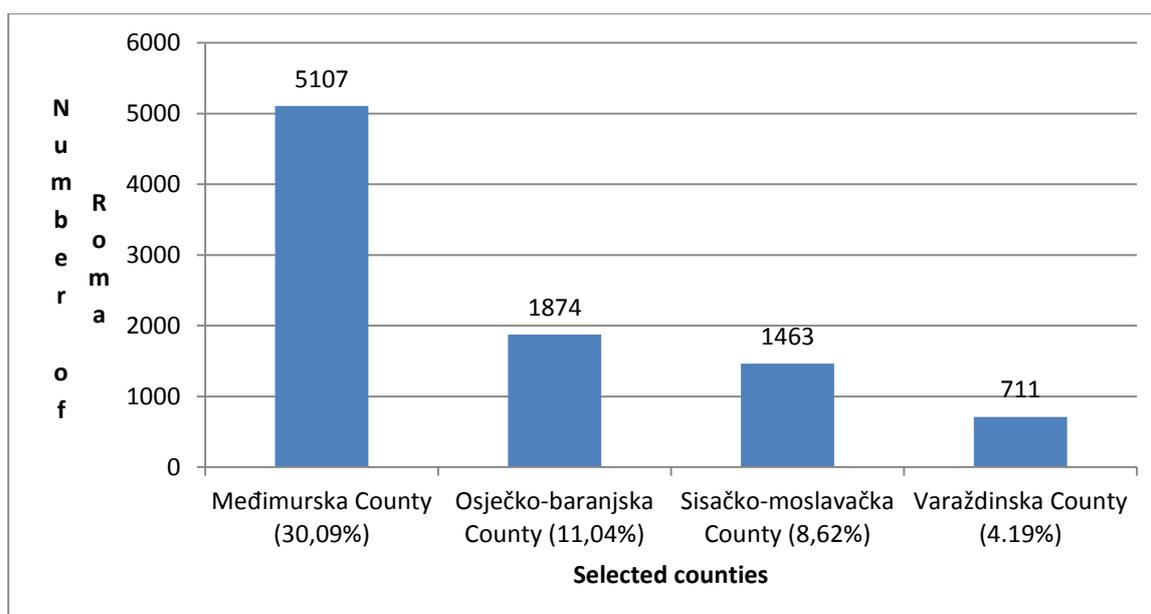
As shown in the chart 4, Roma population is a fairly young population and that the life expectancy is low. The main reason for such data is the fact that Roma population lives in poor conditions and most of them have little or no medical care at all. The living, housing and environment conditions in which Roma people live are terrible. They often live in suburbia, near bigger towns or villages in so called “wild settlements”. These settlements are more than often illegal and have no electricity, nor water connection. Sever is also not connected. Many of the houses are wooden and/or are poorly built. There is virtually no isolation and many of the houses lack doors and windows. That leaves the inhabitants exposed to weather elements, which is particularly problematic, especially in winter, when the temperatures drop below zero degrees Celsius.

Medical conditions are also terrible. Most of the inhabitants in such settlements rarely go to a doctor. The main factor for that is that they keep a distance from the rest of the population. This is specific for the older members of Roma community who are very distrustful and sceptical to everyone who tries to help.

In the field of health continued systematic work on increasing the coverage of the Roma population with health insurance by increasing the availability of health services to the Roma population, improving the health of infants and children equating vaccination of children of Roma national minority with the rest of the population, and to improve the number of vaccinations, work to improve the health of infants and children of Roma national minorities through health measures aimed at eliminating the most frequent causes of morbidity and death, with the implementation of health education for parents and preventive and curative health care measures, and the implementation of other measures aimed at improving the health and health care of the Roma population. Visible progress in the implementation of health education of parents aimed at improving health habits. Although not enough data available, the activities of the county public health, for example in Bjelovarsko-Bilogorska, Međimurska and Primorsko-goranska County indicate that vaccination coverage for children with additional activities, reaches the level of vaccination rate of other children. Some county public health departments have conducted and additional activities to improve the health of infants and children of Roma national minority, such measures continued health surveillance primary schools because of problems lice children.

According to the Croatian Bureau for Statistics, the largest population of Roma is located in Međimurska County. The County is home to 5,107 members of total Roma population in Croatia. That is a high 30.09% of total Roma population in Croatia. The county that has the second largest Roma community is Osječko-baranjska County. There we can find 1,874 members of Roma population (11.04%). Sisačko-moslavačka County is home to 1,463 Roma (8.62%) an Varaždinska County to 711 or 4.19% This data is shown in chart 5.

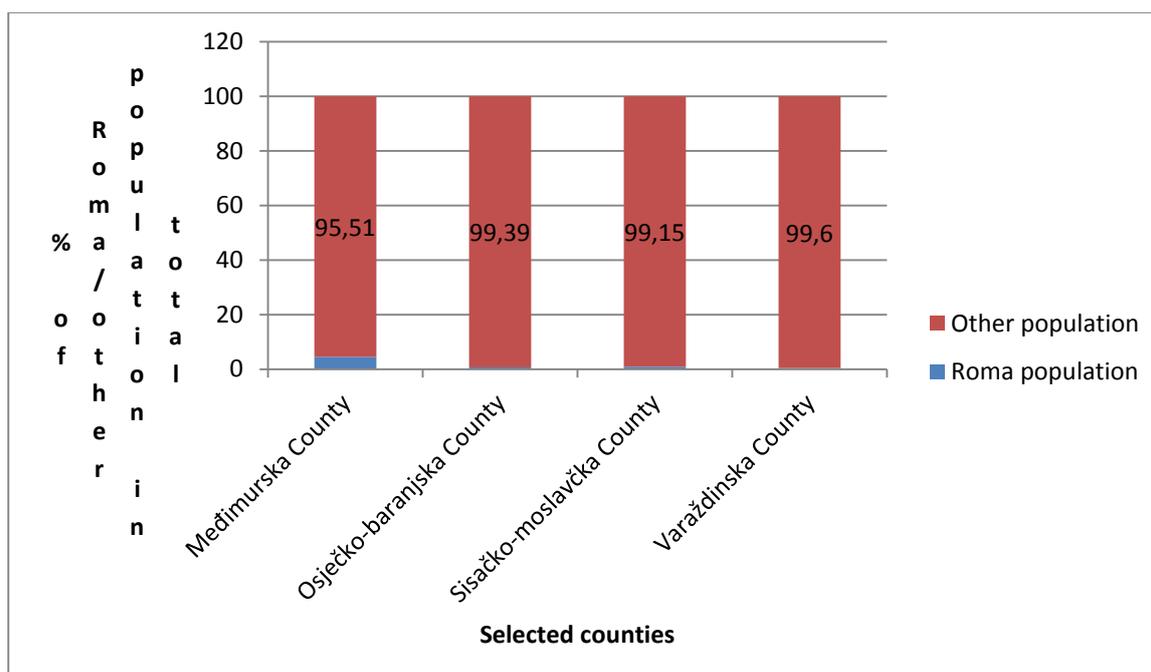
Chart 5. Number of Roma population in selected counties in 2011



Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics

Although it seems a relatively large number, it is pretty small when compared to the rest of the population in the selected counties. The only, so to say, “bigger” concentration is shown in Međimurska County. Roma population accounts for 4.49% of total Roma population in the said County. In Osječko- baranjska County, Roma population has 0.61% of total population and in Sisačko-moslavačka County, 0.85%. The stated data can be observed in the following chart.

