

DRAFT

# REPORT ON THE IMPLANTATION OF THE MILLENNIUM DECLARATION AND MILLENNIUM GOALS FOR THE PERIOD 2000-2015

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## Contents

1. Introduction .....	4
2. Executive Summary .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
3. Context Analysis.....	10
4. Overview of the Millennium Development Goals .....	14
MDG 1 - Halve the poverty rate and eradicate hunger .....	14
MDG 2 – Ensure all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.....	23
MDG 3 – Gender equality and empowerment of women.....	34
MDG 4 – Reduce child mortality.....	41
MDG 5 – Improve maternal health.....	46
MDG 6 – Combat against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases .....	48
MDG 7 – Ensure environmental sustainability .....	55
MDG 8 – Develop global partnership for development .....	60
5 Remaining challenges and emerging priorities.....	63
6. SDG vision for Serbia (update on SDGs and ongoing activities and Government’s and UNCT commitment to it; add a paragraph on policy coordination efforts) .....	68

## List of Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AITUS	Alliance of Independent Trade Unions of Serbia
CFC	Chlorofluorocarbon
DevInfo	NSO and UNICEF database of socioeconomic indicators
DFID	Department for International Development
DOTS	Directly Observed Treatment
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EU	European Union
EU-SILC	EU-Statistics on Income and Living Conditions Survey
ESPAD	European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs
ESRP	Employment and Social Reform Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HBS	Household Budget Survey
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
IDU	Injecting Drug Users
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEA	International Energy Agency
IPA	Pre Accession Instrument
IPH	Institute for Public Health of Serbia Dr Milan Jovanović Batut
IPN	Institute for Protection of Nature of the Republic of Serbia
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LLL	Life Long Learning
LSMS	Living Standard Measurement Study
MAE	Ministry of Agriculture and Environment
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia
MICS	Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey
MMR	Vaccine mixture against measles, mumps and rubella
MSM	Men having Sex with Men
NAP	National Action Plan
NAS	National Assembly of Serbia
NIHI	National Institute for Health Insurance
NIPH	National Institute for Public Health
NPEP	National Programme for Environmental Protection
NSO	National Statistical Office
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PE	Preschool Education
PEP	Pre-Accession Economic Programme
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PPP	Preschool Preparation Program
RS	Republic of Serbia
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEPA	Serbian Environmental Protection Agency
SS	Secondary School

TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDPF	United Nations Development Partnership Framework
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WHO-HFA	World Health Organization “Health for All”

## 1. Introduction

At the Millennium Summit held in New York in September 2000, the leaders of 189 United Nations Member States adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration that proclaims the fundamental values on the basis of which international relations should be rested in the twenty-first century: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, preservation of the environment, respect for nature and shared responsibility. The Millennium Development Goals (hereinafter MDGs) derive from that Declaration and present key targets and indicators expected to be achieved by 2015.

The MDGs aim to:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

This report represents an initiative of the Government of the Republic of Serbia implemented with the support of the United Nations (UN) agencies in the Republic of Serbia and aims to provide an objective analysis and assess the country's progress towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals during 2000-2015. The report also identifies key factors that have contributed to the achievement of each goal and highlights remaining challenges the country will have to address in the future through the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. Most importantly, the report tries to describe the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Serbia in implementing social, economic and institutional reform and their contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

## **2. Executive Summary**

The Millennium Development Goals are a framework world leaders agreed upon to reduce poverty and improve the well-being of people. They are a set of eight interconnected development goals with time-bound targets and indicators. Along with 189 UN Member States, in 2000, Serbia, endorsed the Millennium Declaration at the UN Summit and made a commitment to achieving the MDGs by 2015. Recognizing the relevance and importance of the MDGs in the national development context, the Government initiated the process of formulating national MDG targets and indicators in collaboration with the UN Country Team and wider donor community. During this process the MDGs were adapted to the national context developing appropriate targets and setting of baseline values. These are the set of the national MDGs:

- 1. MDG 1 - Halve the poverty rate and eradicate hunger**
- 2. MDG 2 – Ensure all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling**
- 3. MDG 3 – Gender equality and empowerment of women**
- 4. MDG 4 – Reduce child mortality**
- 5. MDG 5 – Improve maternal health**
- 6. MDG 6 – Combat against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases**
- 7. MDG 7 – Ensure environmental sustainability**
- 8. MDG 8 – Develop global partnership for development**

The progress towards achievement of individual MDGs is summarized as follows:

### **1. MDG 1 - Halve the poverty rate and eradicate hunger**

The country's positive trend in poverty reduction and improving employment rates was disrupted by the onset of the global financial crisis starting to show its first consequences after 2009. Unemployment rates dropped by 5.4%, in 2009 when this positive trend was disrupted significantly bringing the unemployment rates near baseline value from 2002.

The objective of halving the poverty rate has been achieved by 2009 when the poverty rate dropped to 6.9% from 14.0% of 2002 baseline. Regional disparities as well as exacerbated poverty rates among vulnerable groups, still remains a noteworthy feature of society. Since the onset of the global economic and financial crisis the poverty rate grew at 8.6% recorded lastly in 2013. Despite these setbacks considerable achievement has been obtained towards the introduction of social inclusive policies and alleviating needs of the most vulnerable. These achievements include improving the system of social protection and refining the methodology for measuring and monitoring poverty.

## **2. MDG 2 – Ensure all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling**

The key objective of the national MDG 2 was to ensure complete coverage primary schooling, sustain the universal access to secondary schooling improving its quality and advance the process of lifelong learning (LLL).

Primary school net attendance ratio has been very favourable and amounted to 98.5% (2014) of the general population. Considerable emphasis has been placed on facilitating the participation in mainstream education of children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties as well as children from disadvantaged backgrounds through the provision of additional support. Despite these very positive initiatives net attendance ration of children from vulnerable groups and children living in rural communities still lags behind.

The legal basis which governs the education and life-long learning of adults as an element of the comprehensive education system in the Republic of Serbia has been established in 2009. However, the number of adults participating in lifelong learning programmes is still small, only 3.5% of adults aged 25–64 attended education and training programmes in 2013. Despite these encouraging innovations the importance of lifelong learning is not formally recognized. A system for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning still needs to be developed.

The quality of education in the Republic of Serbia is below the international average. Nevertheless, educational achievement of 15-year-olds (PISA) of pupils from Serbia has improved in the period 2006-2012. Progress was also made in reducing the percentage of pupils who did not reach the level of functional literacy – from 52% in 2006 to 33% in 2012, but results still indicate that our education system produces human resources that are not competitive in the global labour market. Regarding the socio-economic status of pupils' education equity as on the similar level as in the OECD countries.

## **3. MDG 3 – Gender equality and empowerment of women**

Key objectives in the achievement of MDG 3 was to halve economic gender inequality, promote female political participation, finalize the system assumptions for By 2011, finalize the setting of system assumptions for achieving gender equality and, develop a system of prevention and protection of women victims of violence.

The employment gap between men and women has decreased considerably, although only moderately, due to raise in women employment. Participation in trade unions has been significantly improved (25% in 2014 as average median in three key bodies) and nears the percentage prescribed by the Gender Law (2009) of 30%. The level of participation of women at all level of political participation has been increased to the

anticipated objectives mainly in women representation in national and municipal assemblies. Women in Foreign Service and as head of municipalities remain underrepresented. The legal, policy and institutional framework for achieving gender equality have been set up in the reporting period. The implementation of these policies remains to be monitored. Although progress can be reported in reporting and prosecutions resulting in convictions have increased, as well as protection mechanisms have improved, gender based violence seem to be on the rise.

#### **4. MDG 4 – Reduce child mortality**

MDG 4 for Serbia stipulated the reduction of child mortality and identified a number of indicators monitoring the quality of health care services and practices required to improve the overall neonatal health. During the reporting period child mortality has been considerably reduced, almost halved by 2014. Coverage of women by antenatal and postnatal health care has improved by 24% which exceeded the target stated under this objective. The mortality rate of children under 19 from external causes of death has been halved as planned marking the successful achievement of Objective 3. Breastfeeding practices remain underachieved despite a very favourable trend until 2010. Although the immunization rates have traditionally been very high, the 99.0% immunization rate has not been achieved. This indicates a need to improve outreach towards all population groups.

#### **5. MDG 5 – Improve maternal health**

Maternal mortality monitoring improved since 2007 with the introduction of a more accurate methodological model for data gathering and analysis. Given this significant change in the methodology there are no comparable data series. Maternal mortality is still higher than European averages placing the commitment to improving national performance rates high on the national development agenda.

The country maintained the fertility rate at the national average which has been set as the national target, reducing the number of abortions and promoting use of modern contraceptives. The objective of reducing the mortality of women of fertile age by over 30% has been successfully attained.

#### **6. MDG 6 – Combat against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases**

The HIV transmission at the national level has undergone several dynamics. In recent years increasing trend of reported sexual transmission was notified among newly diagnosed HIV cases and decreasing trend of newly diagnosed HIV/AIDS cases among injecting drug users (IDU), thus the improvement of sexual behaviour is critical for the control of HIV spreading. Despite these new trends, incidence of HIV/AIDS has been halved and mortality reduced to 1.6 mortality, for 1 million people. It can also be reported that DOTS strategy has been successfully implemented halving the incidence of tuberculosis and produced favourable results in treatment practices. Life expectancy has been increased by 3 years exceeding the target set by the objective. This indicator has been favourable to both men and women. Positive results in health related behaviours (smoking, alcohol and drug consumption, safe sex practices) in the mid-term have reversed in the final phase of the MDGs and require attention on national level predominantly among youth population. Preventive measures need to be vigorously and continuously implemented.



## **7. MDG 7 – Ensure environmental sustainability**

In 2010 the National Programme for Environmental Protection (NPEP) evolved from recognition of need for action in order to remediate environmental damage and provide Serbia's population with environmental public goods. In 2011 the government of Serbia adopted the Environment Approximation Strategy outlining the way ahead in aligning legislation and practices with the EU. Besides the legal framework, the institutional challenge is also significant and efforts are being made to regulate the country's environmental approach as comprehensively as possible. The level of investment in environmental protection and construction of infrastructure in this area lags behind what the new EU member states from Central Europe have invested in environmental protection in the pre-accession period.

When compared to 2002, population coverage with access to public waterworks and implementation of water control and safety measures has improved significantly. However, disparity in the coverage of urban and rural areas by a public waterworks system remains noteworthy. Considerable improvement must be made in the area of access to public sewage system and communal wastewater treatment.

On the issues of improving the housing conditions of poor inhabitants of non-hygienic settlements, initiatives in partnership with the EU and UN have contributed to achieving moderate progress in this area.

## **8. MDG 8 – Develop global partnership for development**

For Serbia, MDG 8 specifies the creation of an enabling environment for dynamic and sustainable growth of the economy, for advancing access to technology, and human resource development. All these important development factors are considered as enablers for effective use and mobilization of partnership opportunities in facilitating the achievements of the 7 MDGs. Positive economic impacts from the previous period had been discontinued by the adverse effects of the global economic crisis. Despite these undesirable dynamics this period also marks an increase in access to and use of technology. This is visible mainly through the increase of mobile phone subscribers and access to computers and internet. The restriction of economic growth affected the level of investment in education and health and kept them at baseline level.

Serbia's strategic direction is EU integration, thus the importance of developing partnerships for economic development, both with EU countries, and with countries in other regions is placed as national priority. Active participation and support for regional, that is, international cooperation as a whole, is one of the basic foreign trade priorities. Through integration on regional and multilateral levels, the Republic of Serbia plans to obtain better access to foreign markets and thus increase its effective market size, which stimulates the inflow of direct foreign investments and the growth of exports. The Republic of Serbia was granted the status of the EU candidate country in 2012 and in April 2013, the EU Commission recommended opening of the accession negotiations with Serbia. In 2014, the process of screening of the compliance with EU standards in various sectors was conducted and opening of the first negotiation chapters is expected in 2015. Accordingly, the upcoming UN and Government of Serbia Development Partnership Framework (2016-2020) is fully aligned with the EU integration process as the overarching priority for the national development agenda.

Despite the significant progress which has been made towards achieving the MDGs since 2002, there are numerous challenges remaining. By and large these challenges are amplified the effects of the global financial crisis and subsequent economic contraction and fiscal consolidation, which has led to a reversal of several positive trends. First and foremost, this has caused a decrease in employment and activity levels, with young jobseekers being particularly affected. While these challenges have been recognized in a number of strategic documents and priorities adopted by the Government, the negative trends are yet to be reversed. In addition more attention is needed in order to improve the labour market position of women, as well as that of minorities and vulnerable groups, who often tend to be disproportionately affected in economic downturns. While some of these outcomes are unavoidable, the Government should nevertheless exert more efforts to minimize resulting (economic and thus also social) inequalities, as these carry through to other MDGs such as gender equality and minority rights through a reversal of (socio-economic) empowerment trends. One of the knock-on effects of the aforementioned economic contraction is an increase in poverty rates, which were otherwise decreasing since 2002. By tackling joblessness head-on, while at the same time intervening so that negative outcomes caused by the current economic contraction are mitigated by improving quality of, and access to services especially for those most vulnerable, the Government can ensure continued progress.

In addition, more attention is needed in order to improve both the conservation, and management of the environment and natural resources. It is especially during economic downturns, when private investment in environmental conservation tends to decrease, that the Government should step up its efforts in this area. These efforts should go hand in hand with improvement of Serbia's (environmental) infrastructure. For instance, the current system of wastewater management system has very low coverage, and needs to be expanded beyond urban areas. Doing so will take time, and require major public investments, but considering for instance the health hazards induced by inadequate sewage systems during the 2014 the floods, it is clear that such investments are long overdue.

Another area of concern is the slowdown in improvement of health indicators. Child mortality and maternal health have improved steadily since the early 2000s, but nevertheless stay relatively high compared to EU countries. Cancer, injury, poisoning and other external factor mortality rates, which have improved in the EU as whole, have remained virtually flat. Serbia's largely public health system still operates under outdated financing and management models. In order to achieve its full potential in terms of efficiency and accessibility, it is essential that the current reform – for instance financing based on diagnosis related group (DRG) – are successfully implemented.

Health care funds should be reallocated to improve the impact of the health care system on population health. Funds should be redirected from curative to public health programmes and programmes for the prevention of diseases.

It is of key importance to increase the efficiency of health services at all levels of health care, with permanent gains in the health status of citizens. Increased efficiency of health care workers may be achieved by introducing new payment models. The capitation formula should include several elements of productivity and quality of work, while payment of hospitals as per diagnosis related groups should be implemented faster on the ground

Finally, more attention is needed in the area of education, where despite progress (in e.g. attendance rates, test scores) since the early 2000s, the inclusion of vulnerable groups still leaves much room for improvement. While the Serbia's pupils perform worse on standardized tests than their peers from developed countries, the gaps seem to be closing. In order to fully close this gap, updating of outdated teaching methods and materials, as well as general education reform and improved financing mechanisms will be needed. Another area with much potential is life-long learning, adult education, and retraining of jobseekers – currently at very low levels – that could positively affect labor market outcomes in the general population. Considering the current economic climate, as well as the traditionally public nature of education in Serbia, it is clear that the Government is best placed to spearhead any improvements in this area. Through adoption of the Strategy for Education, as well as various legislative acts, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development has shown a commitment to education reforms.

In order to achieve the above, Serbia will be able to count on assistance from the international community. In particular, the partnership with the EU, the availability of pre-accession funds (IPA), as well as the new development framework UNDAF 2016-2020, can provide an important framework for resource mobilization in the pursuit of development challenges and reforms stemming from the unfinished MDG business described by this report.

The commitment of the Government of Serbia towards the achievement of the national MDGs shows that policies and actions, backed by adequate funding and political commitment, yields positive change. In view of the global preparations initiated by the Post 2015 development agenda consultations, Serbia has initiated national consultations on setting the development priorities in line with the nascent Sustainable Development Goals. This report will serve as an important baseline for determining the future SDGs for Serbia.

### 3. Context Analysis

**MDG Achievement Agenda in the Republic of Serbia:** In the year of 2000, the Republic of Serbia adopted the Millennium Declaration, while the last national MDG Report was adopted six years ago. The Government, supported by UNCT in the Republic of Serbia, has initiated the drafting of the Report on the Implementation of the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Goals for the period 2000-2015. Upon the proposal made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of Serbia adopted the conclusion assigning the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to develop the Report on the Implementation of the Millennium Goals 2000-2015 in cooperation with the Republic Secretariat for Public Policy. Representatives of the key national institutions and line ministries (who were during the MDG implementation members of the MDG working group) in close cooperation with the UN Agencies, contributed to data gathering and providing contextual analysis. The basic purpose of this MDG report is to present the progress of realization of the national MDGs and measure the level of achievement of these goals, from the initial commitment till today, i.e. in the period between 2000 and 2015. The report also provides an overview of the unfinished business and makes a link to the Sustainable Development Goals agenda for the post 2015 period.

The Millennium Development Goals were incorporated into the national development agenda primarily through the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2008 implemented by the Team of the Deputy Prime Minister for the Implementation of the Strategy for Poverty Reduction. In 2006 the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted a report called “National Millennium Development Goals,” in which the global MDGs and indicators were adapted for national development priorities and harmonized with the existing national development strategies and regulations. Supported by the UNCT in the Republic of Serbia, the Government of Serbia produced several reports: the Review on the Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in the Republic of Serbia (2005), the MDG Monitoring Framework (2006), and the MDG Mid-term report (2009), the MDG Serbia Barometer (2013). UNDAF for Serbia 2004-2010 and 2011-2015 are fully aligned with the MDG framework for the Republic Serbia and UN activities contributed to the MDG Achievement to the Republic of Serbia

**Data and Methodology:** This report is based on official data gathered regularly by lead national institutions such as the National Statistical Office, National Employment Service, Institute for Public Health, line ministries, as well as on data obtained from periodical research from international and domestic organizations and institutions, and DevInfo. DevInfo is a database system developed under the auspices of the United Nations and endorsed by the United Nations Development Group for monitoring human development with the specific purpose of monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is a tool for organizing, storing and presenting data in a uniform way in order to facilitate data sharing at the country level (national and local) across government departments, UN agencies and development partners. As such, DevInfo makes a valuable contribution to data diversification and quality. Additionally, analyses from various documents of the Government of the Republic of Serbia were used (for example, Economic Brief for the Republic of Serbia, Fiscal Consolidation Policy paper, National Reports on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction etc.), as well as sector development strategies.

Progress in the realization of MDGs was monitored on the basis of three figures: the initial value of the indicators i.e. baseline taken at the inception of the process (year 2000 or 2002), the value at mid-term (2008) and the last available figure (2014 where available). For specific indicators there has been a change in methodology. In such cases wherein the baseline or mid-term values have been corrected with data that

provides a comparable time series. An appropriate explanation accompanies such changes in methodology in the detail of this report.

In the 2005 report, most indicators had projected target values to be reached in 2015. Subsequently in 2008, the representatives of the Government and the members of the Working Group for poverty reduction and development decided not to show these target values of indicators. The following reasons for this were stated. First, the Government stopped using the projections that were given in the previous MDG Report, which were based on the Strategy of Economic Development of the Republic of Serbia and other strategic documents which the Government had adopted, given that it considers them inappropriate in the current circumstances, bearing in mind the effects of the global economic crisis on the Serbian economy. Second, currently the Government does not have a new detailed projection of economic development and sector strategies with the appropriate projections up to 2015, from which target indicator values can be derived.

The report is divided into chapters that refer to individual MDGs, while the last chapter is dedicated to conclusions and recommendations. The Appendix consists of a table with national MDGs, objectives and indicators.

**Country Development Context:** Over the last 15 years the Republic of Serbia has experienced economic, financial and trade transformation and accelerated economic integration. The borders opened up to capital flows, while the Republic of Serbia made significant progress towards a functioning market economy. Serbia's economic transformation and liberalisation was furthermore supported by the EU integration process. Receiving a candidate status in 2012 was important milestone for the Republic of Serbia which, together with the process of EU integrations, supported further economic integration.

The overall economic situation in the Republic of Serbia during the MDG reporting period has been characterised by two main trends. The first is marked by a pronounced economic growth up to 2008 with the Republic of Serbia catching up from a relatively low GDP base, and the second by an economic downturn which has lasted since 2008 up until today. Since the crisis Serbia has experienced a fall in economic activity, downturn trends in FDI inflows, investments and capital flows. Through a fall in export demand in the EU the high degree of economic integration with EU Member States, has caused the crisis to spill over to the Republic of Serbia.

The current economic recovery is difficult and brings in a number of challenges. Following the aforementioned fall in capital inflows and export demand, the need for institutional and structural reforms has become much more pronounced.

Moreover, a number of external and internal factors, which characterised the Serbian economy even before the crisis, intensified additionally in the period following the onset of the crisis which contributed significantly to the worsening of the economic situation. The country's economic deterioration had a negative impact on labour market indicators, induced growth of poverty and caused an overall decline in the living standards in the country.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Employment and Social Reform Programme (ESRP)\_draft 2015

The Republic of Serbia ended the year 2014 with an estimated real economic decline of 1.8%<sup>2</sup>. Despite registering growth in the course of 2013 (economic growth of 2.6%), the Serbian economy shows no signs of a sustained recovery (2012 marked a negative economic growth of 1%).

The Government has taken certain steps to address the numerous obstacles hindering growth, and fiscal consolidation and economic recovery were defined as the main objectives of the established after the national elections in 2014. The 2014 EC Progress Report<sup>3</sup>, highpoints the importance of implementation of the announced reforms as critical for political and economic stability.

The main objectives of the economic policy of the Republic of Serbia are set out in the 2015 Fiscal Strategy with Projections for 2016 and 2017:

1. Establishment of macroeconomic stability through the implementation of the fiscal measures and through enhancing the financial sector stability;
2. Elimination of hurdles to the increase of economic activities and competitiveness through the implementation of comprehensive structural reforms.

