INTRODUCTION: DEMOGRAPHICS, POLITICAL & LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

Roma and Egyptians in Albania, influenced by socio-economic factors, have had a higher population growth compared to the majority population. Girls are married at a young age and become mothers earlier than in other ethnic groups. Due to the high birth rates, the Roma and Egyptian communities have a younger average age compared to the general Albanian population. The average age of the Roma community is 25.6 years old, while for Egyptian one is 28.7 years old. However, empirical data show that during the last decade, fertility rate has been lowered. The average household size is 4.6 members for Roma and 4.2 members for Egyptians and has decreased compared to some years ago due to the lowering of fertility rate and internal and external migration.

The interest and attention for the group of Roma and Egyptians in Albania has increased during the last decade. Furthermore the European Union (EU) has conditioned the accession process of Albania into the EU with the fulfillment of 12 political criteria. In this regard, the Recommendation No. 11 “Reinforce the Protection of Human Rights” is the criteria imposed by EU for Albania to take concrete steps to reinforce the protection of human rights, notably for women, children and Roma, and to effectively implement anti-discrimination policies.

In 2003, the Albanian Government drafted the Strategy for the economic and social integration of the Roma community (GoA, 2003). Moreover, in 2008 Albania became also part of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005 – 2015), a 10 years attempt to integrate the Roma in the general European mainstream (ERRC, 2010). The protection of Roma Rights and the Monitoring of the objectives of the National Strategy and National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2010-2015 remain the two main action pillars of Albania toward accession in the EU.

During the post-socialist transition period the group of Roma and Egyptians in Albania, as a consequence of the collapse and closure of state enterprises, their unilateral professional character, low level of education, and discrimination – passed from a relative prosperity to extreme poverty. Currently they are the poorest and marginalized ethnic group in Albania (World Bank study on poverty De Soto et al., 2002). The studies have showed that their poverty level is almost twice higher than the Albanians’ one and this situation has deteriorated.

I. ECONOMIC SITUATION

Welfare level of population, measured using consumption and income data is used to assess poor and non-poor categories of population. In analyzing welfare, preference is given to poverty rate based on

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1 DG Regional Policy funded the survey implementation in the new EU member states (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia)
2 This study is carried out under UNDP Tirana support and is based in research, quantity, and quality techniques. These techniques include: A review of the existing literature; A socioeconomic survey (“Socioeconomic Household questionnaires with Roma and Egyptians, 2011”); The study team conducted 1,200 surveys door to door of Roma households in all settlements and 1,200 surveys with Egyptian households); Semi-open interviews with Roma and Egyptians; Focus group discussions;
3 According to the studies about 75 percent of Roma families are “very poor”, while for the Albanian population this data reaches to 28.8 percent. Roma community is distinguished by two extremes: 80 percent of the families are classified as poor and very poor, while a minority of about 5 percent has a relatively good economical condition.
consumption data, and completed with source of income, home production, malnutrition etc. with following reasoning

**Figure 1** Absolute and relative poverty rates based on income and expenditure of households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PPS $2.15</strong></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PPS $4.30</strong></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>60% equal. median income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC regional Roma survey (2011)

Poverty rates are presented here for Roma and non-Roma households using both absolute and relative poverty lines. We are observing international absolute poverty lines at PPP 2.15$ and PPP 4.3$ a day as well as EU relative poverty line below 60% equalized median income.

Absolute poverty line at PPP 2.15$ (called also extreme or food poverty) shows that 8% of Roma households have expenditure level which is not enough to secure minimum of food necessary for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency. This expenditure level is recorded among Roma households only, and it is linked with malnutrition and famine. In addition, 10% of Roma households had reported income levels that are below the extreme poverty. No ability to afford enough food in a previous month was reported by 65% of Roma and 24% of non-Roma households.

Roma households are more than twice more affected by poverty than non-Roma households who are living in their close proximity. These findings illustrate that significant share of Roma households have coping strategies which help them to secure adequate expenditure level above poverty line. Interestingly, Roma reported slightly higher acceptability level of stealing food if a family does not have food (4%) than non-Roma (1%). Roma experienced deeper shortfall from the poverty line than non-Roma; poverty gap for Roma is 13%, almost three times the level of non-Roma (5%) if income data are used.

Almost in all income categories, except remittances and other income, the income of Roma households is lower than income of non-Roma households.

**Figure 2** Sources of income for Roma and non-Roma households (local currency)

Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC regional Roma survey (2011)
The structure of income of households shows that in average, the largest share of monthly income of Roma household belongs to income from employment (66%) not reflecting high incidence of informal employment as defined by the existence of the contract (90%); followed by significantly lower share of income from pensions (14%), other labor activities than employment (9%) and unemployment benefits (8%) what make 97% of the Roma households income.