Chart 6. % of Roma population in total population of selected counties in 2011



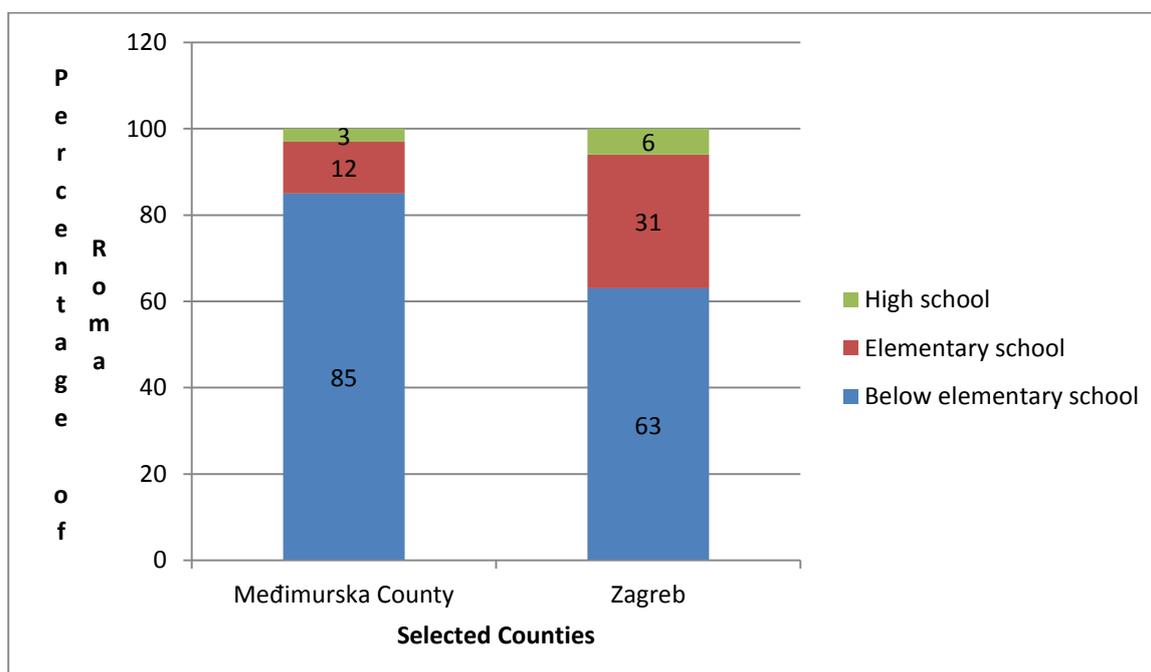
Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics

Roma population face a very difficult problem in Croatia. Namely, 25% of Roma population are without any of legal documentation. The main reason for that is that Roma community is not yet fully formed, nor uses minority rights given to them by the law. This hinders their integration into society. This is a cornerstone to all other Roma problems. Without any form of legal documentation, they can not execute their right for free education, free health insurance, social welfare or a job. Their children are also without legal documentation if the parents do not poses one.

The largest problem when analysing the Roma population in Croatia, is that many of them do not declare themselves as members of Roma national minority. It is speculated that there are two, or even three times more Roma in Croatia that is stated in the population consensus of 2011. Many Roma are unwilling to try to adjust and to integrate into the society. Some of them do not know or understand Croatian language.

In the next chart we will analyse the state of Roma education in Croatia. As it is shown in the following chart, 85% of Roma in Međimurje County do not have the primary school diploma. In Zagreb, there are 63% of total Roma without primary school diploma. 12% of Roma in Međimurje County have finished the primary school in Međimurje County and 31% in Zagreb. As far as high school is considered, 3% of Roma population in Međimurje and 6% in Zagreb have finished their high school and obtained a diploma. It is also important to say that most of them have finished a three-year long high school which has the largest number of graduates that can not find a job.

Chart 7. Situation of Roma education in Međimurje County and Zagreb



Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics

From the available data, we conclude that the Roma in Croatia as an ethnic community with specific social and cultural characteristics, on employment in multiple disadvantaged in relation to members of the majority community. Data on the employment of Roma in the last two years is talking about some enhanced activity in Roma employment, in accordance with the measures and mentioned strategic documents of the Government who in 2005 began to implement. In the Međimurje County in the last two years 40 Roma were employed in the private sector, 22 Roma were employed by public works in Employment of Roma in Croatia:

counties and municipalities, and eight members of the Roma community in public (city) firms and / or NGOs. In Zagreb 43 Roma were employed in the labor market and in the private sector and NGOs.

Education level of Roma population is also low, but improving. New laws have been adopted. One of them states that people that have not finished elementary school (that is mandatory in Croatia) can not be registered at Croatian Employment Service. If one is unable to register at Croatian Employment Service, one can not register at the Welfare Centre and get social aid (financial). Therefore, Croatian Employment Service has started an action in order to educate more members of Roma community. Progress can be seen, as more and more young members of Roma community are starting to continue their education after finishing elementary school. Roma elementary school students have right to free school books and public transport. In order to enrol in high schools, credits threshold are lowered and Roma students are stimulated with scholarship of HRK 500 per month. Many of them decide to continue and enrol in various vocational schools. Roma university students are entitled to HRK 1,000 per month, but only 28 students get those scholarships. Still there are some members that, under the influence or coercion by the older family members, leave school to get married and start to contribute to the family. One of the main prerequisites for the exercise of rights is that people declare themselves as Roma, but they a minority of them does that. By electing Nazif Memedi to Parliament in 2007, a progress has been made in integration of Roma in Croatia. In doing so, Croatia became one of the first nations that have a Roma minority member in parliament.

The Croatian government has joined an initiative called “ Decade for Roma”. A decade has initiated a process that should lead to changes, but has not yet achieved the required impact Roma in Europe - tangible and real integration of the Roma in the parent companies. A major challenge in the coming years is the creation of systematic solutions and taking into account the positive examples in the member countries of the Decade in the EU as a whole. Good examples of systematic policies exist in most countries. Decade is used as an effective forum for the exchange of these experiences in order to maximize the effect of government measures regarding the inclusion of Roma.

The central pillar of the initiative of the Decade, the International Roma Education Fund, established in 2005 to expand the educational opportunities of the Roma communities in Central and Southeast Europe. The aim of the Roma Education Fund is to contribute to reducing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and the rest of the population through policies and programs involving desegregation of education systems.

In the year 2010, Roma minority is included in the historical foundations of the Constitution as one of the 22 ethnic minorities in Croatia. This should certainly contribute to greater integration into Croatia society. Integration, however, should not mean assimilation, because the Roma have plenty of rich culture, tradition and identity that can be saved eve if they abandon the lifestyle they have, that has pushed them to the margins.

2.2 Overview of the resources availability

While conducting this research, many sources have been found and examined. In this section, some selected sources will be mentioned and briefly described. All other resources, are located at the end of this paper in the Annexe 1.

During the research, many sources were found. And although all are useful, some are more appropriate than others. These located sources are in many forms: books, publications, videos, webpages, articles, thesis, documents, reports, etc. The variety of fields they cover is very wide. From official government documents, like constitution, that define national minorities and explain their rights to various videos that are used in news to show current state of Roma population in Croatia.

Firstly, it is appropriate to start with the legislative part. The most important legal document that defines not only Roma but all national minorities in Croatia is the Croatian Constitution. The Constitution defines 22 national minorities in Croatia. The Republic of Croatia guarantees special rights and freedoms of national minorities which they enjoy individually or together with other persons belonging to the same national minority, on the basis of the Constitutional Law on National Minorities. The most important right that the Constitution provides are as following:

- Own language and letter
- Education in own language and letter
- Culture autonomy
- Religion freedom
- Representation in Croatian parliament and other government institutions.

The masters thesis “ Demographic and socio-cultural characteristics of the Roma population in Međimurje County” is vital for two thing. It describes the current state of art in a precise and detail manor. The Roma population in Međimurje County is analysed to the core and all aspect of Roma life are described. This paper presents the analysis of the Roma population in Međimurje County in several different aspects. Demogeographic analysis includes detection the number of Roma population, spatial distribution in which in more detail the spatial segregation is examined, natural growth, spatial mobility and some specific socio - economic structures of the Roma population. The other reason why is this thesis vital is that it show that there is no lack of interest for Roma in Croatia. Many experts are examining and analysing Roma national minority trying to identify the crucial problems Roma people face while trying to integrate into society.