**Table 1. Macroeconomic trends**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
GDP, EUR bn	29.8	33.4	31.7	34.3	-33.1
GDP, per capita, EUR	4.082	4.62	4.401	4.771	-
GDP, real growth in %	0.6	1.4	-1	2.6	-1.8
Inflation (CPI), %/yr-1	6.5	11	7.8	7.8	2.1
RSD/EUR exchange rate, period average	103	102	113.1	113.1	116.6
Current account deficit, % GDP[4]	-7	-9.9	-11.5	-6.1	-5.9
Foreign direct investments, % GDP	2.9	5.5	2.1	3.6	-3.7
NBS reserves, EUR bn	10	12.1	10.9	11.2	10.9
Consolidated fiscal deficit, % GDP	-4.5	-4.7	-6.1	-4.7	- 6.7
Public Debt, % GDP	41.8	45.4	56.2	59.6	69.2

Source: Ministry of Finance, updated on 01.07.2015.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), GDP according to ESA 2010.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.seio.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu\\_dokumenta/godisnji\\_izvestaji\\_ek\\_o\\_napretku/izvestaj\\_o\\_napretku\\_dec14.pdf](http://www.seio.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/godisnji_izvestaji_ek_o_napretku/izvestaj_o_napretku_dec14.pdf)

#### 4. Overview of the Millennium Development Goals

##### MDG 1 - Halve the poverty rate and eradicate hunger

MDG National Objectives		Achievement
Objective 1	By 2015, reduce the unemployment rate by at least 50%	In the period between 2000-2009, an unemployment rate increased by 4%.
Objective 2	By 2015, halve the poverty rate of the entire population and eradicate hunger	This objective has been achieved by 2009 when the poverty rate dropped to 6.9% from 14.0% of 2002 baseline. Since the onset of the global economic and financial crisis the poverty rate grew to 8.6% recorded lastly in 2013. Considerable achievement has been obtained.

##### Employment trends and main features

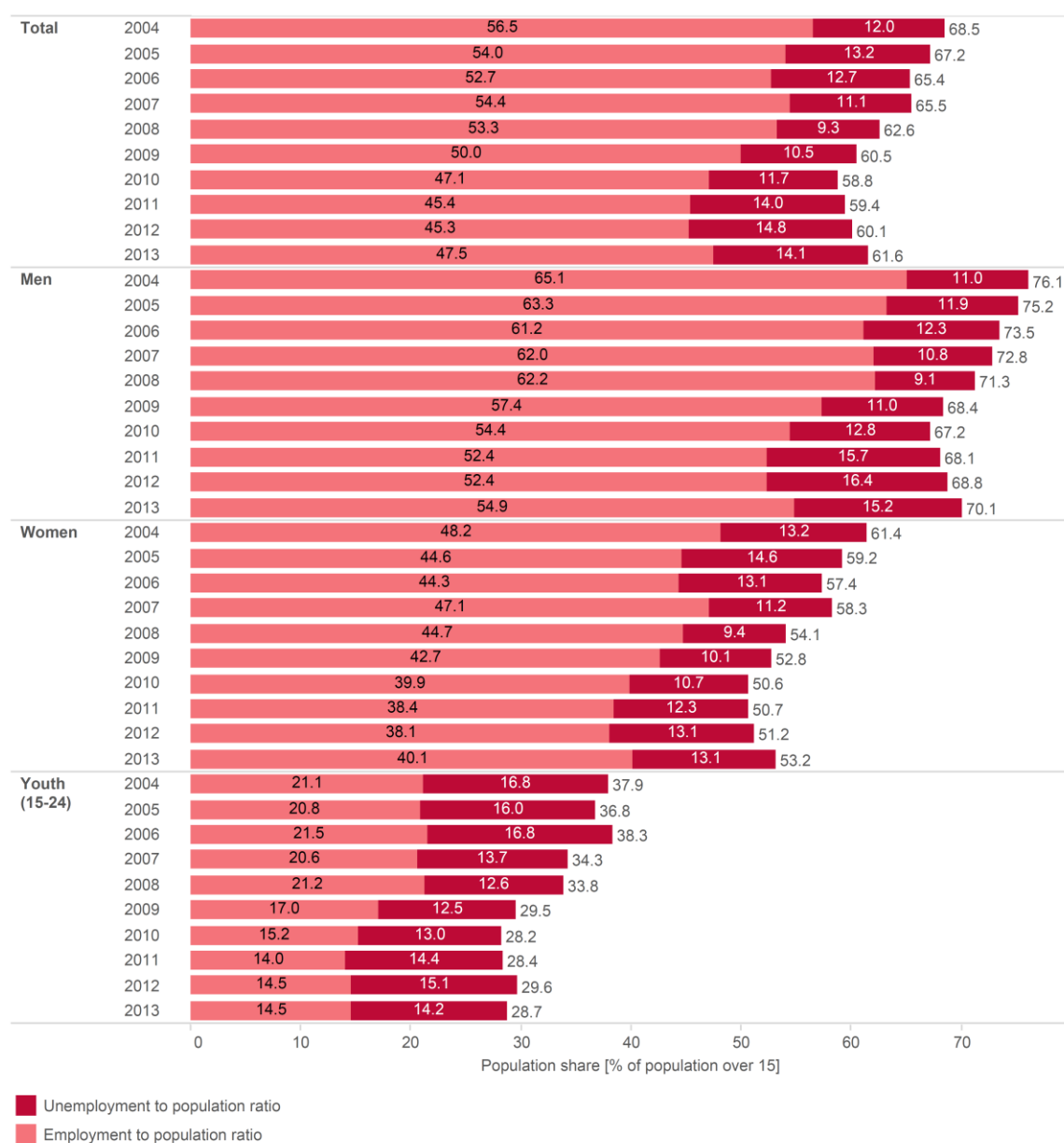
After a period of pronounced economic growth, the period of the world financial crisis 2008-2014 commenced. At that time the country witnessed decreasing employment and increasing unemployment, adding to the negative experiences of the 1990s. Even during the period of relative economic growth, creating employment has been a challenge for the Serbian economy. According to a World Bank report<sup>4</sup>, employment creation in the region was slow even before the crisis (2000-2007), when the region grew faster than many other emerging economies. This was confirmed in the National Employment strategy for the period 2011-2020 ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 37/11), which announces that these trends continued throughout the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century even in the years of the highest economic growth. The benefits of economic growth were reflected in wage increases at the expense of employment growth. The strategy explains that the private sector growth could neither absorb the workforce laid off during the restructuring of socially- and state-owned enterprises, nor generate enough new jobs for increasing numbers of unemployed. This situation was, however, only partially alleviated by employment in the informal economy where mostly unqualified workers found work. According to the latest Labour Force Survey (LFS) of 2014<sup>5</sup>, informal employment accounted for 22.0% of total employment, up from 19.3% of 2013.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/16570/9780821399101.pdf?sequence=1>

<sup>5</sup> [http://webzrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/repository/documents/00/01/71/73/SB-593-bilten\\_ARS\\_2014.pdf](http://webzrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/repository/documents/00/01/71/73/SB-593-bilten_ARS_2014.pdf) page 39, accessed on 15.06.2015

<sup>6</sup> [http://webzrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/repository/documents/00/00/96/02/SB\\_564\\_ARS\\_2013+sajt.pdf](http://webzrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/repository/documents/00/00/96/02/SB_564_ARS_2013+sajt.pdf) page 61, accessed on 01.06.2015

Figure 1. Activity, unemployment and employment (2004-2013)



According to most recent data, at the end of 2014 unemployment in the Republic of Serbia remains high, at 19.6 %, according to the LFS of December 2014 (see



Figure 1 above). Since 2008 both overall unemployment and the unemployment rate have been on the rise as a consequence of the impact of the economic crisis on the labour market. The rate of unemployment in the Republic of Serbia is significantly higher than the unemployment rate of the EU-27 (EU27 unemployment rate was 9.9% in December 2014<sup>7</sup>). The unemployment rate peaked at 22.4<sup>8</sup> per cent of the labour force in 2012.<sup>9</sup> Monitoring of the Long-Term Unemployment Rate persistently indicates very high rates of long-term unemployment, as well as their upward trend in the course of the financial crisis. The rate of long-term unemployment in the period 2011-2013 grew by just below two percentage points, from 17.4% in 2011 to 19.2% in 2012, only to return to 17.5% in 2013. Comparisons with the EU Member States show that, according to this indicator, the Republic of Serbia has four times higher the rate of long-term unemployment relative to the EU 27 average which totals only 5.1%<sup>10</sup>.

Available data demonstrates that women are consistently affected by unemployment more severely than men, despite their higher level of education. The unemployment rate for women has been significantly higher than for men for most of the reference period, i.e. 2008-2014. According to data presented in Figure 1, the difference between the male and female unemployment rates has been decreasing in the period (2.3%pts in 2008 to 0.8%pts. in 2014). Moreover, the employment rate difference has also decreased from 8.4%pts in 2008 to 6.8%pts in 2014. Considering that in general, female workers tend to bear the brunt in economic downturns, women's employment in the Republic of Serbia shows positive results.

The unemployment rate decreases significantly with age, with the unemployment among the youngest age group (15-24). After a period of decline youth unemployment rate started to rise rapidly in 2008 and reached 59.9% in 2011, after which it dropped to a still high 49.6 % in 2014. Although youth unemployment rate recorded in EU-27 (21.4 in December 2014)<sup>11</sup> is a growing challenge within the European Union, the youth unemployment rates in the Republic of Serbia are considerably higher and reason for great concern. According to the analysis provided in the National Employment Strategy 2011-2020, compared to their adult peers, the position of young people on the Republic of Serbian labour market has worsened, judging by the widening gap between the youth and the overall unemployment rate in the reference period.

The percentage of the active working age population in the Republic of Serbia is considerably below the average for the EU-27 (71.3% in October 2009), whilst in the Republic of Serbia this percentage is 60.6 per cent in 2013 (see Figure 1). As recorded in the National Employment Strategy 2011-2020, compared to 2008, the activity rate recorded in 2012 was about 2.5 percentage points lower, due to the considerably faster decline in the active population against that of the working age population. Such a low activity rate is mainly result of the low activity of women, youth (15-24) and persons aged 55-64. Still, in the reference period the activity rate of men has fallen moderately more than that of women (2.4 percentage points compared to 3.4 percentage points, respectively), which has led to a reduced gender gap in activity rates. On the other hand, the activity rate of youth has declined considerably (from 35.8% in 2005 to 21.2% in 2014).

Bearing in mind comparative empirical findings on the impact of long-term unemployment on the future earnings of youth ("scar" effect), data indicating that as many as 60% of the unemployed aged under 25 are searching for a job longer than 12 months is worrying. The institutional framework and measures supporting young jobseekers has improved in the last 5-7 years. To name only a few, the National Youth Strategy has been adopted in 2008-2014 ("Official Gazette of the RS", no 55/08) and a

<sup>7</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6581668/3-30012015-AP-EN.pdf/9d4fbadd-d7ae-48f8-b071-672f3c4767dd> accessed on 15.06

<sup>8</sup> LFS data from October 2012

<sup>9</sup> Decent Work Country Programme, pp. 2; <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/program/dwcp/download/serbia.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Second National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction (2014)

<sup>11</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6581668/3-30012015-AP-EN.pdf/9d4fbadd-d7ae-48f8-b071-672f3c4767dd> accessed on 15.06.2014

new National Youth Strategy for the period 2015-2025 ("Official Gazette of the RS", no 22/15) and Action Plan (2009-2014). After the adoption of the Law on youth ("Official Gazette of the RS", no 50/11) local Youth action plans were subsequently developed in AP Vojvodina and most Serbian municipalities. In the course of 2010, the Strategy for career guidance and counselling in the Republic of Serbia ("Official Gazette of the RS", no 16/10) was also adopted. Given the fact that Youth is an inter-sectoral issue, many national strategic documents deal with youth as well. Despite the improved focus on the legislative and strategic framework, youth unemployment has continued to rise and be one of the major concerns. Lack of opportunity increases interest among young people in considering emigration to third countries. Although official data on this subject is scarce, this trend among youth appears to be increasing. The Global Competitiveness Index data rank the Republic of Serbia third from bottom in the World by its ability to retain talent<sup>12</sup>.

Active labour market programmes implemented by the National Employment Service to date, have paid a very limited attention to addressing the multiple disadvantages that many young people face in the gaining a foothold in the labour market. Although there have been some attempts between 2002 and 2007, there have been no programs solely focused on youth, most of them are indeed focused on employment measures among the young and educated. In the period between 2003 and 2007, many new employment measures were introduced<sup>13</sup>, such as career counselling, mediation, additional education programs and job seeking training<sup>14</sup>, employment fairs and active job seeking clubs. All these measures were primarily focused on the young and educated for the first time seeking an employment, but barely dealt with disadvantaged groups with no specific skill or education such as persons with disabilities, the Roma, refugees and internally displaced people. In 2005, subventions for young entrepreneurs, i.e. grants (non-refundable aid) or self-employment loans (start-up credits); and subventions for new working places, subventions for social insurance and income tax exemption for employers have been introduced, albeit with minimal or no results demonstrated in terms of reduction of youth unemployment rate so far. In the period between 2009-2011, the programme "First Chance" was implemented and it reached up to 45,307 unemployed qualified young people (up to the age of 30) with no working experience. Likewise, since 2011 the program of professional practice (acquiring practical knowledge and skills for independent work within one's profession with no employment relation) was implemented and it reached a significant number of persons falling under the category of youth. In the course of 2014, the measures of active employment policy, based upon the set individual employment plan, included 45,184 young people, which represented the share of 43.87% in the total number of hard employable persons involved in the measures of active employment policy (103,000).

The annual programme of additional education and training, which represents an integral part of the National Action Employment Plan, sets the programmes and measures which aim is to raise the employment rate of unemployed persons for the purpose of continuous presentation at the labour market: professional practice, programme of acquiring practical knowledge (intended for persons with no qualifications or with the low level of qualifications), training programs for labour market, training programmes upon employer's request, basic functional adult education (the most common category of unemployed persons of the Roma nationality). It is mentioned that on the basis of the situational and flow analyses at the labour market at the annual level, through the National Employment Action Plan, special services packages for certain categories of unemployed persons are created (for instance, in 2015, services packages for surplus of employees, for youth (15-30 years of age), unqualified and low qualified persons and disabled persons are being implemented). In the area of creation of a strategic employment policy framework, the Employment Strategy for the period 2011-2020 ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 37/11) was adopted in 2011. Likewise, starting from 2010, the National Employment Action Plan has been adopted on a yearly basis and it represents the basic instrument

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<sup>12</sup> <http://blog.euromonitor.com/2013/11/special-report-brain-drain-a-global-problem.html>, accessed on 01.07.2015

<sup>13</sup> The Law on Employment and Insurance in the Case of Unemployment, 2003

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

for materialization of the set strategic framework, that is, it sets the strategic priorities to be implemented through creation of specific programmes and measures of an active employment policy. The latest action plan being implemented is the National Employment Action Plan for 2015 ("Official Gazette of the RS" nos. 101/14 and 54/15). Based upon the set strategic employment policy framework, that National Action Employment Plans set the categories of less employable persons (persons who due to their health conditions, insufficient or inadequate qualifications, socio-demographic characteristic, regional or professional incompatibility between the supply and demand at the labour market or any other objective circumstances, are in a more difficult situation to find employment), as well as active employment policy measures directed towards the improvement of their employability. Unemployed persons falling under this category have the priority in their inclusion in the active policy employment measures, but at the same time, special employment programmes are being implemented for certain categories. Legal framework for creation and implementation of programmes and measures of active employment policy in the Republic of Serbia is composed of the Law on Employment and Insurance in the Case of Unemployment ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 36/09, 88/10 and 38/15) and the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disability ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 36/09 and 32/13). The Law on Employment of Foreigners ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 128/2014) was recently adopted and it is harmonized with the *acquis communautaire*, through the adequate ratified conventions of the ILO and requests of the World Trade Organization when it comes to free movement of workers within the employment area.

According to an ILO study conducted in 2008, persons from rural areas who have finished secondary schools make up the largest number of unemployed young people, but there are a significant number of drop-outs as well. Despite the fact that they are better educated (6.4% of women have a tertiary degree as opposed to 3.9% of men), the unemployment rate among younger women is higher than among men (Krstic, Corbanese 2008). The 2013 National Employment Action Plan contained one novelty – implementation of a services package for youth – as a way to provide integrated services to young people with modest funds for active labour market programmes. The services package for youth included almost 20,000 young persons, which received incentives for active employment policy measures over the first three months following their registration at the NES. This represents a 21.7% share in the total number of persons difficult to employ included in active employment policy measures (91,038 persons).

**Table 2 \_ Persons with disability - employment**

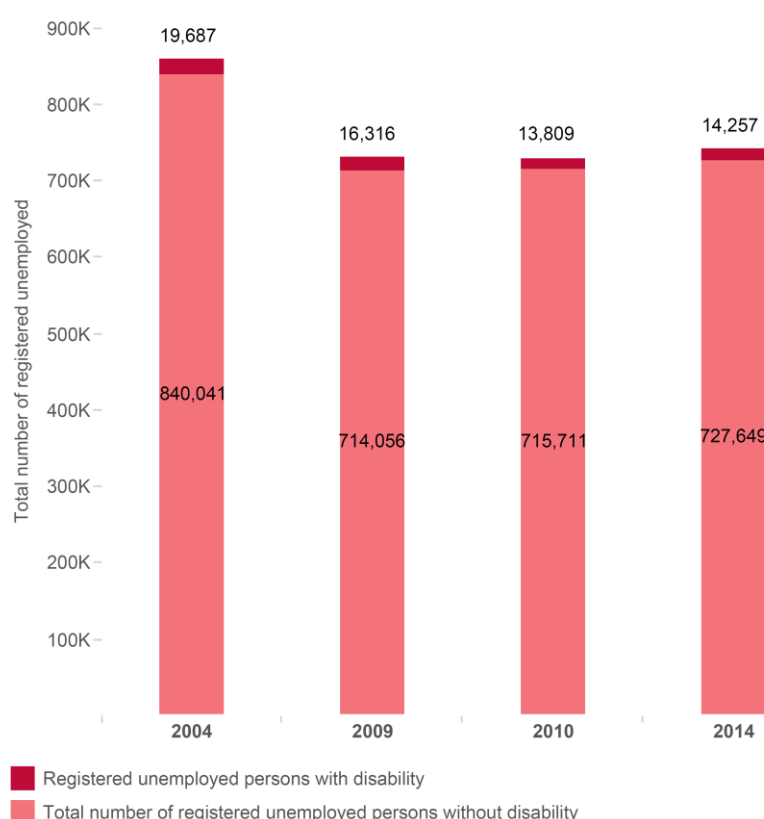
Employed from NES register	2004		2009		2010		2014	
	Total	Female	Total	Total	Female	Total	Total	Female
Total	221,156	112,440	242,627	258,881	135,146	140,588	232,280	122,491
Persons with Disability	9	2	21	1,396	439	1,589	4,147	1,549

Source: National Employment Service, July 2015

Data on employment disaggregated by national origin or by refugee and internally displaced status is largely unavailable in the Republic of Serbia. Workers belonging to these population groups are also more likely to be engaged in work in the informal economy. Since the adoption of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, the overall employment rate of workers with disabilities from the NES registry increased considerably. The table above shows the impact affirmative policy measures on employment of persons living with disability.

Unemployment remains high among persons with disability. There has been however a decreasing trend in number of unemployed persons among those registered with the National Employment Service (see Figure 2). There is no available data on total number of working age people with disability.

**Figure 2. Registered unemployment and disability**



Source: National Employment Service, June 2015

The position in the labour market, as well as the number of available jobs once they are in the labour market, have a decisive impact on the level of poverty and social exclusion<sup>15</sup>.

In 2015, in line with the National Employment Action Plan for 2015, the following special measures and programmes of active employment policy directed towards stimulation of employment, that is, increase of the employability of persons with disabilities were implemented:

I Non-financial measures/services directed towards employers:

Connecting the offer with the labour market demand through provision of services to employers and jobseekers; making contact with employers and satisfying their shown needs; organizing job fairs;

<sup>15</sup> Second National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia (2014) (Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction)

selection and referring jobseekers to employer for selection for employment or other labour engagement, etc.

II financial measures/employment services for persons with disabilities as the part of the overall rehabilitation process of an individual aiming at more active inclusion into socio-economic trends, in accordance with the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities:

Subventions for employment at newly created posts

Subventions for wages of persons with disabilities with no working experience<sup>16</sup>

Reimbursement of costs for work post adaptation and services of professional assistance (working assistance) for persons with disabilities getting the employment under the special conditions.<sup>17</sup>

As of 2009, the National Employment Service has been keeping the special records of registered unemployed members of the Roma minority, who are determined in the new National Action Plan as the category of unemployed persons who should be offered support.

Table 3. Number of unemployed Roma registered in the NES records

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
	Condition as at 31/12					
Total	13,416	15,867	19,398	20,342	22,102	21,791
Women	6,571	7,637	9,180	9,513	10,150	10,053

Source: National Employment Service.

### Main poverty aspects

Considerable progress has been accomplished in the realization of MDGs in the area of poverty, given that the poverty rate in 2009 was closely halved in comparison to 2002. Having in mind its importance, we report on absolute poverty since this type of extreme vulnerability is still high in the Republic of Serbia. In 2002, 14%, or around one million people, were poor, while in 2009 this figure stood at 6.9%, or around half a million people. The global financial crisis and its effects on the Serbian economy are visible in a trend of poverty rate peaking at 8.8% recorded in 2012 and marking a minor decrease in 2013 reaching 8.6%.

Nevertheless, as outlined in the Second National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia<sup>18</sup> from October 2014, poverty remains significant, both expressed in absolute terms (the share of persons whose consumption is below the threshold required to meet the basic living needs – 8.6% in 2013<sup>19</sup>), and in *relative terms* (the share of persons whose incomes are according to the consumers' unit lower than 60% median equivalent incomes per consumers unit – 24.6%<sup>20</sup>). Regardless of the applied methodological concept (concept of absolute poverty or relative poverty),

<sup>16</sup> Article 32 of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities

<sup>17</sup> Article 31 of the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities

<sup>18</sup> Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, Government of the Republic of Serbia

<sup>19</sup> Centre for liberal-democratic studies, Poverty in the Republic of Serbia 2011, 2012 and 2013, 2014, for the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit in the Republic of Serbia.