According to the Socioeconomic household questionnaires with Roma and Egyptians, 2011, 15.5 percent of Roma families and 33 percent of Egyptian families benefit “economic assistance” from the government, which can be partial or full⁴. This assistance represents around 3.2 percent of the total income of Roma HH, 12.9 percent of the Roma households and 16.7 of the Egyptian households benefit elderly pension payments. Very few Roma and Egyptians individuals (2.3 percent for Roma and 4.8 percent for Egyptian) benefit payments for unemployment, which reflects their difficult situation in the labour market. In Albania, the unemployment payment is paid out for a maximum period of one year for persons that are unemployed and have paid their social insurance for at least 12 months. Meanwhile the survey shows that the unemployment in Roma is long – term and at least 23 percent of them state that this unemployment period is longer than 5 years. In addition, Roma work mainly in the informal sector (collection of scrap metal, trade of used clothes, casual jobs etc.) and few of them contribute to the social insurance scheme.

Figure 3 The structure of income of Roma and non-Roma households, % of total monthly income

Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC regional Roma survey (2011)

The structure of household expenditure is presented in Figure 4. Roma households although having significantly lower income level show different structure of household expenditure than non-Roma households. Largest share of the Roma households’ expenditures belongs to food and everyday household goods (61%), alcohol and cigarettes (9%), and housing including rent and utilities (7%). Average monthly spending of Roma household on four main expenditure items is as follows: food and household items 13078.12 LEK, alcohol and cigarettes 1916.81 LEK, housing and utility bills 2065.42 LEK, medicine and medical services 1141.57 LEK.

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⁴ Economic aid is full when the family receives no income from: economic activities, social aid programmes, the capital and family members in migration. Economic aid is partial when families have insufficient incomes from agriculture, pensions and other incomes. Usually full economic aid is applied towards families in the urban areas while the partial ones applies to families that reside in rural ones (Shahollari, 2010).
Interestingly, 54% of total Roma households are facing outstanding payments (28% of non-Roma) (Figure 5). Almost every second Roma lives in the household that has difficulties in meeting their regular monthly payments for electricity (46%), more than a third for water (34%), and 32% payments for health services. The size of these outstanding payments in many cases exceeds dramatically the average monthly income of the household - for electricity and water around three times, for mortgage and other housing related utilities even more. Outstanding payments also affect non-Roma households but accounting for less of their average monthly incomes (with the exception of mortgage, where it exceeds their incomes more than 12 times.

**Figure 5 Outstanding payments, % of household monthly income (by type)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Roma</th>
<th>Non-Roma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electricity</strong></td>
<td>46% 301%</td>
<td>22% 184%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water</strong></td>
<td>34% 267%</td>
<td>16% 107%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health service</strong></td>
<td>32% 48%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other housing related utilities</td>
<td>6% 354%</td>
<td>4% 130%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taxes</strong></td>
<td>3% 40%</td>
<td>3% 109%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mortgage</strong></td>
<td>2% 320%</td>
<td>1% 1220%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit for household appliance or furniture</td>
<td>1% 207%</td>
<td>1% 231%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>1% 0%</td>
<td>0% 20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNDP/WB/EC Regional survey 2011
II. HOUSING

More than 38 percent of Roma and 45 percent of Egyptian families live in old houses, while 21 percent of Roma and 11 percent of Egyptian families live in shacks. Many of these households do not have potable water, toilets and sewages within their houses. Infrastructure, especially near the Roma settlements, is characterized by unpaved roads or roads in bad conditions. Although Roma live in shacks and old houses, they do not benefit much from social housing. As a result, the Roma community members are mainly isolated in poor infrastructure communities, in shacks and old housing, which further constrains their integration and adds to their hardship.5

Roma are mostly affected by inadequate housing in particular the quality, size and adequacy of space per household member, own a bed per person, irregular waste collection. 36% of Roma live in ruined houses or slums. Average square meter per household member for Roma household is 11.58 almost two times lower than standard in non-Roma household (21.07m²). Further, only 58% of Roma households have a bed for each household member (88% of non-Roma). 26% of Roma households reported irregularities in waste collection. Ownership of dwelling is not reported as an issue as 82% of Roma owns a dwelling and 92% of non-Roma.

The majority of the interviewed Roma (38.4%) live in old housing or shacks (20.8%) with single (66.3%) or composite households (27.5%). They self declare themselves as owners of their housing (80.6%), and about 10.8% declare to rent their housing. In terms of dwelling conditions, there is an almost equal division between those who have toilets within the dwelling (34%) and those who have the toilets outside of their dwellings (37.4%). A similar situation is seen in regards to drinking water, although a higher majority of the interviewed report to have drinking water inside the dwelling (61.2%), there is a substantial percentage that report to not have drinking water inside the household (38.8%). In terms of sewage, 56.6% of the interviewed report positively, while 43.4% report to not have sewage in their dwelling. The vast majority of the interviewed Roma get electric energy (82%), while 94.8% report to not have a telephone.