One of the most important books found during this research was a book named “ Our Rights”. This book is written in order to teach Roma children about their rights. It is made to educational but also fun. The book is written in Roma language so this is the second reason for its importance.

Many resources found in this research are of newer date, what implicates that more and more people are beginning to be active in this particular field. It is also important to mention that Roma communities are getting more and more involved in development of Roma communities but also in promoting Roma culture and tradition and identity.

2.3 Overview of practical contacts

During the research phase for this document, various persons, institutions (government and non-government), organizations and activists were identified as important contributors to promotion of Roma issue. 36 participants filled the survey. The participant were chosen within the guidelines set in the methodology guide and in Trnava meeting (6 from the field of education, 12 from the field of employment, 8 from various NGO-s and 10 with Roma community workers). A summary of contacts with the addresses, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers for each organization or professional is available and saved by the project partner and coordinator. Due to the protection of personal data, this information has not been published in the National Report. Government institutions mainly function as a “support” for other organizations and activists that operate in the said field. They provide with the appropriate legislation in the areas where it is needed (housing legalization, legal rights and other rights for minorities, etc.). They also donate, redistribute and relocate financial means to organizations and persons that need some aid to implement a project. Some branches of the government provide aid to Roma with low or no income. Local and regional institutions promote the education of Roma. Usual methods for this are scholarships, free books, free public transport, minor threshold to enrol high schools and others. Some of the government institutions that were identified in this research are:

- Croatian Office for Human Rights
- Ministry of labour and pension system
- Ministry of Education Science and Sports
- Department of Social Policy and Young People
- Croatian Council for Human rights and National minorities.

Non-government organizations are also vital in this field. There are two types of non-government organizations, Roma and non-Roma organizations. Roma organizations in Croatia focus mainly on the promotion of Roma culture and heritage, preserve rights of Roma minority and to promote education among young Roma. They also work with non-government organizations and government institutions to help members of Roma

community to find a job, get basic or higher level of education and to increase the level of integration of Roma minority into society. Non-Roma organizations put their attention on Roma employment and education. Most organizations of this type work in partnerships with government institutions (national, regional and/or local) and Roma organizations in order to identify the specific needs of Roma community and to ensure that a planned project has some meaning. Some of the non-government organizations identified in this research are:

- Center for Peace, Legal Advice and Psychosocial Assistance –Vukovar
- PGP CRP Sisak
- ACT
- Roma football club "Roma"
- Roma Association Kutina
- Bayash Roma Association in Sisak County

Third members of the practical contacts chapter are activists. They are scholars, members of some organizations and various institutions. They often have first hand experience and combine theoretical knowledge from a certain field (legislative, psychology, sociology, economics, etc.) with practical information they obtain in the field. Their contribution can be determined in several ways: they provide an actual source to help identify current state and need of Roma population, write articles, publications and books on the said topics and thus enriching the material used by others in the field. In Croatia there are several prominent figures under this section:

- Dragan Nikolić
- Ibrahim Gušani
- Jagoda Novak
- Filip Škiljan

In this subchapter we have explained the function of some contributors in the field of Roma population. Their roles are various and different but also related and mutually beneficial. As for other sources in the Roma field, we have defined which sources exist, what type and content and which area they cover. It is vital to identify the most relevant source for your research in order to maximize your efficiency. Not all sources and contacts were mentioned in this sector. That is not because they are irrelevant but because there are too many of them.

3 RESULTS OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT ANALYSIS

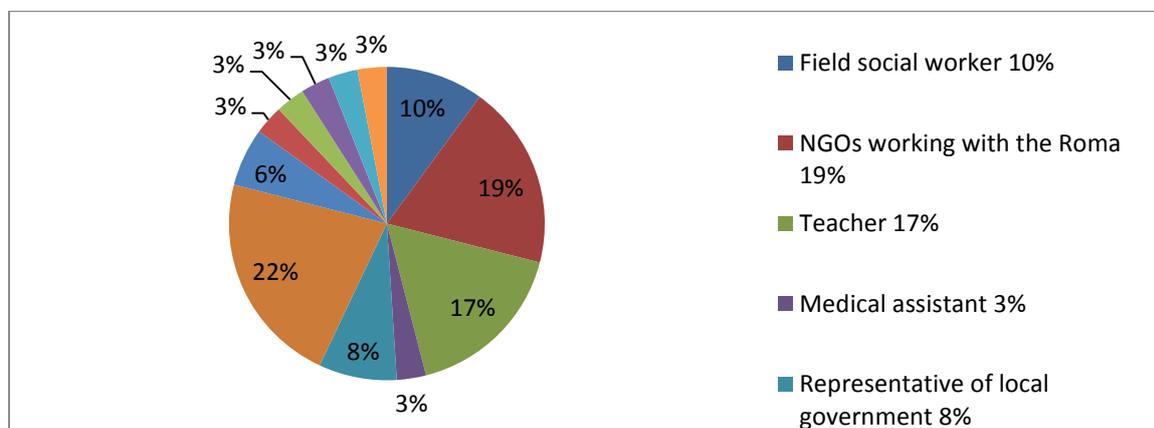
The research for the need assessment analysis was done according to the methodology guide produced by our Slovakian Partner. The guide required to contact 36 people from different institutions, organizations and groups to conduct the survey. The research phase was done during the first half of October 2014. Some people gladly participated in the survey others required some persuasion. After the survey was completed, the CES RO Karlovac team analysed the findings and collected data. The data was then put into this National report. In this chapter, the results of the survey are presented and analysed.

The survey consists of three different parts. In the first part, contacts were asked to give some general information about them. The second part of the survey was about the need assessment. This part gave the participant the chance to tell which information they miss and require. In the third part, participants were given the option to give comments and remarks and thus participate in the creation of the online platform. This chapter will also consist of three parts.

Participants that contributed in this survey come from various field of work. Age, gender, level of education and methods of obtaining data is differs from one participant to another. In this section the general information about the participants will be analysed.

As the chart 8 shows, the majority of the participants are community workers, teachers, members of various non-government organizations and field social workers. The obtained data is not surprising because this are the areas that have first-hand contact with the members of the Roma population. Filed social worker 10% (4), member of the NGO 19% (7), teacher 17% (6), medical assistant 3% (1), representative of local government 8% (3), community worker 22% (8), employers 6% (2), legal trainee 3% (1), worker in central government 3% (1), director of local education centre 3% (1), preschool educator 3% (1) and volunteer 3% (1).

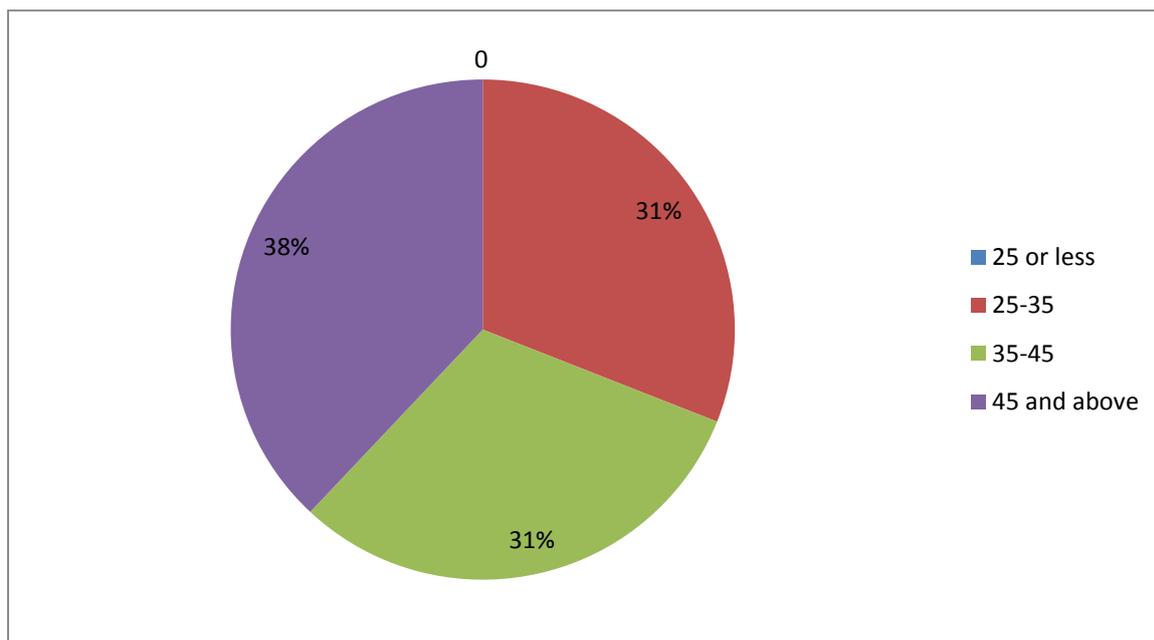
Chart 8. Work area of the participants.