<sup>20</sup> Compared to the EU, the Republic of Serbia had the highest at-risk-of-poverty rate. This value was considerably above the average at-risk-of-poverty rate for the 28 EU Member States (16.9%) as well as the 12 new Member States excluding Croatia (17.3%), and also exceeded the highest rates for individual countries Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, Government of the Republic of Serbia (2014), Second National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia.

the profile of the poor does not differ significantly. Judging by the profile of the poor, the living standards are decisively influenced by three elements: labour market status, low education level and residence outside urban areas<sup>21</sup>. The basic goal set by the Government of Serbia in the Poverty Reduction Strategy (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2003), to halve poverty in the Republic of Serbia by 2010, was achieved by 2007. Within the first MDG, National Objective 2 that was set in the previous MDG Report – to halve the poverty rate by 2015 and to eradicate hunger – has also been achieved at mid-term. Extreme poverty<sup>22</sup> did not exist in this period since there were almost no persons whose consumption was under the food line. However, it should be emphasized that the picture of poverty has somewhat deteriorated, bearing in mind that the official figures do not fully cover refugees, IDPs and Roma (nor about 1,116 people in collective centres), especially given that these population categories are certainly more vulnerable in comparison to the general population of the Republic of Serbia.

The at-risk-of-poverty rate according to the most frequent labour market status (that lasted more than six months) shows that unemployed are in the worst situation (48.7% or almost one in two unemployed persons is exposed to the risk of poverty). Employment reduces the risk of poverty considerably, but the quality of employment remains the key factor for exiting poverty (the self-employed have a significantly higher at-risk-of-poverty rate than those employed with an employer – 38.3% and 6.4% respectively).

Education is a decisive factor for the economic status and the income generating capacity, and therefore it comes as no surprise that the persons with lower levels of education level are exposed to the risk of poverty above the average. In 2013, the highest at-risk-of-poverty rate was recorded among the population with primary education and below (41.8%), while the population with college or university education had the lowest at-risk-of-poverty rate (7.1%). This distribution of population at risk of poverty by educational attainment level clearly indicates that education is worthwhile, given that the labour market rewards highly educated persons<sup>23</sup>.

Even though inequality measured by consumption by the Household Budget Survey (HBS) indicates that Serbia may be categorised among the countries with even distribution (Gini coefficient stood at 0.26<sup>24</sup> in 2012), values obtained through a comparable methodology (SILC) point to a highly pronounced problem of uneven income distribution in the Republic of Serbia (Gini 0.38<sup>25</sup>). Part of the explanation can certainly be found in the fact that the share of own production is high among the households from lower quintiles (more than 12% of their total consumption), and that according to the SILC methodology this income is not assessed or included in the total income.

In 2012 the Gini coefficient stood at 38, which was significantly above the average for the 28 European Union Member States (30.6) and also above the Gini coefficient values for EU countries with the most pronounced inequalities, which requires for adequate policy response.<sup>26</sup>

**Table 3. Absolute poverty rates 2002-2013**

	2002	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Share of persons living in absolute poverty of the	14.0	6.9	9.2	6.8	8.8	8.6

21 Irrespective of the concept applied (absolute or relative poverty), the population of Eastern and Southern Serbia region have the lowest living standards, while the inhabitants of Belgrade region have the highest living standards. For more information see: Second National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia.

22 Share of the population with consumption below the food poverty line

23 Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, Government of the Republic of Serbia, (2014). Second National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia.

24 Centre for Liberal Democratic Studies, Centre for Social Policy, Absolute poverty in the Republic of Serbia and Poverty Measurement –Theoretical Concepts, Condition and Recommendations for the Republic of Serbia, 2014, for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit.

25 [http://webzr.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/repository/documents/00/01/71/56/PD10\\_083\\_srb\\_2014.pdf](http://webzr.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/repository/documents/00/01/71/56/PD10_083_srb_2014.pdf).

26 Ibid.

total population (% poor in the Republic of Serbia)						
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Source: data for 2002 – Living Standard Measurement Survey. For the period 2006-2010 taken from the report *Monitoring Social Inclusion in Serbia – Second Edition*, Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2012. For 2011-2013, according to *Poverty in Serbia 2011, 2012 and 2013*, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, CLDS, 2014.

In the economic classification of the consolidated balance of the Republic of Serbia<sup>27</sup>, social transfers are subsumed under the category of social assistance and transfers to citizens. Social transfers<sup>28</sup> accounted for 16.3% of GDP in 2005, while in the course of 2014 it increased to 18.0%. The largest portion of transfers goes to the disbursement of pensions. The highest value was registered in 2009 accounting to 19.3% of the GDP. In 2012, 72.6% of social transfers were earmarked for the disbursement of net pensions. The share of pensions out of total social transfers was almost unchanged in 2013 and equalled 72.4%. (ESRP 2014)

**Table 4. Share of social transfers in BDP, %**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Share of social transfers in BDP, %	16.3	17.5	17.4	18.1	19.3	18.9	17.9	18.2	17.7	18.0

source: <http://www.mfin.gov.rs/UserFiles/File/bilten%20javne%20finansije/bilten-127-web.pdf>

Roma poverty is higher in rates but also much deeper and more severe in comparison to the general population. Almost one half of the total number of the Roma population in the Republic of Serbia was poor (49.2%), while 6.4% were extremely poor according to last available data from 2007. However, it is critical to the understanding of the available data, that the Living Standard Measurement Survey covered only those Roma that were integrated into the general population. Those are assumed be better off than Roma living in informal settlements. There have been recent efforts of the Office for Human Rights and Minorities supported by international donors and the EU to engage in mapping and assisting Roma communities living in informal settlements. A comparison of Roma poverty throughout the MDG implementation period was not possible, given recent changes in the methodology but also due to the fact that in 2002, the Living Standard Study<sup>29</sup> did not contain a question on nationality/ethnicity.

**Table 6. Roma unemployment rate**

	2007	2014
Roma unemployment rate (15-64 yrs.)*	31.6	43.0

Source: LSMS, SORS, For 2014 LFS

<sup>27</sup> Economic classification brings to the fore the type of expenditure, i.e. its economic feature and the impact of state spending on the market of goods and services, the financial market and the redistribution of income.

<sup>28</sup> Social transfers comprise money allowances stemming from insurance – pensions, unemployment and sickness leave benefits, as well as money allowances not based on contributions – social welfare benefits, children and parental allowance, maternity leave benefits, allowance for assistance to and care of another person and various money rights stemming from war veteran and disability care. In addition, local self-governments approve one-off financial assistance, as well as additional money allowances designed for the impoverished.

<sup>29</sup> <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLSMS/Resources/3358986-1181743055198/3877319-1204816266932/studijaS.pdf>

\* Only Roma integrated in the general population are included. It is not possible to calculate the comparable data for 2002 since LSMS did not contain a question on ethnicity  
Refugee and IDP poverty rate

According to UNHCR, in 2014 in the Republic of Serbia there are a total of 32,295 refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and approximately 204,000 Internally Displaced Persons from Kosovo, out of which approximately 90,000 internally displaced persons are vulnerable, with displacement related needs and without a durable solution. There are ten remaining collective centres hosting more than 765 refugees and IDPs. Programmes in support to municipalities that adopted local action plans to improve the situation of refugees and IDPs has continued. Nevertheless, the living conditions of many refugees and IDPs are still difficult. Many are unemployed and live in poverty. There are still administrative obstacles preventing IDPs to access basic rights and access to social welfare assistance. Even though existing figures do not fully cover refugees, IDPs and Roma IDPs, the available data on these vulnerable groups show that Roma IDPs remain by far the most vulnerable category and is still subject to high poverty rates. According to UNHCR in the Republic of Serbia, Roma IDPs are considered the most vulnerable group where two thirds live at-risk-of poverty<sup>30</sup>

In the forthcoming period, state assistance to the population at risk of poverty should mitigate the occurrence of new poverty and contribute to preventing further deterioration of the status of the most vulnerable population groups. The impact of social transfers on reducing the risk of poverty is insufficient and significantly lower than in the European Union. In 2012, social transfers (excluding old-age and survivors' pensions) reduced the at-risk-of-poverty rate by 21.7%, while the effect in the European Union amounted to 34.4%<sup>31</sup>.

With regard to research on poverty, it is necessary to in parallel with relative poverty researches, continue monitoring absolute poverty according to the current methodology (absolute poverty line and household consumption), as well as monitoring other country-specific financial poverty indicators, should be continued.

Directions of further changes and measures in the sphere of social and child protection include increasing of the coverage and improvement of the adequacy of cash benefits (financial social assistance and child allowance). In the financial social assistance scheme increasing of the weights for children and youth with disabilities and in the child allowance scheme improvement of the benefit adequacy for children of secondary school age and increasing of the child allowance amount for children with disabilities with consideration of the introduction of universal entitlement to child allowance for children with the most severe disabilities should be done.

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<sup>30</sup> On the at-risk-of poverty threshold of RSD 13,680 based on the SILC (EUROSTAT Survey on Income and Living Conditions)

<sup>31</sup> Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, Government of the Republic of Serbia, Second National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia (2014)



## MDG 2 – Ensure all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling

MDG National Objectives		Achievement
<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>By 2015, Increase primary schooling coverage</b>	<p>Primary school net attendance ratio has been very favourable and amounted to 98.5% of the general population. Although children from vulnerable groups still lag behind (Roma, poorest, children from rural areas, children with disabilities)</p> <p>The Law on the Foundations of the Education System ("Official Gazette of the RS" nos. 72/09, 52/11, 55/13 and 35/15 – an authentic interpretation), adopted in 2009<sup>32</sup> sets the preconditions for the non-segregated inclusion of children into education and continued schooling.</p>
<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>By 2015, Obtaining a profession, promotion of the concept of life-long learning, availability of high education</b>	<p>The Law on Adult Education ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 55/13) has been adopted in 2013<sup>33</sup> which governs the education and life-long learning of adults as an element of the comprehensive education system in the Republic of Serbia. The number of adults participating in lifelong learning programmes is small, only 3.5% of adults aged 25–64 attended education and training programmes in 2013.<sup>34</sup> The Republic of Serbia is involved in the Lifelong Learning Programme.<sup>35</sup></p> <p>The importance of lifelong learning is not recognised and a developed system for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning does not exist.</p>
<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>Improvement of education quality</b>	<p>The quality of education in the Republic of Serbia is below the international average. Nevertheless, educational achievement of 15-year-olds (PISA) of pupils from Serbia has improved in the period 2006-2012<sup>36</sup>. Progress was also made in reducing the percentage of pupils who did not reach the level of functional literacy – from 52% in 2006 to 33% in 2012, but results still indicate</p>

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, bilateral screening, April 2014

<sup>35</sup> Lifelong Learning Programme – Memorandum signed between the Government of Serbia and the European Commission in December 2011.

<sup>36</sup> In the domain of reading literacy, the average achievement in 2012 was 45 points higher than in 2006, while more limited progress was made in the domain of scientific and mathematical literacy (14 points in mathematics and nine in science).

		that our education system educates human resources that are not competitive in the global labour market. Regarding the socio-economic status of pupils education equity as on the similar level as in the OECD countries.
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In parallel with the formulation of the MDGs, important developments were unfolding in the area of education and education systems. The UN Millennium Declaration,<sup>37</sup> the EU Lisbon Declaration<sup>38</sup> both have emerged from this increased interest and awareness about the importance of education in society. The Republic of Serbia followed that trend and a large number of strategies and action plans adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia<sup>39</sup> (National Program of EU Integration, National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia ("Official Gazette of the RS", no 57/08), Poverty Reduction Strategy, National Employment Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2011-2020 ("Official Gazette of the RS", no 37/11), , National Development Education Strategy in Serbia up to 20202 ("Official Gazette of the RS", no 107/12) etc.) recognize education as one of the main mechanisms of development. The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia<sup>40</sup> guarantees the right of mandatory and free education to all – preschool (nine months before starting school) and an eight-year-long primary education. There are four cycles of education in Serbia: preschool, primary school, secondary school and higher/university education. Concluding with academic/vocational studies, free education is achievable in the Republic of Serbia. With the adoption of the Law on the Foundations of the Education System ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 72/09, 52/11, 55/13, 35/15 – n authentic interpretation and 61/15), the Republic of Serbia committed itself to the comprehensive implementation of inclusion in education. Key principles of the Republic of Serbia's education system in this regard include equal access without discrimination, adaptation to individual educational needs, and solidarity. Consistent with these principles, considerable emphasis has been placed on facilitating the participation in mainstream education of children with disabilities and/or learning difficulties as well as children from disadvantaged backgrounds through the provision of additional support. This emphasis is evident in the changes in policies on enrolment; curriculum and assessment; human resources; support structures; and funding arrangements introduced since adoption of the Law.

The education system is mostly funded by the budget of the Republic of Serbia. According to European Union methodology, in 2012 the estimated public expenditures on education in the Republic of Serbia stood at 5.27% of the GDP, which is equal to the average public allocations in the EU-27 – 5.26% of the GDP. Still, it should be noted that allocations are significantly lower than in the European Union in absolute terms. Investments per student in the Republic of Serbia are about one third of those in the European Union<sup>41</sup>. It should be noted that the allocation of expenditures per student in the Republic of Serbia does not follow the usual pattern of growth with education levels, which leaves room for further improvement in education efficiency by reallocating resources within the education sector.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Adopted by the UN General Assembly in New York, September 2000 (A/55/L.2).

<sup>38</sup> Adopted by the Council of Europe, Lisbon, March 2000. The Lisbon Declaration is the ten-year plan of EU development, with the main purpose of transforming the EU into the most dynamical and leading knowledge-based economy in the world.

<sup>39</sup> [http://www.srbija.gov.rs/vesti/dokumenti\\_sekcija.php?id=45678](http://www.srbija.gov.rs/vesti/dokumenti_sekcija.php?id=45678) (23 August 2009)

<sup>40</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia No 83/06.

<sup>41</sup> It should be noted that full comparability of these data between the Republic of Serbia and the EU owing to differences in the duration of education levels. In the Republic of Serbia, primary education comprises levels ISCED 1 and 2, and secondary – ISCED 3, while in most EU Member States primary education comprises only ISCED 1, and secondary – ISCED 2 and 3.

<sup>42</sup> Second National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia 2011-2014 <http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Second-National-Report-on-Social-Inclusion-and-Poverty-Reduction-final.pdf>

## Primary education-features and achievements

Primary school net attendance ratio shows stable trend in the mentioned reporting period for overall population as well as for children from Roma settlements.

However, disaggregated data from the 2014 MICS show significant disparities among children in overall population, children in the poorest wealth quintile, and children living in Roma settlements. According to the data the educational attainment level of the Roma population residing in Roma settlements is considerably less favourable (84.9%) than that of the overall population (98.5%). Data also shows disparities between the children from the overall population and the children in the poorest wealth quintile (94.5%) as well as disparities between children living in urban and the non-urban areas – 99.1% compared to 97.6%.

While the net intake rate of children in the first grade of primary school was 97% for the overall population, this number was significantly lower for children in Roma settlements (69%), while also varying greatly depending on the wealth index. Overall, children in Roma settlements have lower chances of starting primary school on time, and of finishing primary school and enrolling in secondary school. This trend is most prominent for Roma girls and children living in absolute poverty. Although no de jure discrimination exists, this practice shows the de facto inequality of vulnerable children, given that there is insufficient support for some groups of children throughout their schooling. The 2009 report assessed that the Roma children cohort size is about 25,000 and 69 % of them are enrolled to primary schools and around 64 % manage to complete. Although it is still far from the Republic of Serbia average, the primary school coverage of children of Roma families was significantly increased in the period between 2002 and 2014, and from 56% it reached 69%. Accurate data on children dropping out of the education system in the Republic of Serbia are not available. According to the Strategy for the Development of Education in Serbia until 2020, the rate of primary school dropout is estimated at between 10% and 15% of a generation, and is significantly more pronounced among children from vulnerable groups. With respect to secondary education, assessments on early dropout range from 8% to as high as 30%.

**Table 7. Primary school enrollment rates, general population and Roma**

	2005	2010	2014
Percentage of children of primary school entry age entering grade 1	93,6	94,9	97,0
Children from Roma settlements	-	-	69,1
Primary school net attendance ratio (percentage of children of primary school age attending primary or secondary school)	98,4	98,7	98,5
Children from Roma settlements	73,6	88,5	84,9

Source: MICS report referent years

**Table 8. Primary school completion rates, general population and Roma**

	2005	2008	2013
Percentage of children that finish primary school	95.3	94.8	96.6
Net primary school completion rate (children residing in Roma settlements)	28.0	--	64.0

Source: SORS, SIPRU: Second National Report: the Second National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia

The government has shown considerable effort and dedication in increasing access to preschool education by investing in pre-school facilities. The number of preschool facilities grew from 1,873 in 2005 to 2,436 in 2013 meaning that 563 facilities have been established or re- instituted.

Preschool education is organized into nurseries (children aged 0 to 3 years), and kindergartens (ages 3 to 5 years). Children aged 5-6 years are covered by a compulsory preparatory preschool programme (PPP). The lowest coverage is observed for children at nursery age, which remains at only 16% despite an increase in past years. The number of children who are covered by preschool education has been increased to about 10.0 % between 2005 and 2013 from 48.23% in 2005 to 58.1% in 2012/2013 school year among children between three and seven years of age<sup>43</sup>. Preschool attendance in Roma settlements is still very low at 9.6%.

**Table 9. Preschool coverage**

	2005	2008	2012/2013
Percentage of children covered by preschool education	48.2	51.2	58.1

SORS, SIPRU: Second National Report

**Table 10. Preschool participation**

	EU 27, 72013	EU 2020 targets	Republic of Serbia, 2013	Strategy for the Development of Education in Serbia until 2020
Participation of children in preschool education (from the age of four to enrolment in mandatory education)[1] (a)	91.7%	95.0%	54.8%[2]	80.0%

[1] In the Republic of Serbia, this is PPP (preparatory preschool programme).

[2] Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, the data do not include PPP.

In terms of regional distribution, more than two-thirds of children attending preschool are from the Belgrade region, while the minority are largely from Šumadija and Western Serbia regions.

<sup>43</sup> Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Education Statistics.

The greatest coverage of children is observed in the PPP programme (94% in 2013), which is understandable given its mandatory status since 2006. Nevertheless, only 63% of children of PPP age from Roma settlements actually participate in PPP.

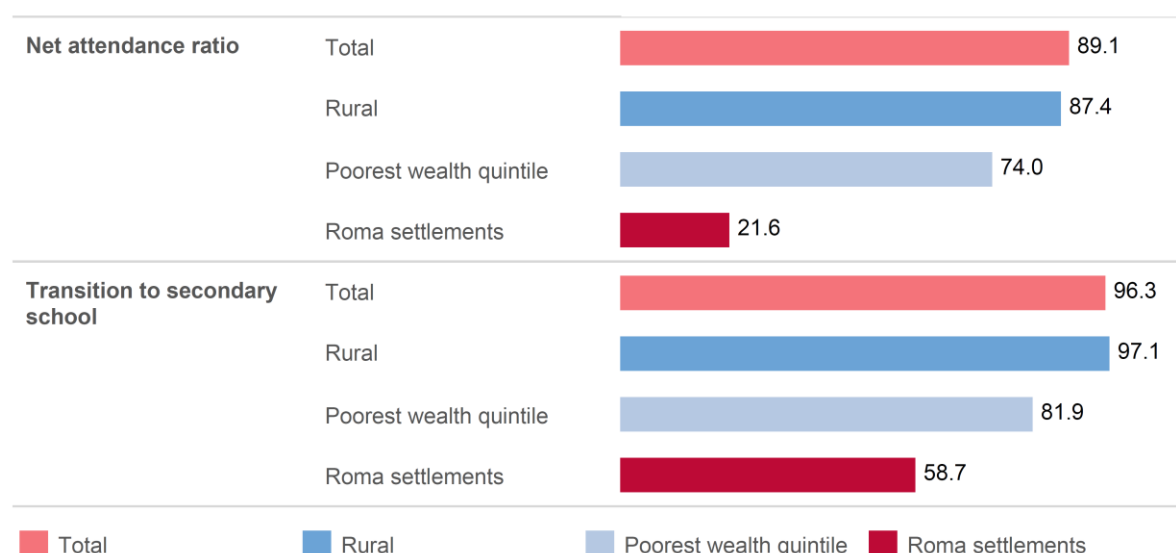
### Secondary education and life-long learning

In the period 2005-2013, the net rate of enrolment in secondary schools has grown from 76.40% to 94% while the percentage of completion dropped from 85.68% in 2005 to 83.98% in 2013. The percentage of students that enrol in secondary schools straight after finishing primary schooling dropped by 1.3% (from 97.59% to 93.3%).

The literacy rate of youth (15-24 yrs.) in the Republic of Serbia (2002 Census) stood at 99.36% whilst the 2011 census recorded a marginal decrease at 99.31%, concluding that full literacy is within reach. In order to assure this, it is necessary to pay special attention to young Roma, whose illiteracy rate is significantly lower. MICS data on youth literacy for the year of 2010 show that among youth 15-24 years in 2010, Roma women stood at 76.5%, Roma men 77.8% while in 2014 Roma women 15-24 stood at 80.1%.

Secondary education is not compulsory in the Republic of Serbia, but it has been set as one of the strategic objectives of the education system. A trend of lower attainment in secondary schools exists, especially among poor children and Roma. In 2012, the coverage of children aged 15-18 years in secondary education was 85%. The 2014 MICS results show that the net attendance ratio is the least favourable for girls in Roma settlements and boys in the poorest wealth quintile. Only one-fifth of children from Roma settlements of appropriate age attend secondary schools, a figure that further diminishes greatly with socioeconomic status. For example, only 5% of Roma children in the poorest wealth quintile attend secondary schools.

**Figure 3. Secondary School Attendance 2014**



**Source: MICS 2014**

The youth activity rate has been recording a protracted downward trend, and the youth unemployment rate has surged since the onset of the crisis – from 35.1% in 2008 to 49.4% in 2013. In addition to being unemployed and inactive, a significant number of young people did not participate in education or training (NEET) – approximately 150,000 (19.5% of the total number of young people aged 15-24) in 2013. Employers are dissatisfied with current curricula, which is considered responsible

for the development of inadequate qualifications and the lack of practical skills and work experience among youth.

According to the Second National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in the Republic of Serbia, the number of adults participating in lifelong learning programmes is small. According to the records of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, only 3.5% of adults aged 25–64 attended education and training programmes in 2013.