Since most of the interviewed Roma declare to own their housing, the majority of them declare to have not applied for social housing. Only 14.3% declare to have applied for social housing and a mere 1.5% report to have benefited from social housing. The main division of the reasons why they have not applied for social housing is between lack of information (46.2%) and not being in need (35.8%).

Furthermore, 98% of Roma lives in household that are materially deprived (86% of non-Roma) while 96% lives in households that are severely materially deprived (79% of non-Roma)6. As further presented in Figure 6 and 7, significant portion of Roma are deprived of basic services and basic household amenities when compared to their non-Roma neighbors.7

Figure 6 Access to services

5 Socioeconomic household questionnaires with Roma and Egyptians, 2011
6 Material deprivation is an indicator adopted by the Social protection committee measuring the percentage of population that cannot afford at least three (four if severely deprived) of the following nine items: to pay rent, mortgage, utility bills; to keep their home adequately warm; to face unexpected expenses; to eat meat and proteins regularly; to go on holiday; a television set; a refrigerator; a car and a telephone.
7 UNDP/WB/EC Regional survey 2011
### III. HEALTH

In Albania the health situation of Roma and Egyptians is worse than that of the majority population, as reflected in lower life expectancy. Causes of improper health situation are related to poverty, difficult living conditions and the absence of basic infrastructure, limited access to healthcare services and the low educational level.

Meanwhile 42 percent of the Roma and 24 percent of Egyptians state that they do not possess healthcare cards and do not receive services in healthcare centers. One of the reasons for this is poverty of Egyptian and Roma families that cannot afford to pay for health insurance, even if children up to 16 years old, persons with disabilities (mental and physical ones), pensioners, unemployed that receive unemployment payment and/or economic aid, mothers with birth permit etc. are all excluded by the expenses for health insurance.

Meanwhile, 37 percent of Roma and 20 percent of Egyptians say that they do not know where to get the respective healthcare cards and that they are not aware of the necessary procedures for acquiring such document. Bad health assessment is recorded by 12% of Roma (9% non-Roma); 59% of Roma have no access to drugs, and incidence of specific medical checks e.g. dental, x-ray, ultrasound, heart check up is rather low when compared to rest of population.

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8 Law Nr. 7870, date 13. 10. 1994, “For Social insurances in the Republic of Albania”. 
Roma and Egyptian children are one of the most at risk groups regarding health. This is mainly explained by malnutrition, difficult living conditions, lack of prenatal and preventive healthcare, the low education level and early births and marriages. The health of pregnant women is another great concern. Roma and Egyptians use less family planning than the majority population directly correlated with the high level of abortion per unwanted pregnancy.

Poor diet is one of the main factors that explains bad health conditions. Almost 27.3 percent of Roma families and 31.7 percent of Egyptian ones state that “we do not have enough money even for food”. Poor Roma and Egyptian families, that constitute the majority, consume food with high percentage of fat and carbohydrates. Malnutrition influences the lowering of children resistance towards diseases for Roma and Egyptians.

Poverty and lack of incomes is an obstacle also for buying medication and curing diseases.

**Figure 2: Reasons why Roma and Egyptians do not ask medical assistance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Egyptians</th>
<th>Roma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal payment is expensive</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I haven’t a healthcare card</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are not treat as majority</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health center/hospital is far away</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Socioeconomic household questionnaires with Roma and Egyptians, 2011

Discrimination is also another obstacle. Almost 25 percent of the Roma and 15.3 percent of Egyptians state that medics do not treat them in the same way as they do for majority members.

**IV. EMPLOYMENT**

The difference in income structures between Roma and non-Roma households can be explained by the significantly underrepresentation of Roma in the labor market, in particular female. Active are 54% of Roma (56% of non-Roma) and 42% of working age Roma are employed (46% non-Roma). Employed Roma mostly work as unskilled or semi-skilled worker (33% or 18% resp.) in trade (22%), agriculture and forestry (15%) or construction (14%). Self-employment is underrepresented in both groups (11%). Unemployment rate for Roma reaches 23% (18% for non-Roma). Majority of unemployed Roma reported working as unskilled labor (55%). No employment experience in age group 15-64 has been reported by 56% Roma (51% non-Roma).^9

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^9 UNDP/WB/EC Regional survey 2011
The percentage of unemployed registered at the labor offices is very low (20.7 percent for Roma and 29.9 percent for Egyptians). About 90 percent of Roma and Egyptians do not have regular working contracts and do not pay social insurance.\(^{10}\)

The most important reasons for not finding a job were described by survey respondents as ‘not enough work for everyone’ (50 percent Roma and 54.8 percent Egyptians), the ‘level of education’ (19.2 percent Roma and 21.4 percent Egyptians) and ‘being Roma/Egyptians’ (16.4 percent Roma and 14 percent Egyptians). This suggests that labour market discrimination exists, but it is not the main reason why Roma and Egyptians have difficulty finding employment.