Source: Analysed data gathered from survey

The next chart, Chart 9 gives the overview of the participant age domain. Most of the participants are older than 45 years. It is interesting to point out that non of the participants are younger than 25 years. In per cents the data is as follows: 25 or less 0%, 25-35 31% (11), 35-45 31% (11) and 45 and above 38% (14).

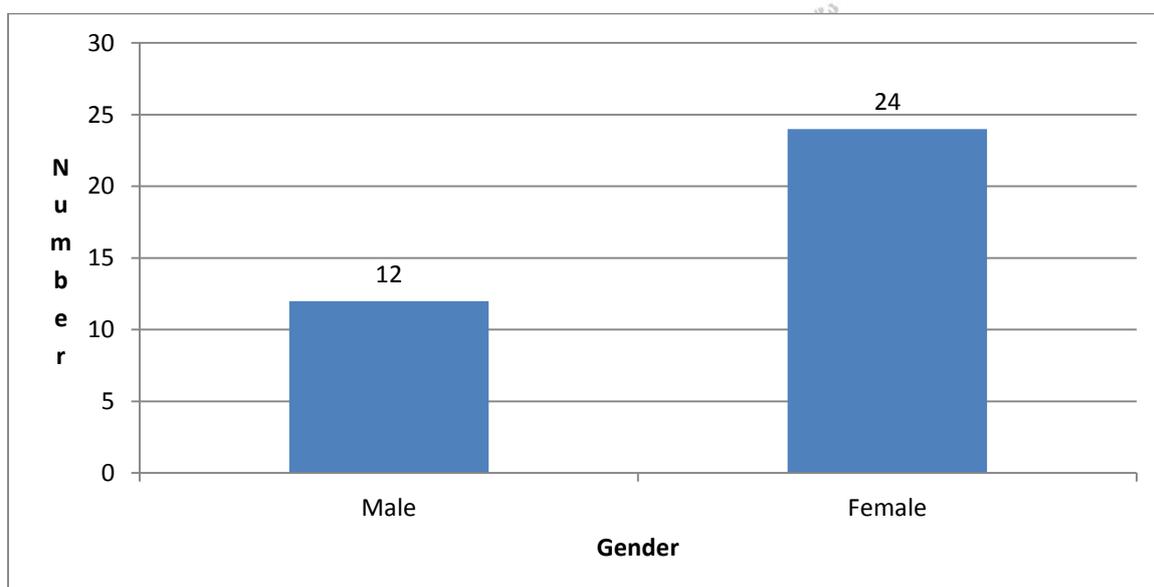
Chart 9. Age of the participants



Source: Analysed data gathered from survey

Most of the participants are male as it is shown in the next chart. In per cents male 33%, female 67%.

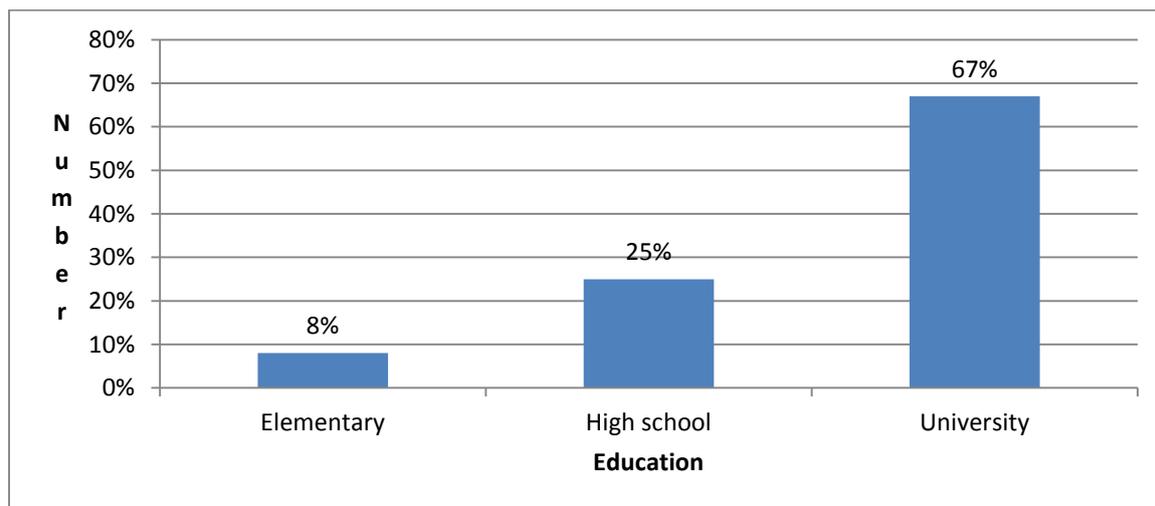
Chart 10. Gender of the participants



Source: Analysed data gathered from survey

Most of the participants have finished University because their job description requires it. But there were also some participants with high school and elementary school. Most of them are members of various non-government institutions. Elementary 8% (3), high school 25% (9), university 67% (24).

Chart 11. Level of education

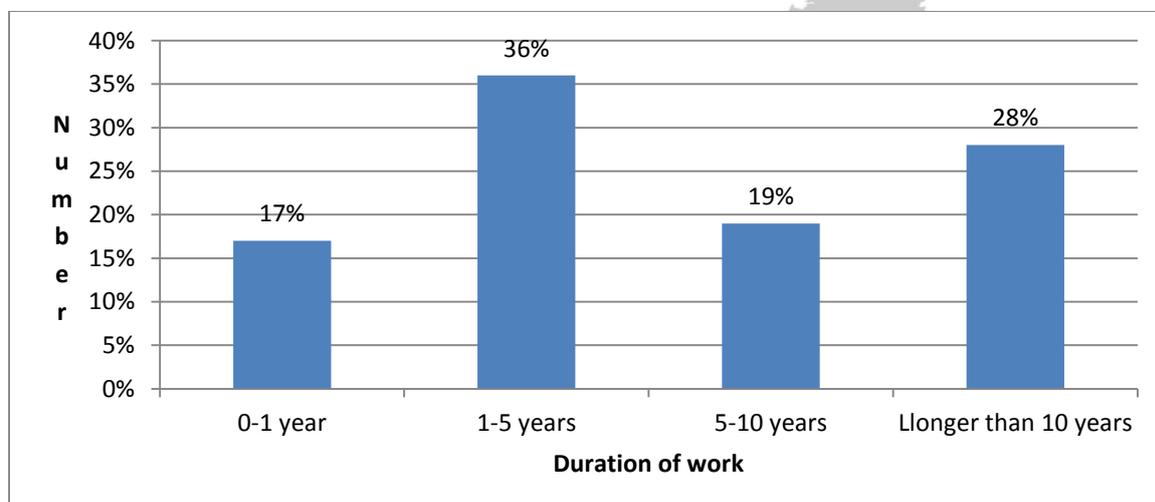


Source: Analysed data gathered from survey

It is encouraging to see that there are participants that just started to work in the said field because that shows that there are people interested in the Roma issue and that want to contribute and help them. 0-1 year 17% (6), 1-5 years 36% (13), 5-10 years 19% (7) and longer than 10 years 28% (10).