The Education Development Strategy for the Republic of Serbia until 2020, adopted in 2012 by the Government of Serbia, sets out key objectives of the long-term development of the school system – increasing the quality of education process and outcome, increasing the coverage of the Republic of Serbia population at all levels of education, achieving and maintaining relevance of education, and increasing the efficiency of utilization of education resources. The strategy is in line with EU's 2020 educational goals and envisages mandatory secondary education, stronger links with the labour market and economic development, the objective of sharply increasing the number of persons with higher education by 2020 and to increase investment in education from the current 3.4% to cca. 6% of GDP.

The problems of the education system persist despite modest reform attempts and they are identified through; dropout at all levels of education is still high and the majority of education indicators are among the worst in Europe, about 10% of the population has not completed primary school (never enrolled or dropped out). Approximately 90-95% of those who complete primary school enrol in secondary education but approximately 15% of these, however, do not complete secondary education. Only 13% of the population completes post-secondary education. The situation is somewhat better when only the active population is considered, but the rate is still far below the EU average (19% of the active population with university diploma compared to the EU average amounting to 30%).<sup>44</sup> The reduction of early school leaving and the increase in the share of university-educated individuals in the total population, which are EU priorities, remain a challenge for Serbia concludes the same report.

## **Quality of education**

Securing full primary, wide secondary education coverage and creating the conditions to remain in the education system as long as possible have been important objectives to meet by 2015 in the Republic of Serbia. The mentioned goals are necessary but albeit not simple precondition for the education system to fulfil its main purpose to enable children to obtain the necessary knowledge and competences they need in order to function in modern society. In order to identify the extent to which education systems fulfil this function, a large number of countries, including the Republic of Serbia, participate in international tests. Two of the most important tests that the Republic of Serbia participates in are the PISA<sup>45</sup> and TIMSS.<sup>46</sup> The strategic framework for improving education has been systematised and enhanced by the endorsement of an integrated Strategy for Development of Education in the Republic of Serbia by 2020. The Strategy's objectives include increasing the quality of the education process and its outcomes, increasing coverage at all levels of education, attaining and maintaining relevance and increasing the efficiency of education. In accordance with the Strategy, the legal framework has been improved through the adoption of a set of new laws and by-laws and amendments to existing legislation.

These international tests provide feedback on the achievements of 15-year-olds and on information on the quality of education in our primary schools in the Republic of Serbia. These tests indicate what

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<sup>44</sup> Draft: Serbia 2020, Development Concept of the Republic of Serbia until 2020

<sup>45</sup> Programme for International Student Assessment - PISA.

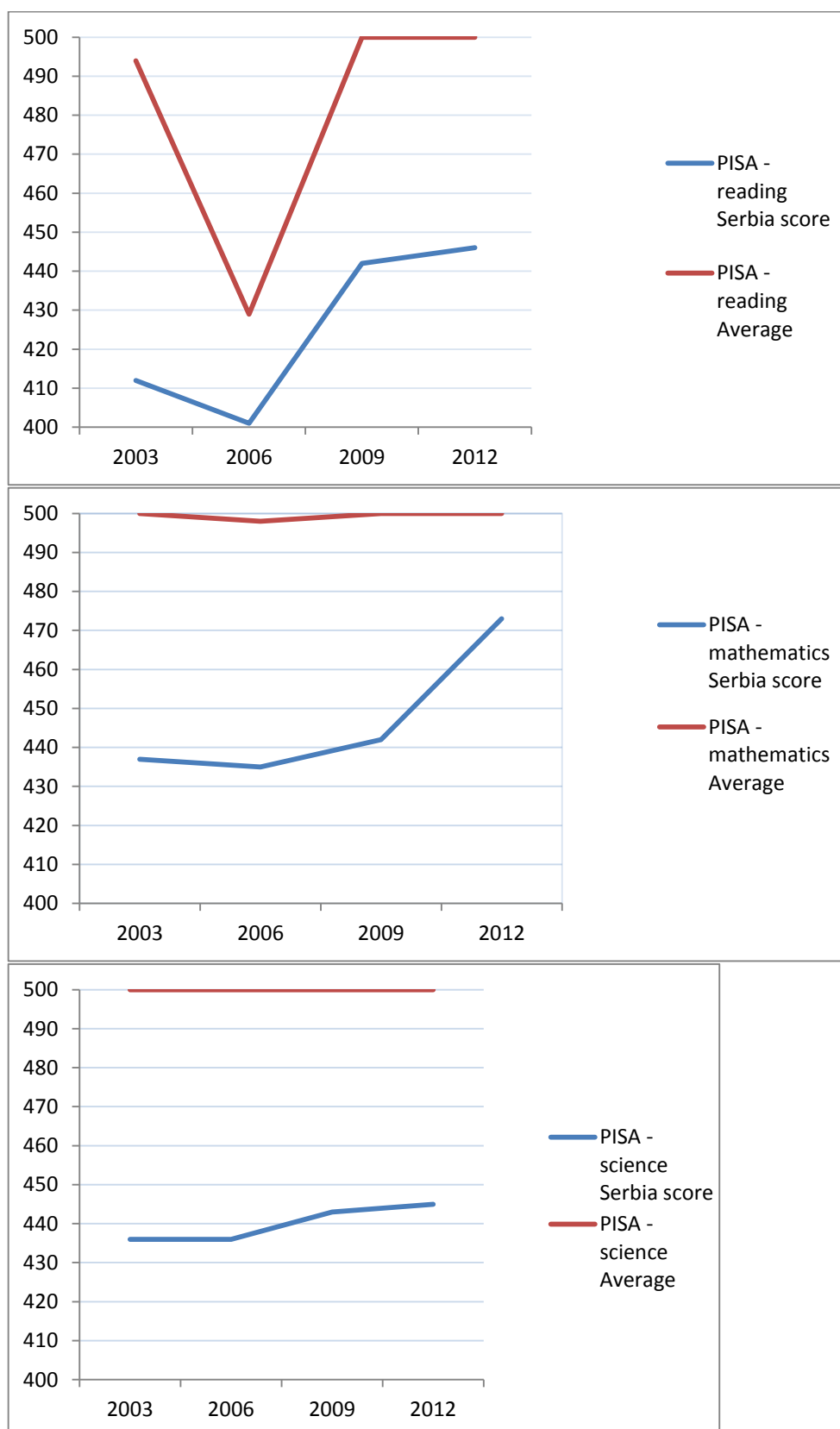
<sup>46</sup> Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study. -TIMSS

human resources we have for economic, technological and social development, as well as our competitiveness by comparing these exact indicators with other countries. Except for the TIMSS results in 2011, the results achieved are lower than the international average, especially those from the PISA test that measured the level of functional literacy – the capacity of students to apply acquired knowledge and skills in key areas and in various situations, as well as to analyse, conclude and formulate conclusions, and solve and interpret various problematic situations.<sup>47</sup> Aside from being mostly below average (our children would need another school year to reach the average results of their peers), the achievements of our students have experienced a downward trend.

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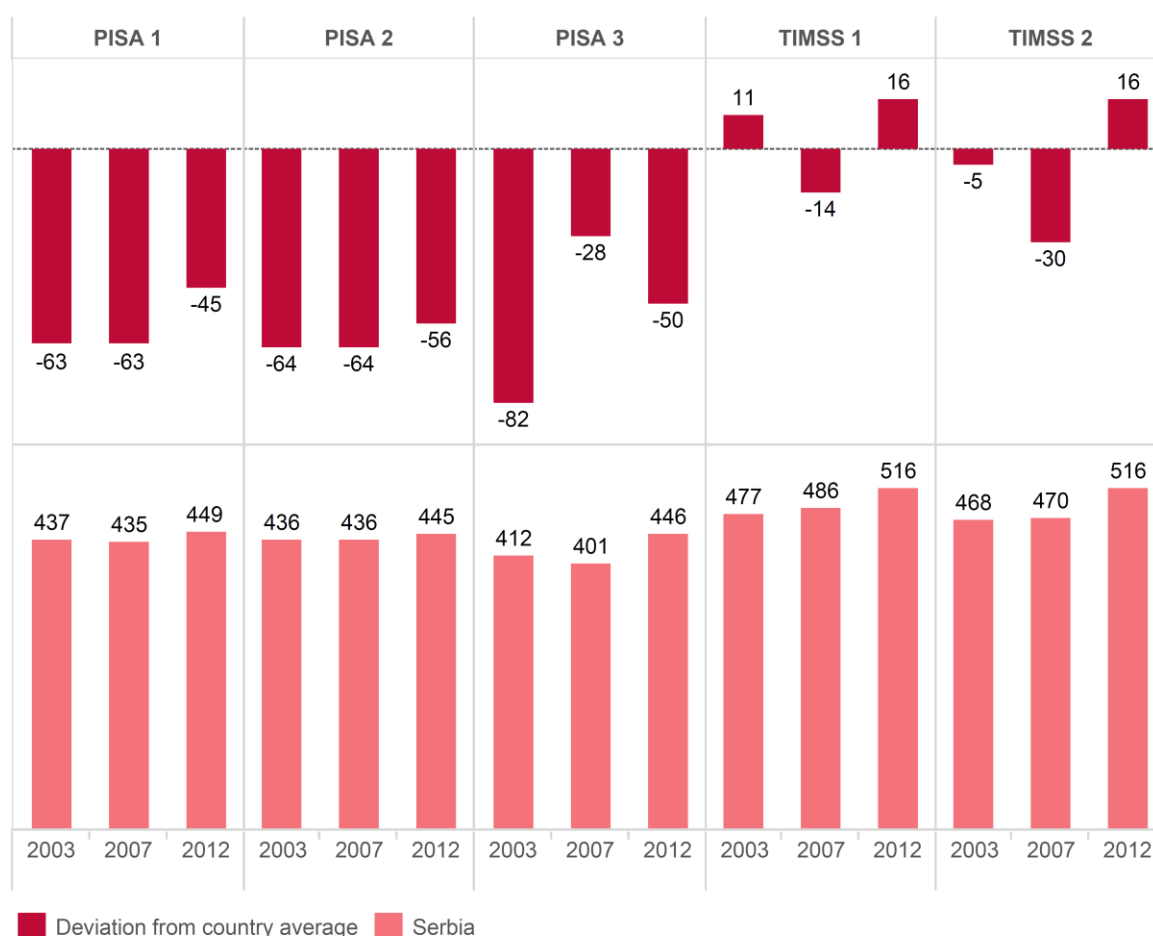
<sup>47</sup> PISA 2006 Report, Institute of Psychology, Belgrade

Figure 4. Performance on standardized PISA test scores





Score for 2003 and 2007 presents achievements for children in eighth grade, and for 2011 for children in fourth grade



The National Employment Strategy 2020 confirms the educational challenge the Republic of Serbia is facing today and finds the challenge even more difficult to address considering the delays in education reform, compared to the sectorial reforms already undertaken in the country and the timeframe for its full implementation. The document highlights the risk of lack of action in developing a strategy for long-term improvement of human capital to accompany the new opportunities for productive employment and concludes that the Republic of Serbia could face the risk of experiencing increasing brain drain of young and experienced educated professionals. Furthering the EU accession process, the Republic of Serbia will likely experience a strong demand for skills which at present are inadequately represented in the labour market. As reported in the National Employment Strategy, closing this skills gap will be challenged by two factors: (1) demographics—by 2025 Serbia's population is expected to fall by nearly a half a million people; and surveys show that many young people are looking at emigration to enhance their opportunities; (2) while improving, student learning outcomes are still low compared with other EU countries (indicated by the scores on international tests, such as the Program for International Student Assessment) and the school curricula do not sufficiently develop key competencies required for competition in the global marketplace. To this very valid point it could be added that the inadequate internship system adds to the inability of students to gain practical and technical skills and thereby moderately mitigate the education gap.

The mismatch between labour supply and demand is a characteristic of labour markets, not only of the Republic of Serbia, but of the majority of EU countries. The lack of harmonization between the knowledge and skills the manpower have and those required by employers' is a common problem in

most EU countries as well as in the Republic of Serbia. It is unrealistic to expect the education system to reform in the short term and in line with the changed structure of labour, qualifications and skills demand. Another problem adding to the overall challenge is the lack of a national qualifications framework, aligned to the European one, with clear qualifications paths, but also transparent processes for their determination, acquisition and recognition, complemented by quality assurance mechanisms is concluded in the National Employment Strategy. Critical issues to be pursued by the education policy are the lack of alignment of employment, education, science and technology development strategies; the lack of a legal framework governing link between formal and informal education and training, as well as effective inter-sectoral cooperation and collaboration between the line ministries responsible for education and employment, but also other relevant institutions and social partners – such as employer's and worker's organizations.

Key challenges are to be by the education policy improvement of the overall education level of the population through development of the system of life-long learning, implementation of the measure to reduce inequality in education, primarily exclusion of vulnerable groups and regional disparities, development of the measure to increase the accessibility of pre-school education and measure to prevent drop-out of education. One of the primary challenges at all levels of education is to improve the quality of educational processes and outcomes. Improvement of the quality of educational processes and outcomes at all levels of education include the following preconditions: focusing the education system on developing the key competencies of pupils, increasing the quality of curricula contributing to the development and quality of learning outcomes and raising the quality of the work of teaching staff so that they are capable of providing the support needed for pupils to develop key competencies and attain better results.

### MDG 3 – Gender equality and empowerment of women

MDG National Objectives		Achievement
<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>Halve economic inequality between men and women (in poverty, employment, unemployment, participation in trade unions, advancement at work, compensation)</b>	The employment gap between men and women has decreased considerable although only moderately due to raise in women employment. Participation in trade unions has been significantly improved (25% in 2014 as average median in three key bodies) and nears the percentage prescribed by the Gender Law (2009) amounting to 30%.
<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>By 2015, increase the participation of women at all levels of political decision making to at least 30%</b>	The level of participation of women at all level of political participation has been increased to the anticipated objectives mainly in women representation in national and municipal assemblies. Women in Ambassadorial positions in the foreign service and as head of municipalities remain underrepresented.
<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>By 2011, finalize the setting of system assumptions for achieving gender equality</b>	The legal, policy and institutional framework have been set up in the reporting period.
<b>Objective 4</b>	<b>By 2015, develop a system of protection for female victims of violence and a system of preventing violence against women</b>	Although progress can be reported in reporting and prosecutions resulting in convictions have increased, as well as protection mechanisms have improved, gender based violence seem to be on the rise.

Based on the standpoints of citizens presented in the latest research of the Commissioner for Gender Equality in the second half of 2013 and published in 2014, women in the Republic of Serbia are rated at the first place when it comes to the exposure to discrimination. In previous researches of this kind, conducted in the second half of 2012, women were rated the fifths place when it comes to risk to discrimination. In May 2015, the Special Report of the Commissioner for Gender Equality on Discrimination of Women was issued.

Normative, institutional and strategic initiatives have been introduced but the most important one is certainly the passing of the Gender Equality Law in the Republic of Serbia in 2009. The National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality 2009-2015 ("Official Gazette of the RS", no.15/09) and the National Plan of Action for the Implementation of the National Strategy for Improving and Promoting Gender Equality 2010-2015 ("Official Gazette of the RS", no.67/10) represent the main strategic documents of the Republic of Serbia in the field of gender equality. Stakeholders in the area of gender equality are stressing the need to take a stock of what has been achieved under this strategic framework and to initiate a participatory dialogue and consultations on the strategic priorities for the new policy cycle.

The Government of Serbia has been starting the process of drafting new National Strategy for Gender Equality, 2016 – 2020, and in May 2015 the Working Group for the Development of New Law on Gender equality was formed. The National Strategy defines state policy with the aim to eliminate discrimination against women, improve their social position and integrate gender equality in all government institutions as one of the components in the process of democratization of the society in Serbia. This is in accordance with the policy of equal opportunities proclaimed in the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (article 15).

Regarding the institutional framework in this field, it encompasses the following: the National Assembly Committee for Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs in accordance with Article 16 of the Law on the Ministries ("Official Gazette of the RS", nos. 44/14, 14/15 and 54/15) supported the work of Coordination Body for Gender Equality, Provincial Secretariat for Economy, Employment and Gender Equality, the Ombudsman, Deputy-Ombudsman, Commissioner for Gender Equality.

In the meantime, the building of institutional mechanisms for gender equality was continued at the local level. Up until now, within the local self-governments in the Republic of Serbia, 112 gender equality mechanisms were formed<sup>48</sup> (compared to 69 in 2009). These local mechanisms are substantially different from one municipality to another, in line with the municipality's capacities, formal institutional form and efficiency in action. They usually have poor capacities, since they do not contain a permanently employed staff, generally their activities remain unfunded and perform a limited formal role.

### **Gender features of economic inequality**

Economic participation is the key social indicator that reflects on the gender system in place in a specific country and serves as indicator what needs to be done to redefine and transform existing gender regimes. Although some progress was achieved in the period between the two reporting periods, economic gender inequalities are still rather pronounced. They are manifested in the unequal position of men and women in the labour market, unequal awards for performance at work, and less opportunities for women to advance to positions of economic power and decision making.

This is illustrated by comparing data respective employment rates<sup>49</sup> between women and men of working age (15-64 yrs.) did decrease in the period between 2005 and 2015, but it is still highly pronounced (see Figure 5). Namely, in 2005, the employment rate for men stood at 63.3% and 44.6% for women (Mehran calculations), while in 2014 the employment rate for men stood at 56.5% and 42.8% for women (RSO, LFS, 2014). Decrease of difference between the unemployment rates between men and women (from 190 to 14 percentage points)<sup>50</sup> can be seen as an important step forward, but it is necessary to stress that the employment gap between employed men and employed women is closing primarily due to a more rapid decline of the rate of male employment. Gender inequalities in labour market position seen from the perspective of unemployment have experienced a declining trend. In 2005, the unemployment rate of women stood at 24.6%, and that of men at 15.9% (Mehran calculations), while in 2014, the unemployment rate of women dropped to 20.4%, and that of men increased to 19.2% (NSO, LFS, 2014). With this, the difference in unemployment rates between men and women dropped from around 90% to merely 1% points, showing that men have been disproportionately affected by job losses.

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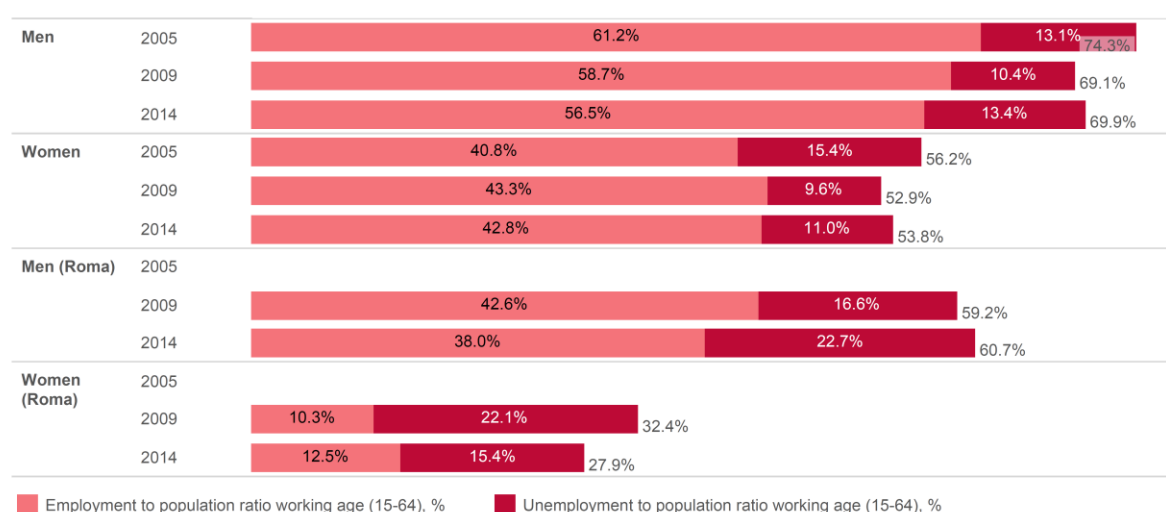
<sup>48</sup> Standing Conference of Cities and Municipalities <http://rr.skgo.org/>

<sup>49</sup> Employment rates represent the proportion of employed persons in relation to the total number of persons of working age (1564 yrs). Specific employment rates of men and women represent the proportion of employed women, i.e. men in relation to total number of women, i.e. men of working age.

<sup>50</sup> Due to methodological changes that took place in the LFS since 2008, which include a higher share of self-employed and helping household members, it is quite possible that part of the above stated changes was caused by an amended methodology. It can be assumed that the higher share of helping household members had partially led to the increase of employment rate of women, because women dominate in this particular category. However, bearing in mind the size of this category, the effect of methodological changes is not crucial for understanding the above described trend.

Observing data on women among entrepreneurs and the self-employed, it can be concluded that a positive trend between 2005 and 2009, with percentages rising from 23.8% to 27%, has been disrupted in 2014 when the percentage of women entrepreneurs and the self-employed dropped to 24.8 %. Some improvement has nevertheless been made. A positive trend has been recorded in the percentage of women among directors of business companies. A considerable raise has been recorded, from 20.8% in 2006 to an impressive 33.0% in 2014. Research indicates that women from marginalized social groups have a particularly unfavourable position in the labour market. Unfortunately, there are no precise and updated records which would allow us to monitor the economic inequalities between women and men from these groups. Data from the Labour Force Survey<sup>51</sup> on gender inequalities among the Roma indicate a highly unfavourable position of Roma women. In 2009, the employment rate of men who have declared themselves as Roma in the LFS stood at 42.6%, while the employment rate of Roma women was only 10.3%. At the same time, the unemployment rate of Roma stands at 28.0% and 68.2%<sup>52</sup> for Roma women. In 2014 these figures are somewhat more positive for Roma women with the employment rate standing at 12.5%. See figure 5 for more data.

**Figure 5. Comparable activity, employment and unemployment by gender and Roma status**



Unfortunately, similar data for women with disabilities is not available, even though it could have been provided by simple monitoring. The 2009 MDG report indicates that the labour market position of these groups is extremely unfavourable, confirming that it is very important to establish a continuous monitoring of disabled persons' position in the labour market. Without systematic data gathering it is not possible to develop adequate and effective measures for improving their socio-economic position.

The Republic of Serbia is a signatory to a number of important and binding international documents, which guarantee the equality of men and women and prohibit gender – based discrimination including the nine core international human rights treaties and in particular the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Council of Europe's Social Charter, the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as instruments such as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. According to the latest CEDAW Committee Concluding Observations to the Republic of Serbia (July 2013), there is a need to allocate resources, strengthen coordination, monitoring and evaluation of policies and action plans aimed at elimination of discrimination against women, as well as to strengthen the national machinery for gender equality

<sup>51</sup> It is necessary to view this data with caution, given that it is not mandatory to answer the question on ethnicity in the survey, so it cannot be expected that the survey noted all the members of Roma population in the sample, nor that the Labour Force Survey included the Roma in a completely representative manner.