Because of poverty and exclusion from the formal labor market, both groups work in the informal labor market, mainly in can and metal collection, in trading used clothes, casual work, construction and begging. This work provides inadequate incomes to their families. However, even these incomes are in decline, which contributes to emotional stress. If viable alternatives are not developed, their future economic welfare is in jeopardy.

V. MIGRATION

Roma are more inclined to migrate in search for better opportunities and living conditions; 36% of Roma reported having intention to migrate as opposed to 25% of non-Roma. Greece is a country of destination for majority of Roma potential migrants (56%) while the largest portion of non-Roma would like to move to Italy (46%).\(^{11}\)

Figure 8 Employment and unemployment rates* (15-64)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity rate (15-64)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Roma</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment rate (15-64)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Roma</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unemployment rate (15-24)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Roma</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNDP/World Bank/EC regional Roma survey (2011)
Note: * - as per ILO definitions

Slight differences are recorded in terms of preferences related to life and work; preference to have higher standard of living by working hard to earn for living reported 67% of adult Roma (78% non-Roma) as opposed to living on social assistance with problems making ends meet but with no particular effort.

Major forms of migrant labor are in can and metal collection, agriculture, casual work, construction, begging, and trade in used clothes, and none produce enough income for migrants’ families to escape poverty. Almost 47 percent of the Roma families and 80 percent of the Egyptian ones that have migrants say that they received remittances from their relatives. These remittances are used to purchase basic

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\(^{10}\) Socioeconomic household questionnaires with Roma and Egyptians, 2011

\(^{11}\) UNDP/WB/EC Regional survey 2011
consumption items, rather than savings or investment. Moreover international migration breaks up families, which leads to further negative economic consequences.\textsuperscript{12}

VI. EDUCATION

High unemployment level of Roma can be partially explained by low level of education. Lack of formal education affects 35\% of Roma age group 25-64 and mostly females (38\%) and only 3\% of non-Roma. In addition, 61\% of Roma population has either primary (ISCED 1) or lower secondary (ISCED 2) education.

Figure 9 Education – highest completed education for age group 25-64

Enrollment in preschool education is significantly lower for Roma (34\% as opposed to 57\% for non-Roma). Enrollment rate in compulsory education (7-15) of Roma children is 48\% (no gender difference recorded) and 91\% for their non-Roma neighbors. The average time a Roma spends in education (25-64) is 4.4 years while it is 9.6 years in case of non-Roma. Roma are leaving education much earlier than rest of population, average length of education for male Roma is 4.6 years and 4.2 for female Roma. These data suggest that Roma children are not attending and completing compulsory or primary level of education and face high level of early school leaving. The same is for younger generation of Roma (16-24) who in average spend only 3.9 years in education (4.2 male, 3.6 female). Such trends have an impact on further education prospect, employment opportunities and exit out of poverty for young Roma.

The Roma/Egyptian population is characterized by illiteracy (40.3 percent Roma and 12.7 percent Egyptian). Meanwhile 25.9 percent Roma and 28.8 percent Egyptians have completed primary education and 14.9 percent Roma and 9.6 percent Egyptian did not complete it, while very few Roma have completed middle school education (16.1 percent). This figure is higher among Egyptians (41.5 percent). The number of those that completed high school is 2.1 percent for Roma and 6.4 percent for Egyptians. The average schooling period is 5.6 years for males and 5.3 for females. While for Egyptians is 6.8 years for male and 6.9 for females.\textsuperscript{14} In the meantime a comparison with the majority population shows that the gap is very large (Table 4). In absence of education for the Roma/Egyptian population it is difficult for

\textsuperscript{12} Socioeconomic household questionnaires with Roma and Egyptians, 2011
\textsuperscript{13} UNDP/WB/EC Regional survey 2011
\textsuperscript{14} Calculation done only from those who have attended (or attend) school
them to integrate into the labour market and their abilities compared to the majority population will continue to decrease.\textsuperscript{15}

61 percent of the Roma households and 57 of the Egyptian one state that they encounter difficulties for the education of their children. Roma and Egyptian parents rank several causes mainly related to poverty. The difficulty to buy books and school related articles, the lack of appropriate clothes, the difficult living conditions and the absence of infrastructure, the contribution that they must give to increase the incomes of their families, caring for their younger sisters and brothers are some of the main obstacles regarding the education of their children. Apart from these obstacles there exist also many institutional ones as well as obstacles related to the Roma traditions. Discrimination is also a barrier to education. In some interviews, parents and children described forms of frequent mistreatment by teachers.

\textsuperscript{15} Socioeconomic household questionnaires with Roma and Egyptians, 2011