Next chart gives us information on how long have the participants worked with the Roma population.

Chart 12. Duration of work in the Roma field

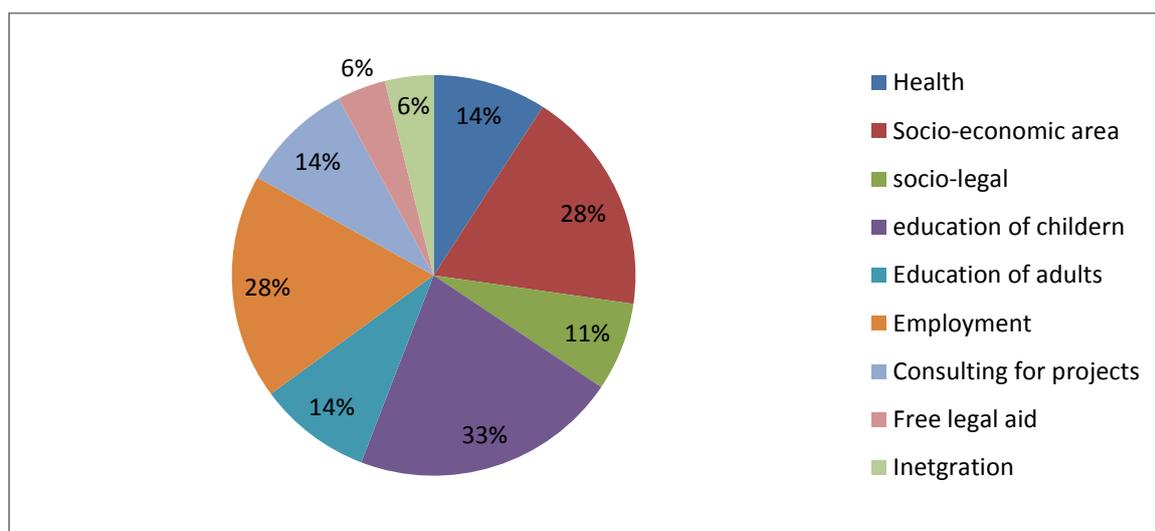


Source: Analysed data gathered from survey

Many of the participants work in more than one field in Roma issue. The results are: health 14% (5), socio-economic 28% (10), socio-legal 11% (4), education of children 33% (12), education of adults 14% (5), employment 28% (10), integration 6% (9), consulting for projects 14% (5).

The next charts shows us the in what field of Roma issue do the participants work.

Chart 13. Work field of participants in Roma issue



Source: Analysed data gathered from survey

All questioned participants work for an organization of some sort. Whether it is an government institution or organization or non-government organization. The next chart shows the information about the organizations.

In percentage the numbers are as follows: less than 5 42% (15), 5-10 33% (12) and more than 10 25% (9).

Chart 14. Number of employees with direct contact with Roma

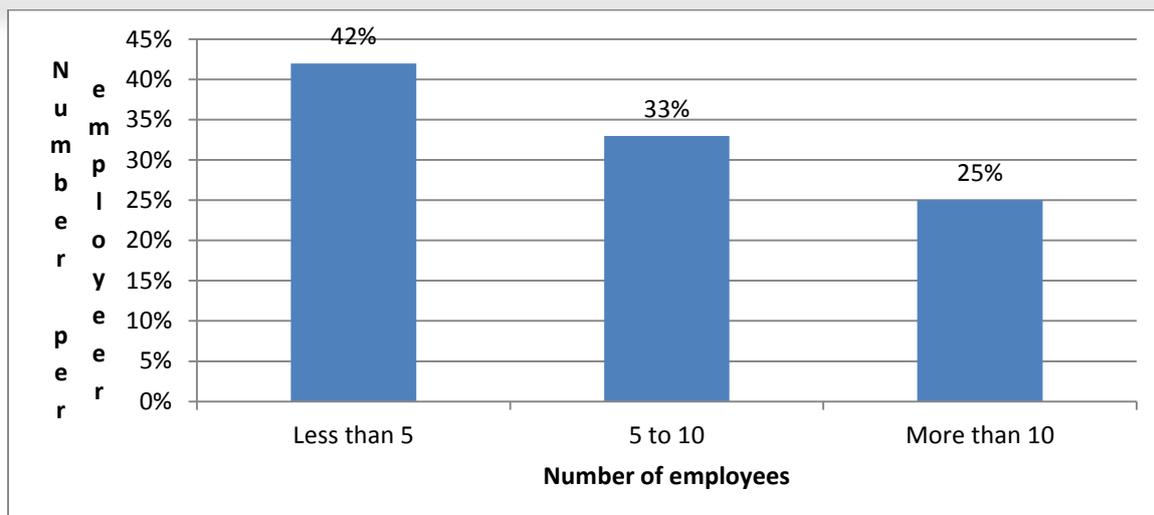
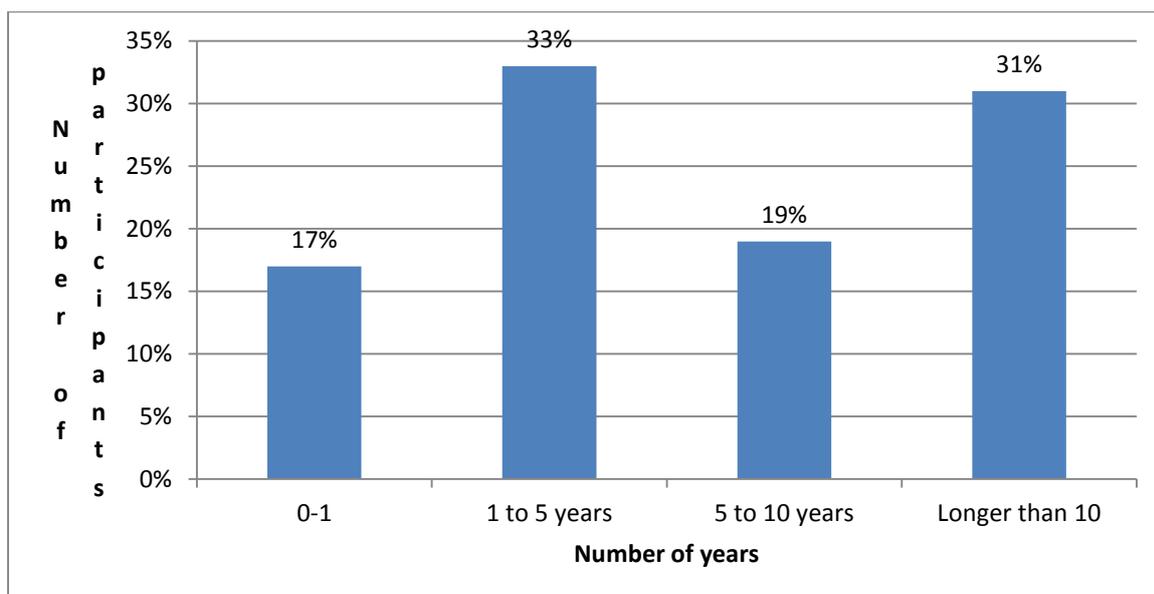


Chart 15 show how long the organization is active in the Roma field. 0-1 year 17% (6), 1-5 years 33% (12), 5-10 years 19% (7) and 10 or longer 31% (11).