<sup>52</sup> Source: NSO, Labour Force Survey, April 2009.

and enhance the dialogue and consultations between the national machinery at all levels and relevant civil society organizations.<sup>53</sup> The main national strategic policy documents in the gender equality field expire at the end of 2015<sup>54</sup> and there is a need to start new policy cycle development based on evaluation of progress, gaps and lessons learnt from the implementation of the current policies as well as broad consultations with civil society. As already pointed out in October, 2014, a new mechanism – Coordinating Body on Gender Equality – was established, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, including as members the Minister without Portfolio responsible for European Integration, Minister of Labour, Employment, Social and Veterans Affairs and the General Secretariat of the Government. However, the means functioning and gender mainstreaming policy competencies of the new mechanism remain to be defined.

### **Women participation in society and government**

After the national parliamentary elections in 2008, the portion of women among the MPs of the National Assembly was doubled (increased from 11% to 22%) in comparison to the previous Report on MDG Realization to finally reaching the goal of having 30% of women among MPs has been accomplished in 2014 election, where the total female MPs amount to 85 out of 250 totalling to 33%. The current parliament fulfils, for the first time since the 2009 Law on gender equality was adopted, the requirement of having a 30% female representation in the legislative branch of government. Nevertheless, the participation of women in the executive branch is significantly lower amounting to a total of four female members of government, amounting to a total of 10.5%.

The level of participation of women in trade unions was recognized as an important element of improving gender equality in the sphere of economic participation and economic relations. There is not a unique monitoring system of membership in trade unions currently established the Republic of Serbia, and therefore precise and comprehensive data does not exist.<sup>55</sup> In the two biggest trade unions (United Branch Trade Unions “Nezavisnost” and Alliance of Independent Trade Unions of Serbia) there are around 46% female members, but this percentage is much lower when it comes to chair positions in trade unions.<sup>56</sup> Both trade unions have established women’s sections, and in “Nezavisnost” there is an SOS hotline for female victims of discrimination and violence at work. In 2014 the two main trade unions reported 21% female representatives in general assembly, 20% in general committee, 11% in the executive committee and 30% in the supervision committee. Although there is considerable progress from 2002 reported 5.6% average female representation, gender participation is only slightly lagging behind the legally prescribed quota.

Figure 6 indicates that considerable work needs to be done in the sphere of female political and public participation. The greatest advancement can be observed in women participation in municipal assemblies touching on the 30% legal quota, however, the percentages of women ambassadors and mayors (municipal presidents) is exceedingly low.

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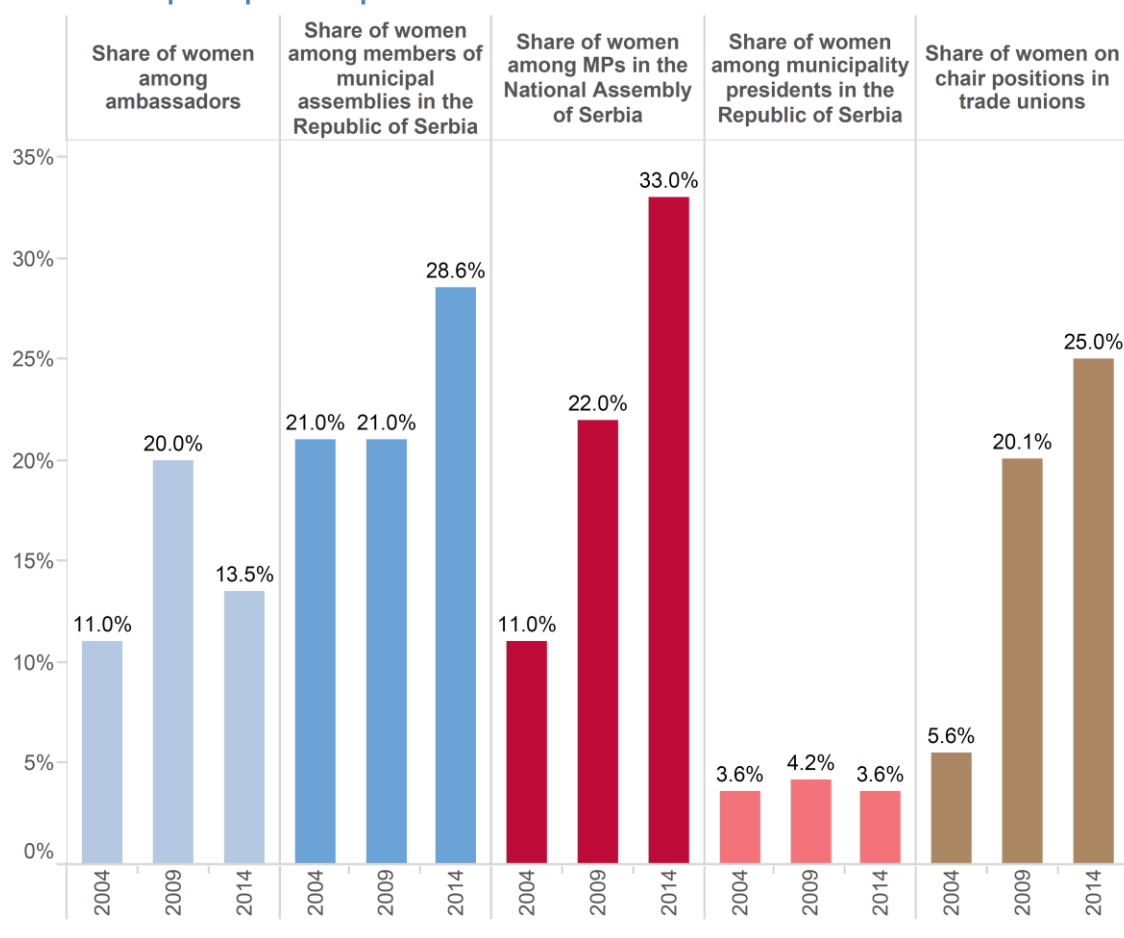
<sup>53</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Concluding Observations on the Combined Second and Third Periodic Reports of Serbia (as cited in UNCT Serbia Common Country Assessment for 2014).

<sup>54</sup> National Strategy for Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women (2011-2015), The National Strategy for the Improvement of the Status of Women and Promotion of Gender Equality (2009-2015)

<sup>55</sup> The data stated in the 2005 MDG Report referred only to the trade union Nezavisnost. Data on the Alliance of Independent Trade Unions of Serbia was included in 2009 MDG report, thus covering the two biggest union organizations.

<sup>56</sup> Among the members of the Board of Directors of the trade union Nezavisnost, there are only 9% women, while among the members of the Steering Committee there are 19%. Among the members of the Council of Alliance of Independent Trade Unions of Serbia (the highest ranking body between the two congresses) there are 20% women.

**Figure 6. Female participation in public office**



### Gender based violence

The Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia ("Official Gazette of the RS", nos. 85/05 – correction, 72/09, 111/09, 104/13 and 108/14) sanctions the family violence and it treats it as a criminal act for the first time (Art. 194), while the Family Law (Official Gazette, 18/05) treats violence against women as a social, not as an individual problem, and foresees various protective measures. Domestic violence against women also is prevalent in the country, leaving children directly and indirectly exposed to the consequences of violence in their homes.

The Republic of Serbia has also ratified Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CAHVIO Convention) in October 2013. The next step would be to implement CAHVIO in its legislation and improve the position of women victims of violence as well as prosecution of perpetrators.

**Table 11. Child victims of violence**

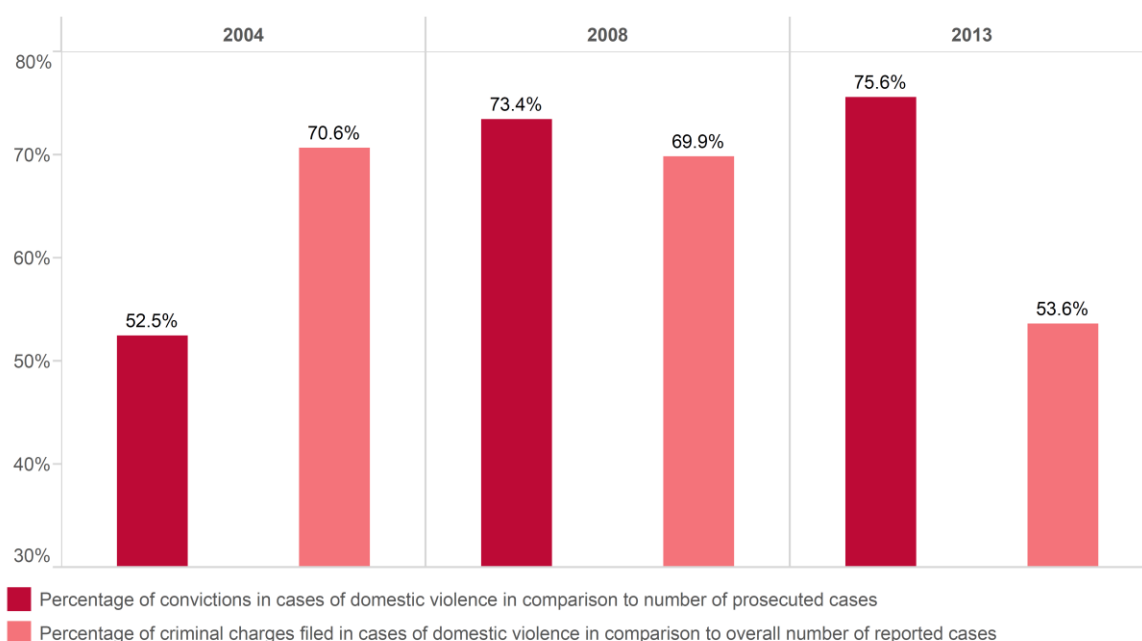
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of families where children were victims of violence, as recorded by the social protection system	841	1207	3396	3787	3,637*

\* Out of this total number, 32 were foster families and two were adoptive families.

According to data collected by the Centres for Social Work, the most prevalent types of violence reported against children are neglect (1,600), physical (1,200), psychological (1,000), and sexual (100). No significant gender differences were found, except for sexual violence, where 80% of victims were girls. Data indicate that reported cases of violence against children have increased, now comprising almost half of all cases of family violence. This rise may be the consequence of a more sensitized system toward violence in families and improved data reliability, but it nevertheless represents a cause for concern. At the same time, the low numbers of reported cases of sexual violence and abuse against children, including incest, is striking and affirms that this type of violence is especially hidden and socially denied.

Records on domestic violence are not precise enough, given that it is not possible to sort out data on domestic violence against women, men and children. Available data indicates a significant drop in percentage of criminal charges filed in cases of domestic violence in comparison to overall number of reported cases (2004 70.6% and 2009 69.9%) to 53.6% in 2013. At the same time, a significant improvement is recorded in the number of convictions, (52.5% in 2004), and 73.4% of prosecuted cases in 2008 to the latest figure of 75.6 % of prosecuted cases in the 2013 (NSO, 2013)

**Figure 7. Domestic violence, rates of criminal charges filed and criminal convictions**



When it comes to the provision of institutional support for victims of gender-based violence, there has been a positive trend in establishment of safe houses for women victims of violence in the reporting periods. According to data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for 2009, in the Republic of Serbia there are ten safe houses (which is four more than in 2006) funded by local government funds. Within these houses, there are advisory centers for victims of violence. In addition to this, in Belgrade and Novi Sad there are also advisory centers for victims of violence that operate outside of safe houses. Following the adoption of the Regulation on the network of social protection ("Official Gazette of the RS" nos. 16/12 and 12/13), the Government has set up the Center for Human Trafficking Victims Protection in Belgrade, on April 13, 2012. The Centre for Human Trafficking Victims Protection was established as an institution of social protection and it conducts assessment of the



situation, needs, strengths and risks of trafficking victims, does the job of identification and provides an adequate assistance and support to the victims of trafficking for the purpose of their rehabilitation and reintegration. Traditionally, most of the victims of sexual exploitation are women (in 2014 out of 30 identified victims 27 were women)<sup>57</sup>. The first quarter in 2015 has recorded a rise in male labour exploitation victims. Currently there are no state funded shelters for women or men victims of trafficking in human beings (THB).

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.centarzztlj.rs/eng/index.php/latest-news/item/20-53-trafficking-victims-at-the-end-of-the-second-quarter>

## MDG 4 – Reduce child mortality

MDG National Objectives		Achievement
<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>Between 2000 and 2015, reduce mortality of children under the age of five</b>	Child mortality has been considerably reduced, almost halved during the MDG reporting period.
<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>Between 2000 and 2015, improve the coverage of women by antenatal and postnatal health care by at least one-third</b>	Coverage of women has been improved by 24% which exceeded the target stated under this objective.
<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>Between 2000 and 2015, halve the mortality rate of children under of 19 from external causes of death</b>	The mortality rate of children under 19 from external causes of death has been halved as planned marking the successful achievement of Objective 3.
<b>Objective 4</b>	<b>Between 2000 and 2015, increase the percentage of exclusively breastfed infants from birth until six months of age</b>	The percentage of exclusively breastfed infants from birth to six month marks an overall increase of 12% since 2000 but indicates an unfavourable reversal of trend since 2010.
<b>Objective 5</b>	<b>Between 2000 and 2015, improve the coverage of children by mandatory immunizations to 99.0%</b>	Although the immunization rates have traditionally been very high, the 99.0% immunization rate has not been achieved.

### Reduce mortality of children under the age of 5

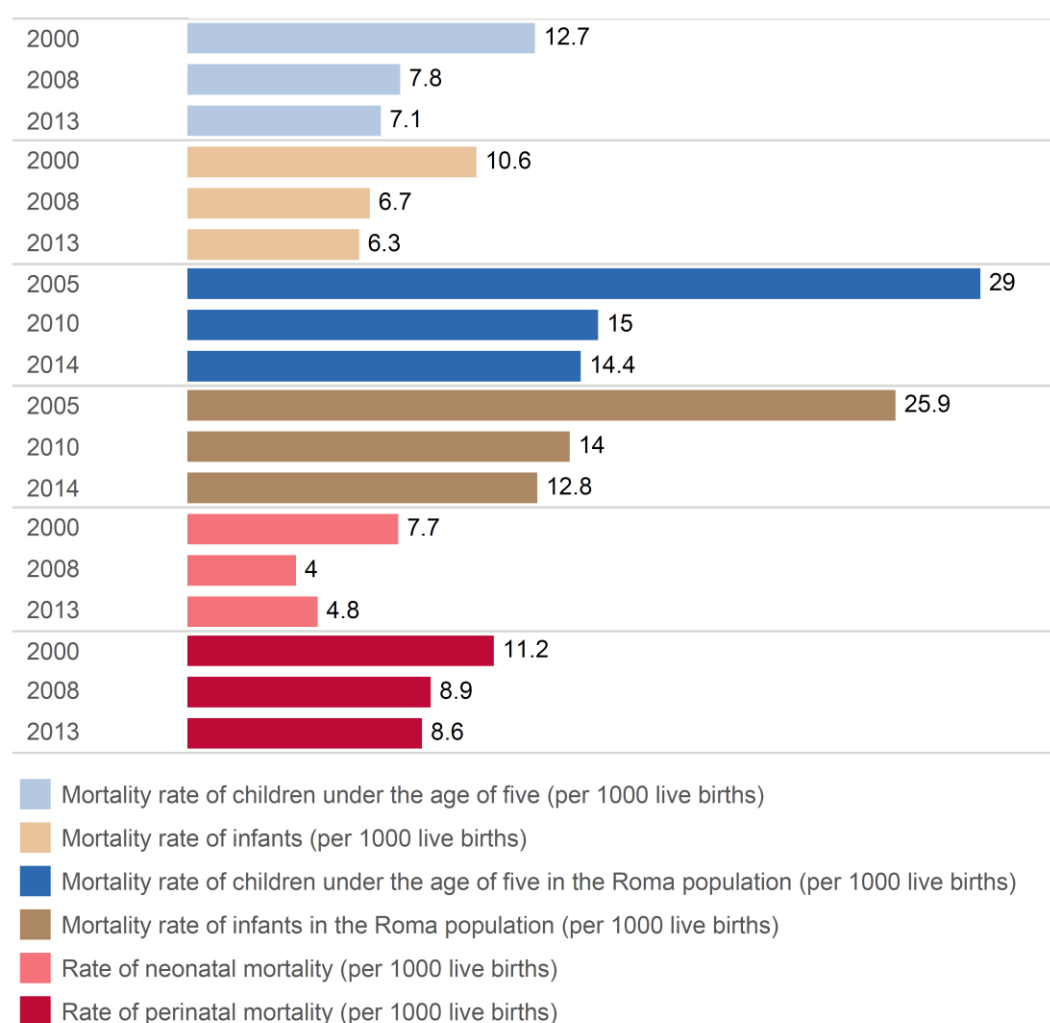
In 2013, mortality of children under the age of five in the Republic of Serbia stood at 7.1 deaths per 1000 live births, which is at the level of this indicator's value in countries that became EU members after 2004. In these countries however, the value of this indicator is above the EU average which, in 2007, was 5.47 deaths per 1000 live births (WHO, HFA). The most common causes of death of children of this age are situations that occurred in the perinatal period and congenital defects, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities, but an important share of deaths are also caused by injuries and poisoning, especially in the period between one and four years old (Figure 8)

The majority of mortalities of children under the age of five relate to infant mortality. In 2013, the infant mortality rate stood at 6.3 deaths per 1000 live births. If we compare the infant mortality in the Republic of Serbia with the EU member countries, we can note that the value of this indicator is at the same level as in the countries that became EU members after 2004, even slightly lower, but it is still substantially higher than the average value of this indicator in the EU (WHO, HFA). Most infants die in the neonatal period, in the first 6 days, from causes that occurred during the perinatal period and from congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities, as well as from causes classified as symptoms, signs and abnormal clinical and laboratory findings (Public Health Institute of Serbia).

Data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) implemented by UNICEF show a substantially higher mortality rate of children and infants under the age of five in the population of Roma settlements. Based on the data from previous MICS rounds, it was of five and the mortality rate of infants in Roma settlements stood at 29 and 25.9 deaths per 1000 live births, respectively, which is significantly higher than the average values at the level of the Republic of Serbia. Survey for

subsequent years namely 2010 and 2014 demonstrated a significant improvement among this population with a decrease in both figures to 14.4 % and 12.8 % respectively. This 50% decrease of both mortality values for Roma children in Roma settlement is attributed to improvement in health insurance coverage enabling easier access to health services and improved coverage with pre-natal services during the same period as outreach services for Roma were introduced through Roma health mediators. The slight increase in the immunization rate could have additionally contributed to these positive results.

**Figure 8. Child mortality rates**



### Health protection of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and maternity

In order to meet the objective and reduce the mortality rate of children under the age of five, it is necessary to improve antenatal and postnatal health care. Health care of women during pregnancy is important, both for their own health and for the health of children. It is an important opportunity to inform and educate women about pregnancy, childcare and reproductive health.

Data covering only public health care providers states that in 2013, 78.71% of pregnant women had visited a gynaecologist in the first trimester of pregnancy which is a 24.3% percent increase from the baseline data obtained in 2000. MICS 2014 data indicates that 94.3% of women 15-49 had the first antenatal care visit in the first semester which may show a more accurate picture of prenatal health coverage. The patronage visits to mothers of new born babies also increased (see table 13) among the general population and those residing in Roma settlements as well.

**Table 12. Health protection of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and maternity**

Coverage of women by modern health protection (percentage of women who visited medical doctors in the first trimester of pregnancy)	2000	54.3	2008	77.55	2013	78.71
Average number of visits after birth by a patronage nurse	2000	2.9	2008	5.92	2014	4.3*
% of women 15-49 who were visited by patronage nurse before delivery was ()	2010	29.1	2014	28.7		
<i>Roma subpopulation</i>		19.3		21.7		
% of women 15-49 who were visited by patronage nurse In the first week after delivery	2010	87.6	2014	94.1		

In order to improve the Roma population's access to health care, especially Roma women and children, health mediators were introduced, who collaborate with clinicians from health-care centres as a part of medical filed visit service. Up till now, this practice has proven very useful and cost effective and played a pivotal role in improving, not only access to maternal health services, but also general education of Roma women and children on reproductive health. Currently there are 75 health mediators in 59 cities in Serbia.

#### **Mortality of children under the age of 19 from external causes of death**

Mortality of children under the age of 19 from external causes of death, stood at 7.5 per 100,000 children of this age in 2013, marking a decrease of over 50%. When analysing the structure of the deaths, mortality rates are higher among boys than among girls. The most frequent causes of death are accidents, mostly traffic accidents indicating the persisting need to improve traffic safety, to reduce violence among youth and against youth, and to preserve mental health; they were therefore recognized as important strategic goals for action in the previous and current Draft National Strategy for Youth (2015-20-19) and in the Strategy for Development and Health of Youth in the Republic of Serbia ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 104/06), and a new Law on Traffic Safety on Roads ("Official Gazette of the RS", nos. 41/09, 53/10, 101/11, 32/12 –Constitutional Court and 55/14) was adopted in 2009.

**Table 13. Mortality of children under the age of 19 from external causes of death**

	2000	2008	2013
Specific mortality rate of children under the age of 19 from external causes of death (per 100,000 children of same age)	15.9	10	7.5

Source: NIPH Batut, SORS

#### **Breastfeeding of children**

UNICEF and WHO recommend that up to the age of six months, children should be exclusively breastfed. According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, the percentage of exclusively breastfed

children in 2014 was 12.8% (MICS 2014) marking a 2.3% drop since 2005. A progressive decrease could be observed between 2005 and 2014 also among the Roma whose indicator had a slightly more favourable value, 18.0% in 2005 down to 13% in 2014 reaching the same level of the general population.

**Table 14. Breastfeeding of children**

	2005	2010	2014
Percentage of exclusively breastfed infants from birth until six months of age	15,1	13,7	12,8
Percentage of exclusively breastfed infants from birth until six months of age in Roma population	18	9,1	13
	2005	2010	2014
Percentage of exclusively breastfed infants from birth until six months of age	15,1	13,7	12,8
Percentage of exclusively breastfed infants from birth until six months of age in Roma population	18	9,1	13

Source: UNICEF, MICS

According to previous MDG reports, in comparison to 2000, when the percentage of exclusively breastfed children was close to zero by the age of four months (UNICEF, 2000), these figures indicate an improvement. Such an unfavourable result in 2000 was probably a consequence of the outdated practice which advised mothers to introduce water, tea, fruit juice and other food as early as possible. In spite of the initial increase from 2000 to 2005, the current percentage of exclusively breastfed children is still insufficient.

This improvement is related to substantial efforts invested in promoting breastfeeding in the Republic of Serbia through a program of promotion, support and protection of breastfeeding and the creation of baby-and-mother-friendly health-care institutions. It was shown that children who were breastfed early (within one hour after being born) have more chances to be breastfed than those who were not, so early breastfeeding and allowing mothers and babies to stay in the same room in hospitals is very important, both for the early development of children and for the support of breastfeeding. In view of developing an early breastfeeding conducive environment, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to develop standards of quality for maternity hospitals that are introducing baby friendly standards through accreditation process of hospitals.

### **Immunization of children**

The immunization program has a long tradition in Serbia and generally high immunization standards and practices. In 2013, the percentage of children up to the age of 24 months immunized against measles stood at 92.6%, indicating a fairly high coverage. Coverage is certainly much higher than in the year 2000, when it was 87%. As early as 2001, it increased to 95% and ever since it has been at a level between 95% and 97%. However, data prior to 2013 show immunization rates of children up to the age of 18 months. Therefore, the slight decrease in 2013 may not be an indication of lower

immunization rates but distortions due to changes in the methodology for data gathering and reporting. MICS data confirms that, coverage of children from the general population with individual vaccines is generally high, but falls below 90% for the third dose. A second challenge exists in the timeliness of vaccinations which, combined with incomplete coverage, jeopardizes individual and collective immunity.

With the introduction of a system of chosen paediatricians and abolition of posts of primary immunization focal points at primary health centres, the immunization coverage dropped within a very short period. Furthermore, untimely and incomplete procurement of vaccines has created gaps in coverage of the immunization system, leaving a substantial number of children without complete immunization. Anti-vaccination lobby has influenced perceptions of a considerable percentage of parents who were choosing not to immunize their children. After a lot of public debate, the Ministry of Health, in 2015, introduced a specific legislation making vaccination compulsory for all children and introducing sanctions for parents who don't comply

In spite of such high coverage, research shows that there are inequalities in vaccination coverage, according to regional level and socioeconomic status. Research implemented by UNICEF in 2014 indicates that coverage with Polio, DPT and Hib vaccines is lower among children living in the richest households and those living in Belgrade region where coverage with the third dose of some vaccines falls below 70 percent. It was emphasized that Roma children living in Roma settlements are especially endangered, given that vaccination coverage is the lowest in this population. Current data confirms research findings that show a considerable gap between immunization rates of Roma and the general population. Among many issues affecting the immunization rates of this specific disadvantaged group, the most common are lack of health insurance card, lack of access to health assistance, lack of information among parents, as well as an attitude that vaccination is not that important (Dinkić, Ognjenović, McClelland, 2009).

**Table 15. Immunization of children**

Percentage of children vaccinated against measles in first 24 months of life	2000	86.6	2008	96	2013	92.6
Percentage of Roma children vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis in the first year of life	2005	70			2014	64.5
Percentage of Roma children vaccinated against measles in first 24 months of life	2005	63			2014	68.8

Source: NIPH, MICS

## MDG 5 – Improve maternal health

MDG National Objectives		Achievement
<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>By 2015, reduce maternal mortality by one-fifth</b>	Maternal mortality monitoring improved by introducing more accurate methodological model for data gathering. Improvement should be continued.
<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>By 2015, preserve and improve the reproductive health of women by maintaining the fertility rate at the present level, reducing the rate of abortion by 50%, and doubling the percentage of women who use modern contraceptive methods</b>	Good progress can be reported under objective 3 in maintaining the fertility rate at the national average, reducing the number of abortions and promote the use of modern contraceptives.
<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>Between 2000 and 2015, reduce the mortality of women of fertile age by one-third</b>	This objective has been achieved by reducing the mortality of women of fertile age by over 30%

### Maternal mortality

Maternal mortality, i.e. mortality of women caused by diseases and conditions that occurred during pregnancy, childbirth and six weeks after childbirth, has been monitored as per five-year averages. Since 2007, the methodology includes triangulation of data sources: death certificate, birth registration and hospital discharge list and is aligned with European practices. When comparing data in the reporting period, since 2000, the reported data appears as an increase of maternal mortality but in reality it represents a more accurate and realistic figure. Comparing Serbia with other countries in Europe, the current standing is higher than for example Austria 8.7% in 2010, and Czech Republic 2.6% in 2010 but lower than Romania 24.0% and Latvia 20.2% in the same year (Eurostat 2010).

The proportion of childbirths with medical attendance shows high values in the entire period since the year 2000, reaching 98.4% in 2014. This was a result of the practice of having almost all childbirths in health-care institutions. In spite of such a high coverage at the level of the Republic of Serbia, it has been noted that the coverage is lower in some population groups. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (UNICEF, 2005) has shown that in 2005, the percentage of childbirths with medical attendance was somewhat lower among Roma (95.4%), and even lower among the Roma living in Roma settlements (92.9%), in comparison to the average of the Republic of Serbia (which, according to this Survey, stood at 99.0%). In 2014, improvement can be reported among the Roma living in settlements where the percentage of childbirths with medical attendance stood at 98.6% reaching the national levels.

**Table 16. Child delivery**

	2000	2007	2014
Delivery assisted by any skilled attendants (%)	98.7	99.8	98.4

Source: SQRS (2000), SQRS and MICS (2007), MICS (2014)

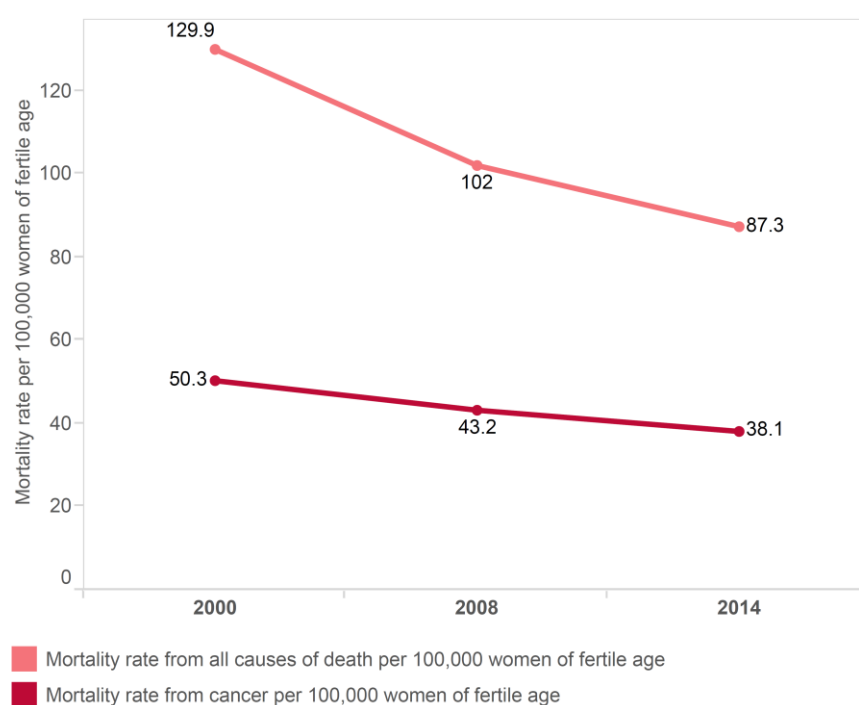
### Reproductive health of women

Within the improvement of women's health in the reproductive age, an important aspect relates to fertility and family planning. In our country, the number of children per woman decreased from 1.5 to 1.4 in 2008, and remained at the same level in 2013. In the area of family planning, it is noted that abortion is still used as a method of birth control, instead of modern contraceptive methods. Research shows that in 2000, the percentage of married women or women in stable relationships who use modern contraceptive methods was 33%, while research from 2006 had a slightly higher finding, 37.3%. At the same time, there was a lower rate of abortions, both among women of reproductive age and among adolescents. In 2000, the rate of abortions among women of reproductive age was 2069.5 per 100,000 women, while in 2014 it stood at 1194.0 per 100,000 women. Among adolescents (young women between 15 and 19 years old), in 2000 there were 504.2 abortions per 100,000 adolescents. According to registered data, since 2000 this trend has been decreasing, and in 2013 this rate stood at 456.5 per 100,000 adolescents. Even though the goal is to reduce the number of abortions, there are doubts whether the data on abortions reflect the actual situation in this field. Although these numbers seem encouraging it has to be noted that official statistics represents only data from state facilities. Abortions conducted in privately run medical facilities remain largely unreported. MICS 2014 data are indicating that 15% of all women 15-49 have had at least one induced abortion. This percentage is much higher among older women (32%), women with primary education (28%) and women from Roma settlements (31%).

### Mortality of women of fertile age

Mortality of women of fertile age decreased from 129.9 in 2000 to 102 per 100,000 women in 2008 and was recorded to 87.3 in 2014. Given this decreasing trend, it can be concluded that the objective to reduce it by one-third by 2015 has been exceeded. The mortality rate of women of reproductive age from cancer is also decreasing from 50.3% in 2000 to 38.1% in 2014. Given that cancer is the most common cause of death in this age group these are all very positive and encouraging figures.

**Figure 9. Mortality of women of fertile age**





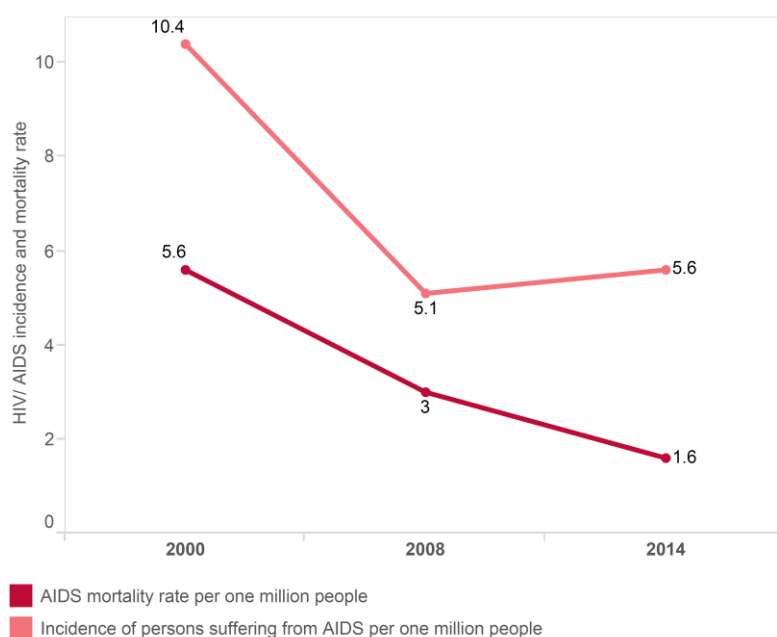
## MDG 6 – Combat against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases

MDG National Objectives		Achievement
Objective 1	By 2015, halt the spread of HIV/AIDS	Incidence of HIV/AIDS has been halved and mortality reduced to 1.6 mortality for 1 mil people
Objective 2	Improve the control of tuberculosis by implementing the DOTS strategy	The DOTS strategy has been successfully implemented halving the incidence of tuberculosis.
Objective 3	Increase the life expectancy by an average of two years in the period from 2000 to 2015, and reduce the share of the population who describe their health as poor or very poor	Life expectancy has been increased by three years exceeding the target set by the objective. This indicator has been favourable to both men and women.
Objective 4	Reduce risky behaviours by 10%	Positive results in the mid-term have reversed in the final phase of the MDGs
Objective 5	By 2015, establish centres for preventive services in all health care centres in Serbia	No results to report
Objective 6	By 2015, establish mechanisms for monitoring the health of children with developmental difficulties and adult persons with disabilities	The legal framework which includes provisions for monitoring the health of children with developmental difficulties and adult persons with disabilities has been established.

### Prevention of HIV/AIDS

According to the latest data from 2014, the AIDS incidence rate was 6.1 per one million people, while the AIDS mortality rate in 2012 stood at 1.6 per one million people, showing a significant decrease from 3 per one million people in 2008. In recent years increasing trend of reported sexual transmission was notified among newly diagnosed HIV cases (87% in 2012 and 78% in 2013 versus 27% in 1991) and decreasing trend of newly diagnosed HIV/AIDS cases among injecting drug users – IDU (4% in 2012 and 3% in 2013 versus 70% in 1991). Additionally, regarding the HIV transmission categories among newly diagnosed HIV infected people reported in the period 2002- 2013 in the Republic of Serbia, there is clear increasing trend among men who have sex with other men – MSM (66% of all reported HIV cases in 2012 and 63% of all reported HIV cases in 2013 versus 26% in 2002 and 11% in 1991) partly due to increasing number of MSM tested in VCCT sites (centre for voluntary counselling and testing on HIV). On the other hand, there is decreasing trend among newly diagnosed HIV cases among Injecting Drug Users (IDU) (3% of all registered HIV cases in 2013 versus 16% in 2002) the most likely due to extensive harm reduction programmes implemented within Ministry of Health HIV project funded through the Global Fund. Thus the improvement of sexual behaviour is critical for the control of HIV spreading. The National Health Survey of the Population of the Republic of Serbia (Ministry of Health, 2013) has shown that 72.0% of youth between the ages of 15 and 24 use condoms during risky sexual intercourse. This represents a significant improvement in relation to 2000 baseline data according to which only 33.4% of youth used condoms during risky sexual intercourse (UNICEF, 2000).

**Figure 10. HIV/AIDS mortality and prevalence**



Source: Register of HIV/AIDS, NIPH Batut

The National Strategy for Fight against HIV/AIDS on HIV infection and AIDS adopted in 2010 constitutes the principal strategic framework and provided guidelines for HIV/AIDS prevention activities among the general population, youth and vulnerable groups. It defined activities related to the provision of care, treatment and support to persons living with HIV/AIDS as well as activities related to community support in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The Strategy provides guidance for epidemiologic surveillance over HIV/AIDS, monitoring and reporting.

### Control of tuberculosis

The tuberculosis incidence rate in 2013 registers at 17.0 per 100,000 people, and the treatment success rate was 82% in 2013<sup>58</sup>. The tuberculosis incidence rate in the Republic of Serbia is lower than the one in countries that have become EU member states since 2004, for example 29 in Bulgaria and 87 in Romania per 100,000 as of 2013<sup>59</sup>. With the support of The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the project “Control of tuberculosis in the Republic of Serbia through implementation of DOTS strategy and outreach services” has been implemented in the Republic of Serbia since 2004. Implemented measures and activities have resulted in a decrease in the tuberculosis incidence rate from 32 per 100,000 people in 2005 to 24 per 100,000 people in 2008 and to reach a final low of 17.0 in 2013. During the same period, the number of successfully treated patients was increased from 69% in 2005 to 82% in 2013.

### Perception of health and life expectancy at birth

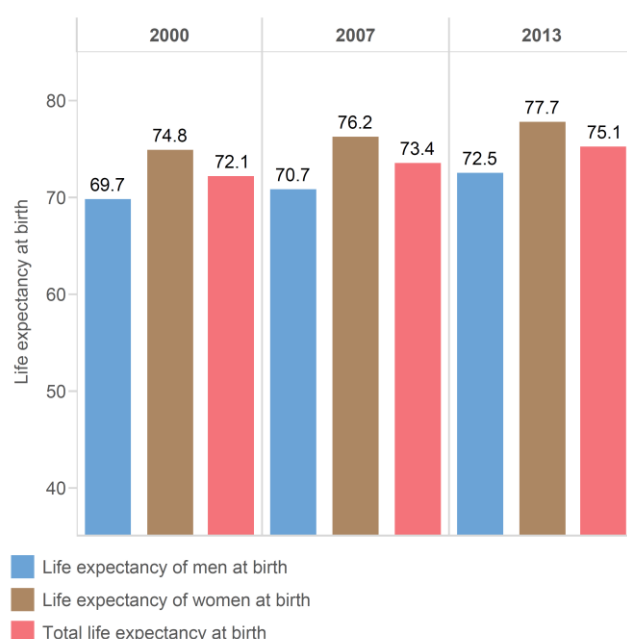
Life expectancy at birth of the Serbian population increased in the period from 2001 to 2013 by three years, that is, from 72.1 to 75.1 years (SORS 2013) exceeding the set target in Objective 3 by one year. The life expectancy indicator at birth has been favourable to both men and women. In spite of these positive trends of life expectancy at birth, the subjective assessment of population of the Republic of Serbia regarding their own health remains unfavourable according to the National Health Survey from

<sup>58</sup> Institute of Public Health, data submission in June 2015.

<sup>59</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.TBS.INCD/countries> , accessed on 17.06.2015

2013, when compared to the one from 2000. The percentage of adults describing their health as poor or very poor was 15.0% in 2000 and 15.7% in 2006 and 15.6% in 2013.

**Figure 11. Life expectancy at birth**



Source: SQRS

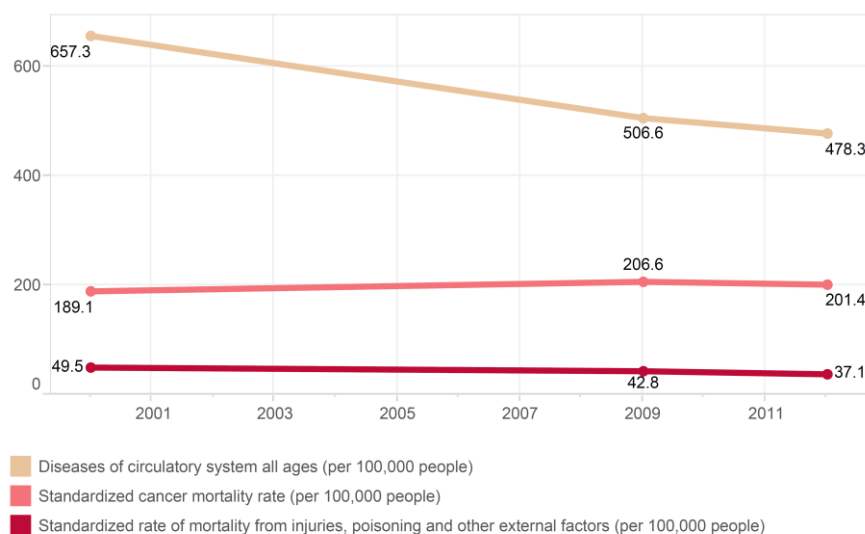
Looking at the diseases which are the leading causes of death in the Republic of Serbia, we can see that mortality among all ages from diseases of the circulatory system considerably high, standing at 478.34 deaths per 100,000 people in 2012. The standardised death rate from diseases of the circulatory system in the EU-28 was 432.3 per 100 000 inhabitants during the period 2008–10<sup>60</sup>, which indicates that the Republic of Serbia is slightly above the EU 28 average.

The Republic of Serbia has adopted the Strategy for Prevention and Control of Chronic Non-communicable Diseases<sup>61</sup> ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 22/2009), as a comprehensive strategic document defining objectives, activities, indicators, expected results, key actors and a timeframe for the implementation of the strategy.

<sup>60</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Health\\_statistics\\_at\\_regional\\_level](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Health_statistics_at_regional_level) accessed on 25.06.2015

<sup>61</sup> Strategy for Prevention and Control of Chronic Non-communicable Diseases 2009 -2015 available at [http://www.srbija.gov.rs/vesti/dokumenti\\_sekcija.php?id=45678](http://www.srbija.gov.rs/vesti/dokumenti_sekcija.php?id=45678)

**Figure 12. Disease and cancer prevalence and mortality**



Source: WHO European Health for All databases

The standardized cancer mortality rate among the population all ages was 206.61 people per 100,000 people in 2009 showing a slight decrease to 201.37 to 100,000 people in 2012 (NIPH). This rate increased over the period between 2000 and 2008, which can be partially explained by an improvement in the registration and identification of causes of death. However, the decrease in standardized cancer mortality rates both in the EU and in Central and Eastern European countries indicate that the modern approaches to primary and secondary prevention of cancer are still being insufficiently applied in the Republic of Serbia (Public Health Institute of Serbia, 2008, WHO, HFA database). The problem of suffering and dying from cancer has been acknowledged, and a program called "Serbia against Cancer," which defined the need for organized screening of cervical, breast and colon cancer was adopted. Other programs were also passed, such as the National Program for Colon Cancer Prevention, National Program for Breast Cancer Prevention and National Program for Cervical Cancer Prevention. Moreover, within Institute of Public of Health of the Republic of Serbia, National Cancer Screening Office has been established in order to coordinate all activities related to prevention and cancer screening.

The standardized rate of mortality from injuries, poisoning and other external factors among persons of all ages in 2012 stood at 37.13 per 100,000 people dropping from 49.7 to the latest available value from 2012, 29.9 (NIPH). Notwithstanding the significant decrease, the present value is still considered high and represents 4% off all deaths, as high as diabetes.<sup>62</sup>

### Health related behaviours

Baseline data for health risk related behaviours, such as, smoking, alcohol and drug use, etc., have been obtained from population surveys conducted on 5 or 6 year basis. After the third research cycle it is possible to view the changes in risky behaviour prevalence and to observe emerging trends.

After the initial decrease in smoking among school children between 13 and 15 years old is thus the prevalence of smoking in this age group was 16.9% in the survey from 2003 and 10.4% in the survey from 2008, in 2013 an increase taking the prevalence to baseline levels (16%) can be observed. Positive changes related to smoking were registered in the National Health Survey of the Population of the Republic of Serbia, which also demonstrates that the percentage of youth between 15 and 19 years old who occasionally or daily smoke has dropped from 22.9% to 15.5% in the period between

<sup>62</sup> [http://www.who.int/nmh/countries/srb\\_en.pdf](http://www.who.int/nmh/countries/srb_en.pdf)

2000 and 2006, has again increased to 19.5% in 2013 (EU 27 2012 29%).<sup>63</sup> The percentage of smokers in the adult population decreased from 40.5% in 2000 to 33.6% in 2006 and was marked at 35.8% in 2013.