Chart 15. Active years in Roma field

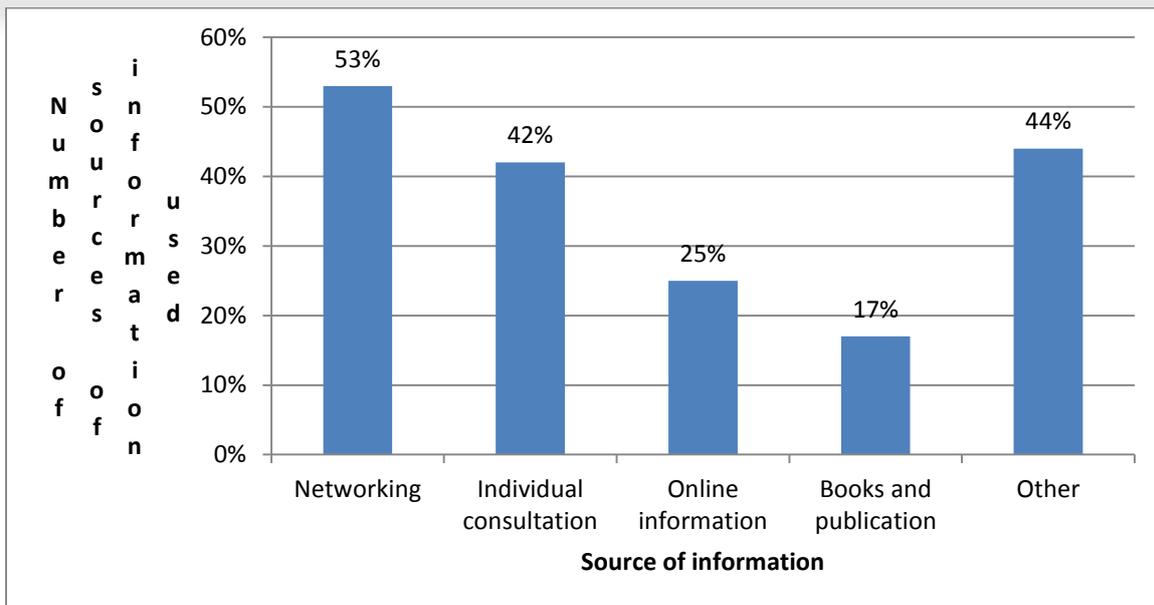


Source: Analysed data gathered from survey

All questioned participants operate and work on the national level.

The last question in this part was about the sources of information. The results are: contacts (networking) with experts and partners 53% (19), individual consultations 42% (15), online information 25% (9), books and publications 17% (6), other 44% (16).

Chart 16. Source of information

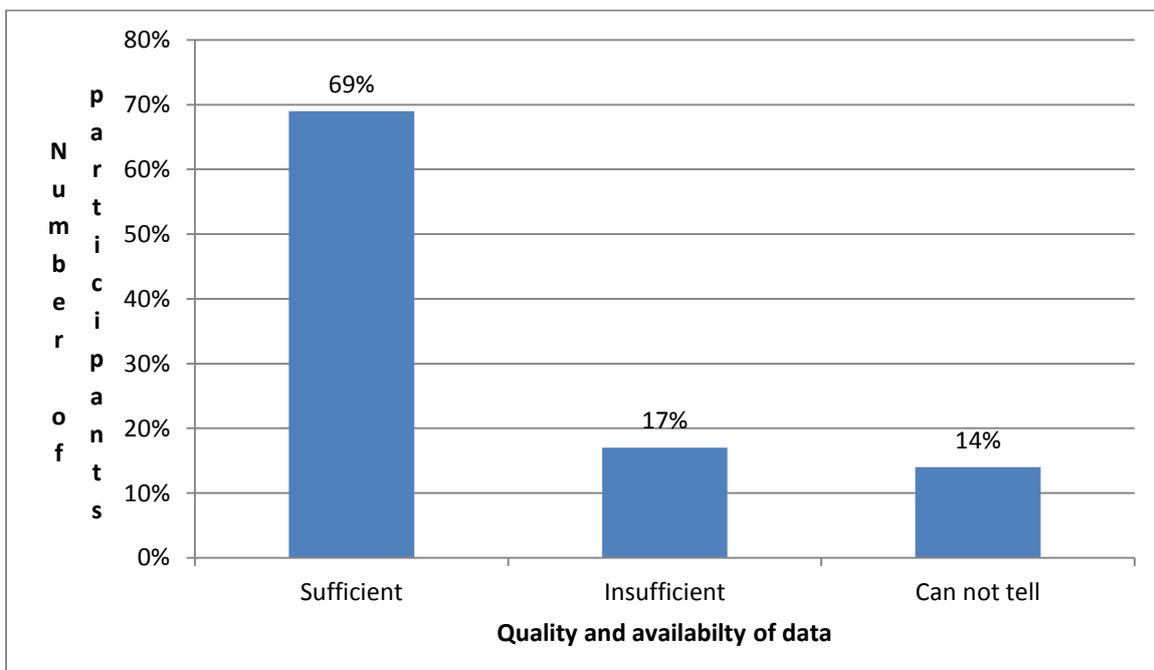


Source: Analysed data gathered from survey

In this subchapter the needs assessment was analysed. Participants were asked several questions to help us identify the field that lacks information.

As the chart shows, most of the participants agree that the existing data is not sufficient 69% (25). Only 17% (6) of the participants said that the available data is sufficient. 14% (5) of the participants can not tell.

Chart 17. General quality and availability of data



Source: Analysed data gathered from survey

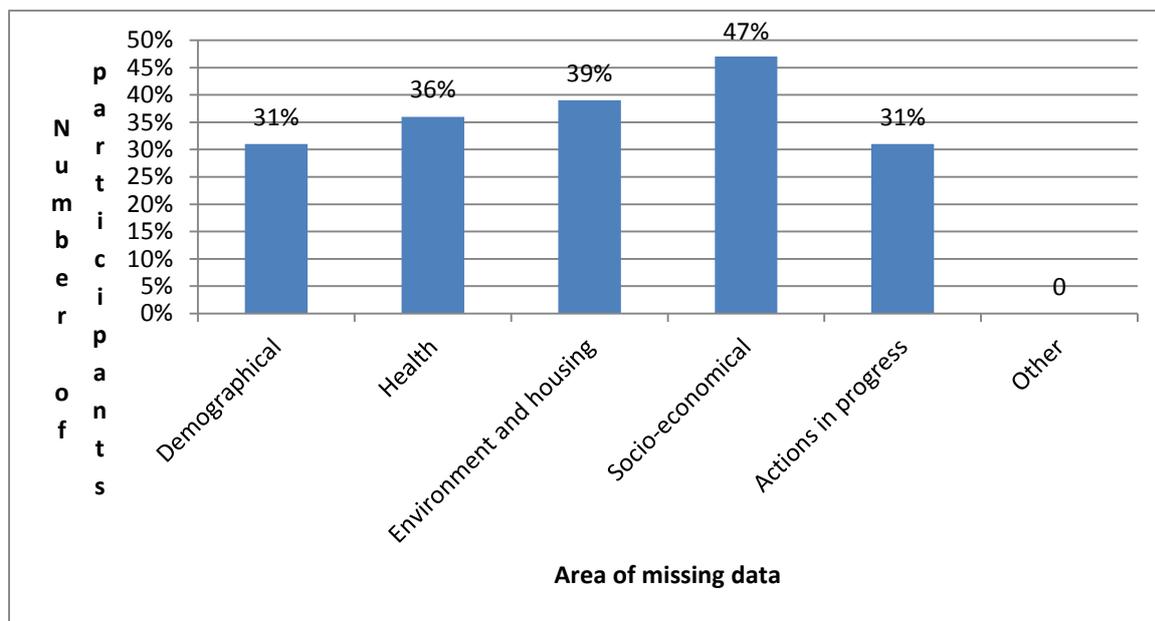
Table 1. Availability of information in national/European level per selected area