In the period since 2000, numerous activities focused on smoking reduction were carried out in the Republic of Serbia, such as the ratification of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and the adoption and implementation of the National Tobacco Control Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, as well as an action plan for the period up to 2010, which certainly largely contributed to the positive changes in the prevalence of smoking. Since then, there has been a reduction in the number of non-smoking campaigns. There is no data on implementation of punitive measures against those breaking the Law on Tobacco ("Official Gazette of the RS", nos. 101/05, 90/07, 95/10, 36/11, 6/12 – sums adjusted, 69/12 – sums adjusted, 93/12, 8/13 – sums adjusted, 64/13 – sums adjusted, 108/13, 4/14 – sums adjusted, 79/14 – sums adjusted and 5/15 – sums adjusted).

The percentage of youth between 15 and 19 years old who do not consume alcoholic beverages increased from 58.8% in 2000 to 63.6% in 2006, marking an alarming decrease below baseline data at 47% in 2013.<sup>64</sup>

**Table 27. Prevalence of smoking among children and young adults**

Prevalence of smoking among children between 13 and 15 years old (%) [1]	2003	16.9	2008	10.4	2013	16
Percentage of young people between 15 and 19 years old who smoke (occasionally or constantly) [2]	2000	22.9	2006	15.5	2013	19.2

Source: [1] GYTS 2003, 2008 and 2013. [2] National Health Survey of the Population of Serbia, 2000, 2006 and 2013

The percentage of young people between 15-24 who have practiced sexual relations with a non-regular partner and have used a condom as protection has been decreasing since 2006 when the value was registered at 74.7% (78.4% of young people aged 15-19, and 73% of those aged 20-24). In 2013 the number was registered at 71.6% (73.8% aged 15-19, and 70.2% aged 20-24.<sup>65</sup>) It is notable that the younger age group tends to have safer sexual practices than those between 20 and 24 years of age. The population survey shows an increase in the number of young people aged 15- 19 years old who have tried psychoactive substances. The Government has passed the Strategy for the Fight against Drugs in the Republic of Serbia 2009–2013, as well as the Action Plan for Program Implementation, defining, among other things, activities related to the primary prevention of drug use. In the 2006 national health survey, some 14.3 % of young people aged 15-29 reported having tried illegal drugs (Ministry of Health, 2006). A regional distribution indicates that the highest proportion of young people who had tried drugs was in Belgrade (22.8%), followed by Vojvodina (17.2%), and the lowest rates were observed in Central Serbia (9.1%). The highest prevalence of reported drug use was observed among those aged 25 to 29 (19.9%). The proportion of 15 to 19-year-olds who had reported trying some psychoactive substances was 6.9 %, which is less than the 9.3% reported in 2000.

<sup>63</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/docs/eurobaro\\_attitudes\\_towards\\_tobacco\\_2012\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/docs/eurobaro_attitudes_towards_tobacco_2012_en.pdf) accessed on 24.06.2015

<sup>64</sup> National Health Survey of the Population of Serbia, 2000, 2006 and 2013

<sup>65</sup> National Health Survey of the Population of Serbia, 2006 and 2013

In 2008, the first national ESPAD study was conducted by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia and the Institute of Public Health of Serbia, in close cooperation with the ESPAD international coordinator and the EMCDDA. According to the results of this study, lifetime prevalence of illicit drug use was 8.0% (this includes cannabis, amphetamines, cocaine, crack, ecstasy, LSD or other hallucinogens, heroin and GHB). Some 6.7% of students had tried cannabis at least once during their lifetime (9% boys and 5% girls), 5.0% reported cannabis or hashish use in past 12 months and 2.0% during the last 30 days (3.0 % boys and 2.0% girls). Some 7.5 % of respondents who had reported use of cannabis had used it 40 or more times during their lifetime. Apart from cannabis, 7.6% of respondents reported using sedatives without a doctor's prescription. The lifetime prevalence rate of illicit drugs other than cannabis or hashish was 3.0% or lower (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia, IPH of Serbia, 2008a).

In 2011, the second national ESPAD study was conducted with the support of the Implementation of the National Strategy of Drug Abuse (INSADA) project funded by the EU. It found that, as in 2008, a total of 8.0 % of students reported having consumed some illegal drug at least once in their lifetime. Some 7.0 % of respondents reported having tried marijuana at least once in their lifetime. Similar to the previous ESPAD survey, boys reported a higher prevalence of trying marijuana at least once in their lifetime than girls (9.0% and 4.0% respectively). Some 5.0% of respondents reported marijuana use in the past year and 3.0% had used cannabis in the last 30 days (4.0% boys and 1.0% girls). As in the 2008 survey, 7% of respondents had used sedatives without a doctor's prescription. Some 3.0 % of first-grade students reported they had used psychoactive substance other than marijuana or hashish. Apart from inhalants, which were used by 5.3% of students, other drugs were used by less than 3.0% of students.

Nutrition indicators (MICS referent years) show an increase in the number of obese persons in both the adult population and among children under 5 years old. The percentage of the obese in the population aged 20 years and up has increased from 17.4% in 2000 to 21.3% in 2013. In the group of children under 5 years old who have a body weight which exceeds the referent population by over two the percentage show a decrease to baseline levels from 2000 i.e. 13.9%.

### **Preventive health-care services**

At present, there is no data available on preventive services. It is presumed that this initiative has been established through a project and failed to be institutionalised. Nevertheless, a number of surveys show an unmet demand from parents for more counselling and advisory services in the areas of prenatal health and children's growth and development, particularly in the early years. The 2014 MICS data show very low coverage of counselling services related to perinatal health, pregnancy and parenting. Only 14% of women from the general population, and 3 per cent of women from Roma settlements, indicated they had used these services within primary health care institutions. Reasons given for this low coverage vary, including the unavailability of services in all locations, as well as parents' lack of awareness of the services or failure to recognize their value.

Children with developmental difficulties, and their parents, face special difficulties in securing adequate and timely support. Such support encompasses not only paediatricians being able to identify children with development risks, but also to provide support and refer them to appropriate health, social or developmental support services. According to unpublished data collected by the Republic Institute of Public Health, units for developmental counselling at primary health centre level exist in up to 26 municipalities.

Outreach services have proven an efficient tool to address health issues of the most vulnerable populations. The Republic of Serbia has a well-developed network of visiting nurses, which has been recognized as good practice. These nurses' contribution to the care of pregnant women and new-

borns -- along with their identification of health and psycho-social risks and referral of families at risk and families with children with disabilities to needed services – is vital.

### **Children with developmental difficulties**

The high rate of perinatal mortality indicates that many children who survive the perinatal period may have their health and development put at risk as a result of earlier complications. Data from primary health institutions in Belgrade show that only about 1% of all children were registered as experiencing difficulties in their psychological or physical development. However, this is significantly lower than the expected rate of 5-7% and contradicts data on children with developmental difficulties documented through other reports by the same institutions (e.g., number of children supported through developmental counselling). Reports from the social welfare system also support this assumption, since 6.4% of all child clients of Centres for Social Work (CSW) were children with disabilities. Under-registration in the health system also is observed every year, which further indicates a serious issue in the detection of developmental difficulties. The Law on medical documentation and health evidence<sup>66</sup> ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 123/14) has introduced the provision on establishing the data base on children with disabilities at the level of primary healthcare. Healthcare institutions should establish a registry of children with developmental and physical difficulties within primary healthcare centers. Following the introduction of this practice, the Institute for Public Health has established a working group for furthering the introduction of this practice. With the support of UNICEF, data gathering and management improvement could be expected in the near future.

The number of children with disabilities in residential care also has decreased, but at a much slower pace. While the number of overall children placed in institutions fell 72% between 2000 and 2013, this number showed a smaller decline of 59% for children with disabilities. As a result, the share of children with disabilities in residential care increased from 49% to 59% over this period.<sup>67</sup> In all, children with disabilities are over-represented in residential care. Moreover, the most prevalent such children are those with intellectual disabilities (more than 60%), which shows that children with intellectual and the most complex disabilities still do not benefit from a family-like care environment and necessary community-based support services. Reports of the independent institutions and non-Government organizations emphasize very poor living conditions in institutions for children with disabilities, including poor and inadequate access<sup>68</sup> to health, lack of access to education, scarce rehabilitation programmes, cases of abuse and neglect, and overall lack of contact and social interaction with the general population.

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<sup>66</sup> Law on Health Records and Statutory Records in the Field of Health, published on 18.11.2014.

<sup>67</sup> 2012 Report on Children and Youth, Republic Institute for Social Protection, Belgrade, 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Ćirić-Milovanović et al., *The Hidden and Forgotten: Segregation and Neglect of Children and Adults with Disabilities in Serbia*, Mental Disability Rights Initiative – MDRI-S, Belgrade, 2012.

## MDG 7 – Ensure environmental sustainability

MDG National Objectives		Achievement
<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies, stop the loss of environmental resources and encourage their revitalization</b>	Considerable progress has been made in the integration of sustainable development principles in the legal and policy framework. The implementation of sustainable development practices requires sturdier financial commitment and monitoring.
<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>Reduce the percentage of the population without appropriate access to safe drinking water, basic sanitation</b>	There is considerable progress in access to safe drinking water, both in access and improved water safety control.
<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>Improve the housing conditions of poor inhabitants of non-hygienic settlements</b>	Initiatives in partnership with the EU and UN have created moderate progress in this area.

In response to European partnership goals and conditions in view of EU candidate country status since 01 March 2012, following the entry into force of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement on 01 September 2013 and having opened accession negotiations on 21 January 2014, the Republic of Serbia confirmed its strategic commitment to the acceleration of the European integration process which includes significant engagement in the sector of environmental protection. In 2010 the National Programme for Environmental Protection (NPEP) evolved from recognition of need for action in order to remediate environmental damage and provide Serbia's population with environmental public goods. In 2011 the Government adopted the Environment Approximation Strategy<sup>69</sup> outlining the way ahead in aligning legislation and practices with the EU. Besides the legal framework, the institutional challenge is also significant and efforts are being made to regulate the country's environmental approach as comprehensively as possible. As such it is based upon a cross-cutting approach that encourages integration of environmental protection into Decision on the Establishment of the Coordination Body for the EU Accession Process ("Official Gazette of the RS", nos. 95/07, 5/10 and 87/10). IFI finance is forecast to account for some 5-6% of the post-accession total cost of approximation and whilst relatively lower than the importance of grant funding, improved conditions on such loans could have an important impact on the Republic of Serbia - especially if budgetary funding remains constrained. The Law on Environmental Protection ("Official Gazette of the RS", nos. 135/04, 36/09, 36/09 – other law, 72/09 – other law and 43/11 – Constitutional Court), approved by the Government in March 2010 took into account the work undertaken in this regard. In addition to these broadly based and cross-cutting strategies, important strategies and communications related to specific aspects of environmental protection have been prepared. The National Strategy on Waste Management 2010-2019 ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 29/10) was adopted in May 2015. The Strategy on Biodiversity for the period 2011-2019 ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 31/11), was adopted in 2011, and the National Air Protection Strategy will be developed within the IPA 2014 Project "Continuation of the Implementation of the Strategy for Environmental Approximation as a Support to the EU Negotiation Process (2016-2018)", while the National Strategy for Sustainable Use of Natural Resources is under development. The Water Management Strategy for the territory of the Republic of Serbia will be adopted in 2015. The First (Initial) National Communication of the Republic of Serbia under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was submitted to the Secretariat of the Convention in 2010, and preparation of the Second National Communication is

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.misp-serbia.rs/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/EAS-Strategija-ENG-FINAL.pdf> accessed on 18.06.2015



ongoing. The National Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants was adopted in 2009.

### **Assure protection of natural resources and foster revitalization**

The commitment to the environmental agenda is also demonstrated by level of investment of the government. The present level of investment in the environment in the Republic of Serbia is insufficient. In the period between 2001 and 2008, it stood at 0.3% of GDP showing a slight increase in 2013 to 0.4% of the GDP (the EU 27 average over 2006-2010 is 1.7%). However, there are no precise data on total investments in environmental protection and construction of infrastructure in this area. New EU member states from Central Europe have invested from 1.5% to 2.5% of their GDP in environmental protection in the pre-accession period. The internationally recognized obligations in the environmental protection area are numerous, and lack of concern only raises future costs.

Forests represent a valuable part of the ecosystem and have a very important position in the global concept of environmental protection and improvement. Accordingly, special treatment through an appropriate system of protection, use and management of all forests' functions within sustainable development is encouraged. The positive trend of 29.1% in 2009 of the total area of the Republic of Serbia covered in forest area, has shown a steep decrease to 25% in 2013 which is below the baseline of 25.6% from 2000.

Protected natural areas covered 6.0% of the total territory of the Republic of Serbia in 2013, which was a somewhat smaller percentage than in 2008 (6.19%) which demonstrated a certain level of stability in maintaining natural area protection standards. When compared to 2000, when the total protected area was 4.92%, a positive trend is evident. Apart from national parks, nature reserves, exceptional natural sites, natural monuments and nature parks, 215 plant and 426 animal species are protected in the Republic of Serbia as natural rarities. From the aspect of the percentage of protected areas in the total territory, the Republic of Serbia is among the countries with a middle-lower protection level.

The main sources of air pollution in the Republic of Serbia are thermal energy facilities (thermal power plants, heating plants), oil refineries, products of fuel combustion in industry and transportation, but also the use of solid fuels (heating wood and coal) in households, individual boiler rooms and burners. However, it should be mentioned that significant efforts and investments into the refinery installations amounting to EUR 50 million were made with the purpose to level up the fuel quality with the European fuel quality standards. It may be concluded that the progress was made, and thereby a possible impact on the implementation of the set goal. The National Statistical Office data on the use of solid fuel show that in 2013, as much as 56% of households used solid fuels, which represents a positive trend when compared to the reference value of 60% from 2002. This indicator had a slightly more favourable value in 2007 with 54.2% of household use solid fuel. This could be due the increase of the price of electricity, and household reverting to solid fuels. Considerable differences from the aspect of the type of heating used by urban and other settlements are evident. In urban settlements, 34.3% of households use solid fuels, as opposed to 84.1% in other settlements. Heating wood and coal remain the most-used energy sources in households, especially in the case of the poorer population. Solid fuel consumption, although decreasing, is still high. The Energy Sector Development Strategy till 2015 foresees a considerable increase in the number of individual natural gas consumers, as well as of centralized heating system users by approximately 400,000 and 180,000 households, respectively, which could be reflected in the numbers of solid fuel consumption.

In 2013, the percentage of energy generated from renewable sources in relation to the total primary energy consumption was estimated at 12.3%, and that is only if the primary generated electric energy from the hydro potentials of large hydroelectric power plants is counted too (and not only the potential of hydroelectric plants up to 10 MW of power). When compared to 2002, when it was 7.5%,

a steep increase in this percentage is evident. With the aim of increasing the use of renewable energy sources in 2009 the Republic of Serbia adopted the Regulation on conditions for obtaining the status of privileged producer of electricity and criteria for assessing the fulfilment of these conditions ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 72/09), as well as the Regulation on measures encouraging the production of electric energy using renewable energy sources and combined production of heating and electric energy. In 2009 the Republic of Serbia became member and founder of the International Renewable Energy Agency, as the first international intergovernmental agency with specific focus on renewable energy, and will continue to actively participate in the work of this agency, in accordance with its statute and its interests in the field of use of renewable energy sources. A complete ban on CFC use will enter into force on 1 January 2010. Verify entry into force and compliance of CFC ban.

#### **Assure access to water supply and sanitation networks and safe handling of communal waste**

Bearing in mind the level of the Republic of Serbia's development, it is more appropriate to use the definition such as access to clean and safe drinking water as "the percentage of households which have access to a public waterworks system." According to the National Statistical Office data for 2013, 82.01% of households of the Republic of Serbia had access to a public waterworks system, while the rest of the population gets water from wells, public drinking fountains and other sources (National Statistical Office, 2013). A considerable percentage (17.4%) of rural households uses protected wells or hydrants, and an additional 2.3% uses open water sources, including lakes and streams. When compared to 2002, when the percentage of the population with access to public waterworks was 69%, an improvement is evident. However, there is a great disparity in the coverage of urban and rural areas by a public waterworks system. This demands considerable improvements, and further development of the public water supply system represents a priority.

Compared to development of water supply to the population, the development of sewage systems lags behind considerably. In the wastewater management sector, the Republic of Serbia is, according to the EBRD development and reform related transition indicators, among the countries with the least developed wastewater management sector. The NSO data for 2013 show that 57.8% of households have access to the public sewage system (National Statistical Office, Municipalities of the Republic of Serbia 2013), which indicates a steady increase when compared to the 49.3 % in 2008. In the urban environment this percentage is 50% to 85%. Existing infrastructure in some municipalities, especially in the South Serbia region needs restructuring and significant efforts are made by the government in cooperation with the UN and the EU in assisting this specific area. There are considerable differences between towns and villages – only 15% of rural households are connected to the public sewage system. Considerable efforts are made resulting in evident progress in percentage of water samples from controlled public waterworks which meets the physical, chemical and biological requirements, in relation to the total number of controlled systems rose from 36% in 2000 to 57.8% in 2013 (NIPH 2013)

Waste management remains unsatisfactory. The main challenges of waste management in the Republic of Serbia still relate to ensuring good coverage and capacity for the provision of basic services such as waste collection, transport and sanitary disposal. According to an estimate by the Environmental Protection Agency, the average waste collection coverage is 60%. Waste is collected in urban environments, while in rural areas, there is usually no organized waste collection.

**Table 18. Sewage and water treatment access**

	2008	2013
Percentage of households with access to public sewage system (%)	49.3	57.8
Percentage of households with access to sewage system which possesses an appropriate communal wastewater treatment system (%)	8.3	10.5

A very slight increase of coverage has been recorded, which represents a positive trend, but we are still dealing with estimates, without more detailed data. In line with the revised National Waste Management Strategy, it is planned for the waste collection coverage to reach 80% of the population by 2015 and full collection by 2025 as per the National Environmental Approximation Strategy. Several sanitary landfills have been built, several regional landfills are under construction, but large quantities of waste are still disposed in unsuitable disposal spaces, some of which do not meet even the minimal sanitary landfill technical standards. The existing level of recycling, i.e. use of waste is insufficient. Progress is slow in this area since Law on Waste Management ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 36/09) was adopted in 2009 and the National Environmental Approximation Strategy in 2011. Table shows the trend in handling communal waste since 2008 when the EU compliant methodology was introduced.

**Table 219. Waste collection coverage**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Average communal waste collection coverage (%)	~ 60	~ 60	72	77	~ 70	80	~ 80

Source: National Environmental Agency, 2015

### **Housing conditions of the poor inhabitants of non-hygienic settlements**

During the MDG reporting period the social housing issue has been dealt with through different housing programs and approaches regulated mainly through several housing and related laws and strategies. These include the Law on Social Housing ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 72/09), the Law on Social Welfare ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 24/11), the National Poverty Reduction Strategy in Serbia from 2003 and the National Strategy of Social Housing ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 13/12). Despite the proliferation of these instruments, there appears to be a lack of implementation. As an example, a social housing programme was initiated in 2009 by the central government in concert with local self-governments to address the inability of a large percentage of the population to pay market rates for housing and to begin to rectify the lack of public or subsidized rental accommodation. The international community has also invested in a number of housing programmes aimed at ensuring adequate housing, in particular for refugees and displaced persons, and Roma, as well as for victims of the catastrophic floods of 2014. These initiatives have yielded limited results in alleviating housing needs for the most vulnerable and the multiplicity of laws and strategies suggests a fragmented approach without an overarching framework a long-term unifying vision.

A specific objective relates to the achievement of considerable improvements in <sup>the</sup> life of the poor population living in non-hygienic conditions. Housing is considered non-hygienic if it meets one of the

following conditions: lack of drinking water sources, lack of sewage system, insufficient living space, temporary housing facilities, or a lack of housing security. According to a UNICEF survey from 2006, it is considered that 18.9% of households are located in slums. Almost 59% of Roma households, that is, as much as 62% of the Roma population lives in non-hygienic conditions. These settlements lack utilities, infrastructure and are built spontaneously. Individual housing units do not meet housing standards and are usually constructed out of waste materials and improvised construction material. According to the data of the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, in 2015 there are close to 600 informal Roma settlements in the Republic of Serbia, according to data from the Ministry for Construction, Transport and Infrastructure. According to the 2011 census there are 147,000 Roma in the Republic of Serbia, although Roma organizations warn that the real number of Roma could be as much as five times higher. Commissariat for Refugees and Migration and the UNHCR claim that of the approximately 250,000 refugees and IDPs living currently in Serbia, 120,000 live in poverty, with a significant segment living in situations of extreme exclusion.

Due to legal fragmentation, data on housing remains difficult to obtain, even estimations. There is no Central registry of social housing initiatives and the Agency for Social Housing, established in 2011 is not responsible for monitoring initiatives outside the ones defined by the Law on Social Housing. Housing for refugees is also provided according to the Law on solving housing needs of refugees ("RS Official Gazette" No. 47/95). Internally displaced persons are provided with the assistance with the purpose to improve housing conditions while being displaced.

## MDG 8 – Develop global partnership for development

MDG National Objectives		Achievement
Objective 1	Dynamic and sustainable growth of gross domestic product	Negative growth and shrinking of the economy have characterised the period from 2009-2013. The positive economic impacts from the previous period had been discontinued by the global economic crisis.
Objective 2	Increase the accessibility of new technologies to a much larger number of citizens	Increased use of and access to computers and internet by over 20% of citizens
Objective 3	Increase investments in human resource development	Restricted growth affected the level of investment in education and health and have kept them at baseline level

### Economic development indicators

The full achievement of the Millennium Development Goals presumes dynamic and sustainable growth of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2015. Since the achievement of the first seven Millennium Development Goals depends in a larger or smaller extent on changes in GDP and other economic development indicators, this is an overview of its dynamics in the period between 2000 and 2015. The Republic of Serbia ended the year 2014 with an estimated real economic decline of 2.0%. Despite the slight recovery in the course of 2013 (economic growth of 2.6%), the Serbian economy shows no signs of stable recovery (in 2012, a negative economic growth of 1.5%). According to the projections presented in the 2014 Fiscal Strategy with projections for 2015 and 2016, and the 2014 Pre-Accession Economic Programme (PEP), a slow path of recovery is expected with the average GDP growth rate of 1.6% over the next three years. The Government has taken steps to address numerous obstacles hindering growth. Fiscal consolidation and economic recovery were defined as the main objectives of the new Government in early 2014. The Progress Report adopted by the EC in October 2014 recognizes the importance of timely observance and implementation of the planned reforms. As per EU recommendation and practices, the Republic of Serbia is preparing its first employment and social reform programme, with a view to identifying and addressing its key challenges in employment policy and social policies

The percentage of foreign debt in GDP in 2013 increased considerably since 2005 from –64% to - 80.8%. According to the World Bank criterion (the ratio between foreign debt and GDP), the Serbian economy belongs in the group of mid-level indebted countries (the limit is 80% of GDP).