INFORMATION	National level		European level	
	YES	NO	YES	No
Is the following information available?				
Information about potential partners in your activities	25(69%))	11(31%))	7(50%))	7(50%))
Contact details of community outreach workers	30(83%))	6(17%))	4(29%))	10(71%))
Contact details of NGOs working with Roma communities	20(56%))	16(44%))	4(29%))	10(71%))
New legislation and the application of the rights of the Roma ethnic group	16(44%))	20(56%))	5(36%))	9(64%))
Contact details of the local representative of the Roma ethnic group	21(59%))	15(41%))	3(21%))	11(79%))
Information about the activities of community workers	12(33%))	24(67%))	2(14%))	12(86%))
List of potential employers for the Roma population	7(19%))	29(81%))	2(14%))	12(86%))
Information on the possibilities of improving conditions for residents in material distress	12(33%))	24(67%))	3(21%))	11(79%))
Information about the possibilities of voluntary work with the Roma community	10(28%))	26(74%))	4(29%))	10(71%))
Methods of work with the Roma community	15(42%))	21(58%))	4(29%))	10(71%))
Teaching materials and didactical tools	10(28%))	26(67%))	2(14%))	12(86%))
Information about the possibilities of coping with stressful situations while working with the Roma	7(19%))	29(81%))	3(21%))	11(79%))
Information on current legislation	22(61%))	14(39%))	5(36%))	9(64%))
Information on ongoing projects and programs focused on Roma	13(36%))	23(64%))	4(29%))	10(71%))
Information on obtaining financial support for the creation of projects and programs	17(47%))	19(53%))	9(64%))	5(36%))
Information on the possibilities of participation in international projects	17(47%))	19(53%))	9(64%))	5(36%))
Information on completed projects and their effectiveness	13(36%))	23(64%))	4(29%))	10(71%))
Examples of good practice	10(28%))	26(67%))	6(42%))	8(58%))
List of the most effective interventions in the field of Roma issues	6(17%))	30(83%))	3(21%))	11(79%))

Next chart show us information that participants said is missing in their field of work.

Collected and analysed data in percentage: demographical 31% (11), health 36% (13), environment and housing 39% (14), socio-economical 47% (17), activities in progress 31% (13) and other 0% (0).

Chart 18. Missing data



Source: Analysed data gathered from survey

When asked to describe the biggest problem in work with Roma, the participants defined the following:

Table 2. Biggest problem in work with Roma

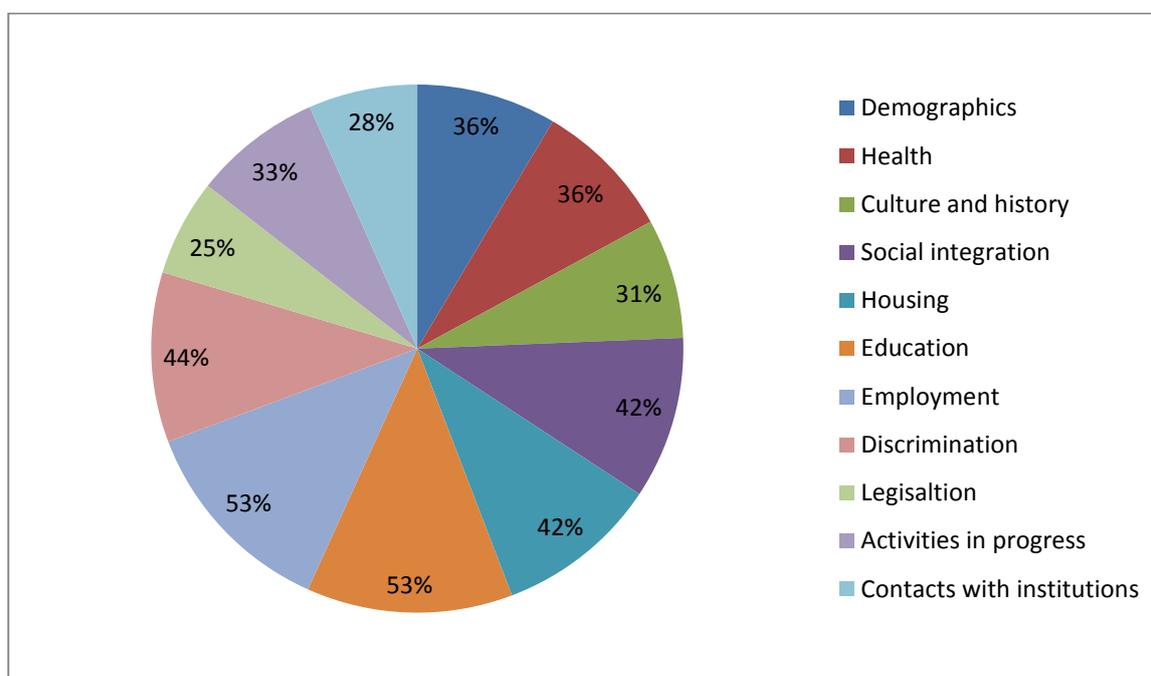
Roma not declaring as Roma	4	11%
Low education	11	31%
Low level of integration	3	8%
Language barrier	3	8%
“Wild settlements”	4	11%
Poor living conditions	1	3%
Inactivity	1	3%
Discrimination	1	3%
Lack of information	1	3%
Low education about health issues	1	3%
Unemployment	3	8%
Bad cooperation with Roma communities	3	8%

This subchapter will discuss how the online platform should look and what data should it contain and in which form. Participants were asked to answer several questions in order to contribute to the creation of the platform. The existing materials are already collected and contained in the excel table.

First chart in this subchapter will show what participants think the online platform should focus on and which data they find relevant.

In percentage the data is as follows: demographics 36% (13), health 36% (13), environment and housing 42% (15), social integration 42% (15), culture and history 31% (11), education and training 53% (19), employment 53% (19), discrimination 44% (16), legislation 25% (9), activities in progress 33% (12), contacts with institutions 28% (10).

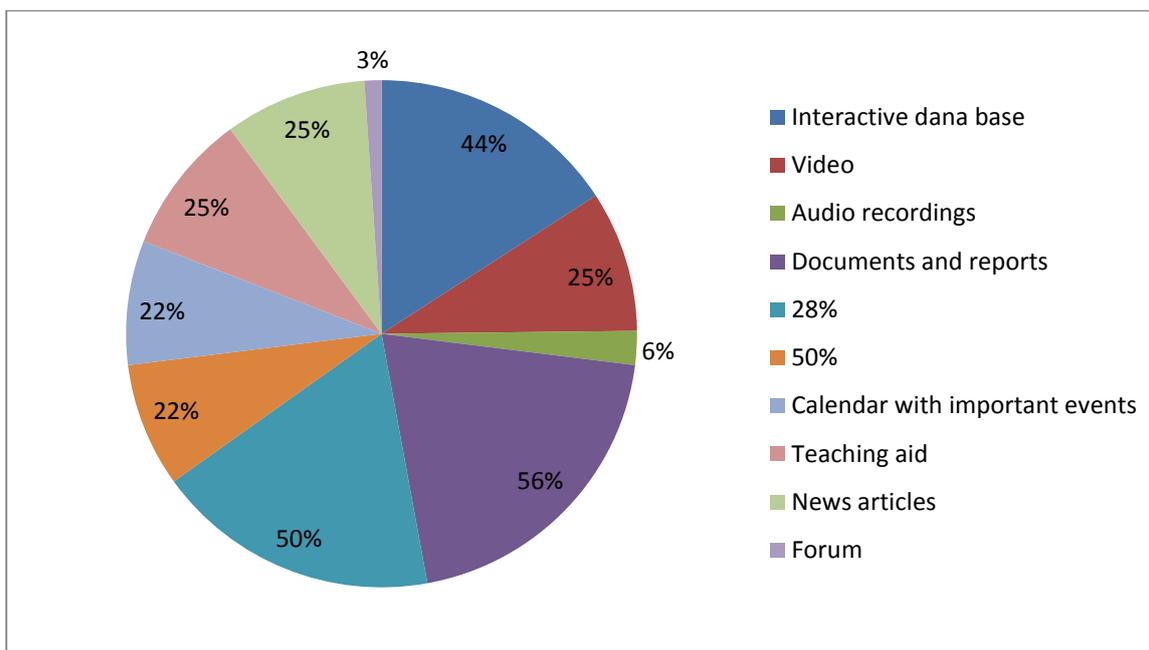
Chart 19. What field should the focus be set on



Source: Analysed data gathered from survey

44% (16) participants would like that the online platform contains an interactive information base, 25% (9) would like videos, 6% (6) audio recordings, 56% (20) documents and reports, 28% (10) pictures and illustrations, 50% (18) database with contacts to various institutions, 22% (8) calendar with important events, 22% (8) teaching aids, 25% (9) news articles and 3% (1) a forum to hold discussions. In real numbers the chart looks like this.

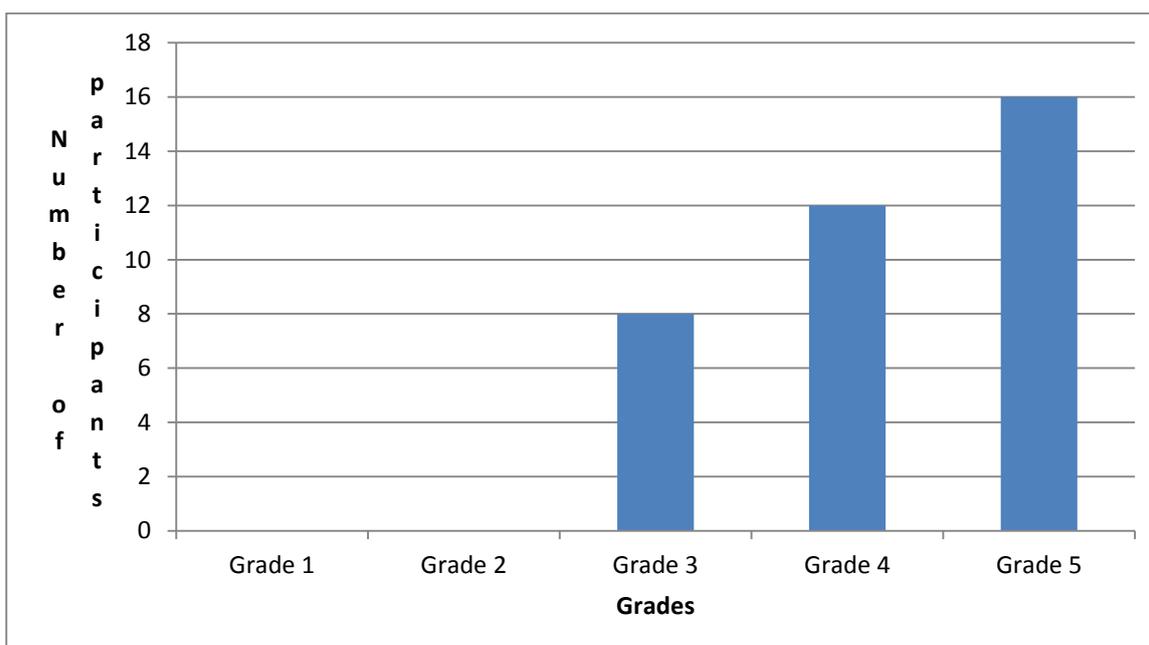
Chart 20. Form of the information on the online platform



Source: Analysed data gathered from survey

The next chart shows how many participants would find the online platform useful. They were asked to grade the usefulness of the platform in their work with a grade from 1-5. 22% (8) graded it with 3, 34% (12) with 4 and 44% (16) with 5. In real numbers the situation is as follows:

Chart 21. Usefulness of the online platform in the field of work



Source: Analysed data gathered from survey

In order to get the better view, the median has been calculated. The median is 4 as it is shown in the table 3.

Table 3. Usefulness a newly created platform e-RR

Usefulness platform	
Median	Modus
4	4

4 MAIN FINDINGS

Obtained and analysed data in Croatia reflects the current state of Roma population in Croatia. As the research suggest and the survey proves, the current state is below expectations. Main government institutions have written and enacted a strategy “Decade for the Roma” to implement Roma into society but the strategy is failing. The main problem is that the measures the government provides are for Roma population that have declared themselves as Roma nationality. Only 16,975 Roma have done so. Some predictions say that there are twice or even trice as much Roma people in Croatia.

Because the do not declare themselves as members of Roma nationality, they are unable to use some of the benefits that Croatian government has enacted for them. For example: free books for children in elementary and high school, scholarships for Roma in high school and university, free public transport for Roma members who have the status of regular student, pupil.

One of the problems is also the legal status of Roma population. Many of them lack basic personal documentation. The main reason for that is that Roma community is not yet fully formed, nor uses minority rights given to them by the law. This hinders their integration into society. This is a cornerstone to all other Roma problems. Without any form of legal documentation, they can not execute their right for free education, free health insurance, social welfare or a job. Their children are also without legal documentation if the parents do not poses one. The bright side of this that there are more and more organizations who provide free legal aid to members of Roma population. They help them resolve their document status but also their housing status.

Environment and housing is also a big problem. Many Roma families still live in “wild habitats”. Those habitats are often built in suburbs of larger cities. Many of them lack the legal documentation, and as such are planned for demolition. This would render many of them homeless. The conditions of the settlements are also questionable. There is no sewer, no public lights, only roads connecting this settlements are often only dirt roads that turn to mud when it rains. Many of the houses are still made from wood, without proper isolation. That contributes to increased sensitiveness to various sicknesses and infections. And since many of the Roma population are very traditional and do not trust doctors, the disease last longer.

Older Roma are more traditional than younger Roma. Quite often they do not allow their children to finish school. They enrol them in the family business from a very young age. When they are young, they are forced to beg. As they grow older and change, so does their role. From bottle collectors to collectors of iron, copper and other metals and stuff that can be savaged and resold. Many of them do not have the chance to finish school or to decide what to do with their lives.

The general public is very discriminative against members of Roma population. Many people blame them for their problem, without trying to understand their history and culture. They are perceived as uneducated, unhealthy, uncultured thieves that cause trouble wherever they go. In newer times and with the help of government institutions and non-government organizations but also the changes in Roma community, the Roma are starting too adept and integrate to society. Many positive steps have been made. More and more employers are starting to hire members of Roma society because they realize how hard working good workers they are. And many of the members of Roma community are starting to go to school. They tend to finish the elementary and high school, and some even enrol to various universities.

The time to change is upon us. Roma members are willing to try to integrate into the society and the general public is starting to accept them. Still, there is much to be done. More awareness programs should be realized and general public should be more informed with the Roma culture, history and heritage. Getting to know one another and starting to respect the differences is the only way in building a common future.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

With the help of the research and the survey, a clearer perspective has been given on what should the online platform look like. General information about every partner country should be added, and the state of art in each country should be described (demographic picture, overview of main problems, structure of Roma population, status of Roma in education and employment, their housing and environment status, etc.). The need assessment analysis has provided the answers on what fields to put focus. Most participants have the need for more and better data in education and environment and housing field. Other areas should not be forgotten.

As for the platform appearance, it should be formed as an interactive online platform with emphasis on documents and reports and contact information about the relevant institutions for each area of work. Also, a sub-page should be added to the platform. It should contain some form a forum. It would enable the users to discuss various topics and to connect with persons that work in the same field. It would also allow better communication and exchange of the good practices from different parts of European Union and even broader.

The platform should also contain a data base with successful and good practices from various groups, organizations, institutions and other parties that operate in the designated field. It would allow everyone to get an insight into various examples and to remodel it and implement it in their respective area.

It is vital that the platform is user friendly and easy to use for anyone, even for those without any computer knowledge and skills.

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