Serbia's strategic direction is EU integration, thus the importance of developing partnerships for economic development, both with EU countries, and with countries in other regions is placed as national priority. Active participation and support for regional, that is, international cooperation as a whole, is one of the basic foreign trade priorities. Through integration on regional and multilateral levels, the Republic of Serbia plans to obtain better access to foreign markets and thus increase its effective market size, which will stimulate the inflow of direct foreign investments and the growth of exports.

## **New technologies and their accessibility to citizens**

The availability of modern technologies and their accessibility, to a larger number of citizens should be complemented by investments in science, education, and research and development. This could influence the reduction of the gap between the technologically outdated Republic of Serbia economy and more technologically more advanced economies. There is a general consensus that knowledge-based economy is a prerequisite for fast and sustainable development hence appropriate investment in scientific research activities must be regarded as a priority. In Serbia, the level of foreign direct investment remains at very low level at 2.4% of GDP in 2013.

Mobile phone subscribers per 100 people have increased has almost doubled since 2005 and the number of subscribers exceeds the number of inhabitants by 28% (128 mobile subscribers for 100 people).

The number of personal computers per 100 people between 16 and 74 years old also increased. In 2006, there were 43.2 personal computers per 100 people (between 16 and 74 years old), and in 2013 there were 63.4. The data also indicate that not every computer owner had access to the internet because the number of internet users was slightly lower than the number of personal computers per 100 people (between 16 and 74 years old) but has improved compared to the gap in 2006. The number of internet users from 32 users per 100 people between 16 and 74 years old in 2006 to 58.5 users per 100 people in 2013.

The digital divide between rural and urban areas continued as a result of underdeveloped infrastructure and broadband access (52.4% in urban areas, compared to 28.5% in rural ones). The development of rural areas is dependent on the coverage and overall condition of the local infrastructure, as well as on its accessibility to the rural population (ESRP).

## **Investment in human resources development**

During the MDG reporting period the Government has been involved in permanent reforms conducted in the area of education and health-care systems. Despite developed strategic and policy frameworks, investment in these sectors, critical for a vibrant economic activity as treated as developmental factors, remains at a very low level.

Except for a slight increase in state expenditures for education to 3.8% of GDP in 2008 from 3.5% in 2005, data from 2013 indicates a return to a new low standing at 3.4% . This share is much lower than the UNESCO recommendation of 6%, which is the level of these expenditures in OECD countries. Current data indicates that the objective set in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, for the share of state expenditure for education to reach 6% in 2010, has not been realized.

State expenditures for health care in the period between 2005 and 2013 stood at 5.7% of GDP, while the total expenditures for health care are estimated at approximately 9% of GDP.

## **Global Partnership for Development**

The Republic of Serbia has a multifaceted cooperation in the field of development with the UN System and the UN Agencies through the implementation of the Development Assistance Framework, UNDAF, and as an EU accession candidate through the EU instruments of pre-accession assistance through the IPA funds. The EU countries are the key donors of the development assistance both through the UN system and through bilateral agreements.

Serbia has also development partnership with the other countries, such as Norway, Japan and Canada, which gave significant donations for development of Serbia. Development partnership within the development of infrastructure is also made with the Russian Federation, China and the United Arab Emirates.

## 5. Remaining challenges and emerging priorities

### Unfinished business as per the final report analysis

This section provides an overview of remaining challenges and priorities identified during the process and emerging from the final report analysis. Despite significant progress that has been achieved in the area of poverty reduction, continuing attention should be devoted to social inclusion policy measures for vulnerable groups, such as IDPs, refugees, persons with disabilities and Roma. The improvement of the labour market position of especially vulnerable groups is the basic precondition for poverty reduction and their social inclusion. Improved education of Roma could reduce considerably their high unemployment rates and incidence of low-paid employment, and hence also improve their low living standards. Overall, governance and public policies need to become more inclusive, and improve access to services (education, health, labour market) for vulnerable groups and individuals. Some of the remaining challenges are regional in nature and transcends national development and physical boundaries. Youth unemployment, migration, environmental issues and disaster risk reduction are just a few examples. Youth unemployment for instance, bears the brunt of the recent global crisis in Europe and the region shares the grim figures. Job creation, improved school-to-work transition and better access to the labour market needs to be addressed with vigorous policies and active measures.

Considering the potential negative consequences of the global economic crisis and recession on the Serbian economy, poverty monitoring is critical in preventing its increase, and aggravating the poverty of the most vulnerable categories of the population.

In terms of education, there is considerable work to be done in the first place. Namely, increase the coverage of children with pre-school education especially in non-urban communities with focus children from poor families, children with developmental problems, Roma children. Special attention should be paid to programs targeted at inclusion and support for schooling of children that bear the highest risk of dropping out of the education system. Mechanisms the establishment of lifelong learning approach has not been established yet. The Education Strategy 2020 also identifies similar priorities providing the overall strategic framework.

The analysis of the situation and trends concerning the progress on gender equality indicates some positive steps in most of the set objectives, but they also imply a need to invest significant efforts in the future. It is necessary to improve methods of monitoring the position of marginalized groups in the labour market, including gender-desegregated monitoring.

Employment of women remains a concern and requires active engagement in eliminating discriminatory practices. Gender mainstreaming practices in fiscal and financial planning are important mechanisms for promoting and ensuring gender-equitable policies. Acting against gender-based violence requires precise and systematic data on cases of violence according to the gender and age of the victim, which would allow separate monitoring of violence against women, men and children. An overall improvement of case registration and monitoring is advisable.

There has been progress in reducing child mortality rates. Mortality rates have dropped significantly both among children under the age of five and among infants, in the perinatal and in neonatal periods. Although vaccination coverage is high, the data indicate a potential decrease in immunization rates among the general population and among the most vulnerable. The percentage of exclusively breastfed infants up to the age of six months is low and more attention needs to be paid in this area. In order to reduce the health gap between specific (marginalized) population groups and the general population, it is necessary to further develop programs for improving access to health care. This can be achieved by expanding good practices, such as the introduction of Roma health-care mediators. It



should be noted that the health gap is a result of broader social and economic factors, including social vulnerability and exclusion, unemployment, a low level of education and a lack of access to information.

Considerable results were achieved in the fight against AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases. The activities implemented with significant support of international institutions have resulted in the reduction of AIDS and tuberculosis incidence, as well as the reduction of mortality related to AIDS. From the aspect of health-related behaviour, prevalence of smoking, alcohol and drug use among youth should be closely monitored and appropriate measures developed.

Further harmonization of environmental regulations with EU legislation and expansion and strengthening of institutional capacities will certainly contribute to an improved environmental practice on national and local level of government.

### **Unfinished business and priorities for post 2015 according to the people of the Republic of Serbia**

The Republic of Serbia was selected along with several other countries around the world to provide support to the definition of the new global development agenda by consulting its people about their views of the development priorities. Two series of consultations were conducted in Serbia:

1. First National Post-2015 Consultations in the Republic of Serbia were conducted during the first half 2013 and they were facilitated by the United Nations Country Team with full endorsement by the Government to give opportunity to its people to take part in this global development policy-making process. Through the national campaign Serbia We Want/Srbija kakvu zelimo, as a part of the global campaign the World We Want, over **250,000 people** got familiar with the details of the Post-2015 Consultations in Serbia (figure includes those who had chance to see the forms/questions through social media and direct contacts). Over **28,000 people** actually provided their voice by taking part in the consultations: **3,500 people** through the online survey and web portal [www.srbijakakvuzelim.rs](http://www.srbijakakvuzelim.rs), **3,000 people** through direct consultations (interviews, focus groups discussions, workshops) and **21,500 people** through Facebook and Twitter. The number of 28,000 interviewed individuals includes, besides the general population of the Republic of Serbia, representatives of over **30 different groups of stakeholders**, among which **many marginalized** such as: people with disabilities, the elderly, women, people living in remote rural areas, Roma, LGBT persons, displaced populations, unemployed, trade unions, workers, farmers, journalists, street children, children with autism, youth and others.

According to people's voices **nine priority themes were identified as relevant for Post-2015 period**. Priority themes were ranked according to the number of stakeholder groups voices registered under each of themes and they were grouped in three priority tiers:

#### **Priority Tier 1**

More and better jobs and decent employment, eradication of poverty and better support to vulnerable groups, good governance and reliable institutions.

#### **Priority Tier 2:**

Culture of responsibility, tolerance and solidarity (culture of social cohesion), better quality of education, better healthcare.

### Priority Tier 3:

Sustainable environment, gender equality, better management of migration and population mobility.

People were also asked to specify how the changes could be implemented and respondents mostly proposed investments in human and socio-cultural capital, enhancement of the rule of law and institutions reform through smart policies and economic investments. Among **actors responsible for change implementation** respondents often quoted: state and government, but also (one third of them emphasized the role for) civil society, and various social groups or individuals. People of the Republic of Serbia recognized room for their own contribution to the changes through micro-actions and **individual responsibility** in everyday life, through responsible professional engagement and decent behaviour in the community. Many expressed readiness to contribute through **civic engagement** while some feel **powerless** and doubt any possibility to contributing to the development processes. People of the Republic of Serbia want **immediate changes** without further excuses and delays. However, many shared their realistic estimate that the changes would occur during the **next decade**

2. The first national Post-2015 Consultations were conducted in the Republic of Serbian during 2014 and they focused on assessing the relationship between Culture and Development.

### New UNDAF (now Development Partnership Framework - DPF) for the Republic of Serbia 2016-2020

United Nations Country Team and the Government of the Republic of Serbia have agreed the new Development Partnership Framework for the period 2016-2020 under the title Development Partnership Framework. This strategy was developed following an extensive Country Context Assessment and a comprehensive series of consultations with all relevant stakeholders in the country, as well as taking into consideration the new draft global SDG agenda as well as the results of the National Post 2015 Consultations. The planned priorities for the cooperation between the United Nations Country Team and the Government of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2016-2020 form good basis for the future national sustainable development strategy and map the unfinished business in the Republic of Serbia as follows:

**Table 21: Development Partnership Framework Priorities for the period 2016-2020 – Government of Serbia and UN Country Team**

Pillar	Outcome
I. Governance and Rule of Law	1.By 2020, people in the Republic of Serbia, especially members of vulnerable groups, have their human rights protected and have improved access to justice and security 2.By 2020, governance institutions at all levels have enhanced accountability and representation to provide better quality services to people and the economy 3. By 2020, state institutions and other relevant actors enhance gender equality and enable women and girls, especially those from vulnerable groups, to live lives free from discrimination and violence
II. Social and Human Resources Development	4. By 2020, high quality, inclusive, equitable, gender-sensitive, and age appropriate health services that protect patient rights are available and utilized by all

Pillar	Outcome
	<p>5. By 2020, an efficient education system is established that enables relevant, quality, inclusive and equitable education to all, particularly the most vulnerable, and increases learning and social outcomes</p> <p>6. By 2020, the social welfare system is strengthened to provide timely, holistic and continued support to individuals and families at risk and enable them to live in a safe, secure, supportive family and community environment.</p>
<b>III. Economic Development, Growth, and Employment</b>	7. By 2020, there is an effective enabling environment that promotes sustainable livelihoods, economic development, focused on an inclusive labour market and decent job creation
<b>IV. Environment, Climate Change and Resilient Communities</b>	8. By 2020, there are improved capacities to combat climate change and manage natural resources and communities are more resilient to the effects of natural and man-made disasters
<b>V. Culture and Development</b>	9. By 2020, the Republic of Serbia has inclusive policies ensuring an enhanced cultural industries sector, promoting cultural diversity and managing cultural and natural heritage as a vehicle for sustainable development

### Proposals to address the unfinished business through existing national and UN planning frameworks

The matrix below represents a cross reference of the remaining challenges with priorities in current development frameworks, national and UN.

Unfinished business according to the final MDG achievement analysis	Perceptions of priorities by people of Serbia through Post 2015 National Consultations	UNDAF 2016-2020 Priorities defined based on wide national consultations	National Development Framework
Reduce <b>unemployment</b> , with focus on long-term unemployed, rural unemployment, and unemployment among <b>youth</b> in particular* Improve <b>school-to-work</b> transition.	Increased decent employment	<b>I. Economic Development, Growth, and Employment</b> 7. By 2020, there is an effective enabling environment that promotes sustainable livelihoods, economic development, focused on an inclusive labour market and decent job creation	<b>National Employment Strategy for the period 2011-2020 (2011-2020)</b> <b>National Youth Strategy for the period 2015-2025. (2015-2025)</b> <b>First and Second National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction</b>
Continue the <b>education reform</b> and improvement of education quality  Increase <b>pre-school</b> attendance and school enrolment	Better quality of education	<b>II. Social and Human Resources Development</b> 5. By 2020, an efficient education system is established that enables relevant, quality, inclusive and equitable education to all, particularly the most vulnerable, and increases learning and social outcomes	<b>Strategy for Education Development in the Republic of Serbia (2012-2020)</b> <b>Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education in the Republic of Serbia (2007-2015)</b> <b>Strategy for the Development of the Adult Education in the Republic of Serbia (2006-...)</b>
<b>Poverty reduction</b> , with focus on <b>inequality</b> and improved governance and care for the <b>most vulnerable*</b> with emphasis	Eradication of poverty and better support to vulnerable groups	<b>III. Governance and Rule of Law</b> 1. By 2020, people in Serbia, especially vulnerable groups, have their human rights	<b>Strategy for the Improvement of the Roma Status in the Republic of Serbia (2009-...)</b> <b>Social Protection Development Strategy (2005-2020)</b>

on social cohesion policies. State assistance to the population at risk of poverty should mitigate the occurrence of new poverty and contribute to preventing further deterioration of the status of the most vulnerable population groups.		protected and have improved access to justice and security	<b>Strategy for the Improvement of the Status of the Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Serbia (2007-2015)</b> <b>First and Second National report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction</b>
Advance <b>social cohesion</b> policies	Culture of tolerance and social cohesion	<b>IIIa. Culture and Development</b> 9. By 2020, Serbia has inclusive policies ensuring an enhanced cultural industries sector, promoting cultural diversity and managing cultural and natural heritage as a vehicle for sustainable development	<b>Strategy for Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination (2013-2018)</b> <b>First and Second National Report on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction</b>
Improve environmental sustainability and implementation of environmental policies in view of issues related to sustainable development and <b>climate change</b>	Sustainable environment	<b>IV Environment, Climate Change and Resilient Communities</b> 8. By 2020, there is an effective enabling environment that promotes sustainable livelihoods, economic development, focused on an inclusive labour market and decent job creation	<b>Strategy for Introduction of Cleaner Production in the Republic of Serbia (2009-...)</b> <b>National Strategy on the Introduction of the Republic of Serbia into Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocols for the Waste Management Sectors, Agriculture and Forestry (2010-...)</b> <b>Strategy on the Biodiversity of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2011- 2018(2011-2018)</b> <b>National Strategy of Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Goods (2012-...)</b> <b>National Environmental Programme (2010-2019)</b>
<b>Participation</b> of women political and social decision making  <b>Fight domestic and gender based violence</b>	Gender equality	<b>V Governance and Rule of Law</b> 3. By 2020, state institutions and other relevant actors enhance gender equality and enable women and girls, especially those from vulnerable groups, to live lives free from discrimination and violence	<b>National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality for the period 2009-2015 (2008-2015)</b> <b>National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women in Family and in Intimate Partner Relationships (2011-...)</b> <b>National Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence (2008-2015)</b>
Reduce maternal mortality and  <b>mortality rates</b> from diseases of circulatory system/cancer  Reduce <b>smoking</b> and consumption of <b>psychoactive substances</b>	Better healthcare	<b>VI. Social and Human Resources Development</b> 6. By 2020, the social welfare system is strengthened to provide timely, holistic and continued support to individuals and families at risk and enable them to live in a safe, secure, supportive family and community environment.	<b>Tabaco Control Strategy (2007-2015)</b> <b>Strategy for Continuous Improvement of Health Care Quality and Patient Safety (2009-2015)</b> <b>Public Health Strategy (2009-2015)</b> <b>National Anti-HIV/AIDS Strategy (2010-2015)</b> <b>National Strategy for Prevention and Protection of Children from Violence (2008-2015)</b> <b>Strategy on Drug Abuse Prevention for the period 2014 - 2021 (2014-2021)</b> <b>National Sustainable Development Strategy (2008-2017)</b>
Resolving the issues of <b>refuges</b> and <b>IDPs</b> and improve <b>migration management.*</b>	Better management of migration and population mobility	<b>VII. Governance and Rule of Law</b> 1.By 2020, people in Serbia, especially vulnerable groups, have their human rights protected and have improved access to justice and security	<b>Migration Management Strategy (2009-...)</b> <b>Strategy for Returnees Reintegration Based Upon the Readmission Agreement (2010-...)</b>

Source: MDG Final report for Republic of Serbia 2015	Serbia we want, post 2015 consultations, UNDP 2014	UNDAF for Serbia 2016-2020	Republic Secretariat for Public Policy of the Government of the Republic of Serbia
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## 6. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) vision for the Republic of Serbia

Government of the Republic of Serbia has actively contributed to the development and formulation of the Sustainable Development Agenda through active participation in the Open Working Group.

At country level, people of the Republic of Serbia have actively contributed to the formulation of the SDG agenda through two series of the National Post 2015 Consultations in 2013 and 2014 as described in the paragraph above.

In parallel with the preparations of the new Development Partnership Framework for the Republic of Serbia for the period 2016-2020, the UNCT and the Government of the Republic of Serbia are developing a matrix presenting the new set of 17 SDGs and targets with links to key strategic references relevant for the wider context: i/ global conventions the Republic of Serbia committed to, ii/ national development targets (as outlined in the existing national strategies) and iii/ EU accession priorities set in the negotiating process for EU accession. Once finalized and agreed by all relevant stakeholders, this matrix will be used as a key reference in the coming process of the nationalizing of the SDGs that will take place following September 2015 official launch of the new agenda.

Government is in the process of establishing an inter-ministerial SDG working group that will be tasked to work the nationalization, implementation and monitoring of SDGs in the Republic of Serbia. The inter-ministerial group will be chaired by one of the Deputy Prime Ministers and should be fully operational at the end of the summer 2015.

During the spring and summer 2015 Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia and UN Resident Coordinator have organized series of meetings with national and international partners introducing the new global development agenda. The official presentation of the agenda, along with a structured campaign, will be led by the new working group on SDGs after the official launch of the new development agenda. New Development Partnership Framework for the Republic of Serbia for the period 2016-2020, the UNCT and the Government of Serbia is fully in line with the SDG framework.

The Republic of Serbia as a member of the UN Economic and Social Council, Open WG for defining sustainable development goals and Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing was actively involved in the process of adoption of the Post-2015 Global Development Agenda. The Republic of Serbia participates in the negotiations on the Global Development Agenda currently taking place in the UN General Assembly. As the EU candidate country, the Republic of Serbia supports the Conclusion of the EU Council on sustainable development, adopted on 16 December 2014.

At the internal plan, several inter-ministerial meetings on sustainable development were held within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the course of 2014 and 2015, where the representatives of these ministries gave their comments, from the areas of their competencies, as well as proposals and opinions about the goals and sub-goals and on the Synthesis Report of the UN Secretary General on Sustainable Development Goals.

**The institutional and financial framework for the implementation of the global development goals is currently being established** and besides the National Assembly, all competent secotral

ministries and offices, representative of academic, business, scientific and cultural institutions will be involved in their implementation.

In that regards, MFA proposed establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for the Implementation of the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda and adoption of the National Sustainable Development Strategy, which would put the implementation of the goals from the Post-2015 Development Agenda within the context of the Euro-integration, for a lot of goals overlap with the commitments of the Republic of Serbia pertaining to the negotiation chapters with EU, particularly when it comes to the Chapter 27 covering environmental issues.

The Inter-Ministerial Working Group for the Implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda has the following competencies:

- to monitor, in cooperation with the sectoral ministries, the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the implementation of all development goals and sub-goals based upon the precise statistical indicators, after its adoption on the September Summit in New York this year;
- to prepare interim Reports on the Implementation of the Global Development Agenda in the RS in the period up to 2030;
- to gather and coordinate standpoints and activities of all sectoral ministries in relation to the UN Global Development Agenda, based upon which our priorities and positioning of the RS when it comes to its adoption during the September Summit in New York would be set ;
- to initiate, in cooperation with the Republic Secretariat for Public Policy, a process for the adoption of an umbrella national sustainable development strategy, which would consolidate all individual strategies and harmonize attainment of goals of the UN Global Development Agenda with the requirements the RS has to attain so as to meet its other international commitments, first of all, to successfully finalize its accession negotiations with the EU.
- to set, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, financing of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Strategy ;
- to set, in cooperation with the Republic Statistical Office, the basis for the statistical monitoring of the goals and sub-goals;

Special attention should be paid to the measurement of the attained goals and sub-goals. Monitoring of the implemented goals should be uniform around the world, so as to have comparable data. It is necessary to take into account financial aspect of gathering of data on attained goals and sub-goals.

We hereby assess that all goals are of the great importance, but we pay special attention to the following goals and sub-goals:

- end poverty in all its forms everywhere (goal 1)
- end hunger; achieve food safety (goal 2)
- promote sustained and inclusive economic growth and decent work for all (decent work and economic growth) (goal 8)
- promote sustainable industrialization (goal 9)
- reduce inequality within and among countries (goal 10)
- ensure sustainable production and consumption patterns (goal 12)
- ensure healthy lives for all (goal 3)
- ensure education for all (goal 4)
- achieve gender equality (goal 5)
- promote activities at all levels to fight against climate change (goal 13)
- ensure peaceful and inclusive societies and rules of law (goal 16)

The Republic of Serbia takes part in the UN projects dedicated to contrition towards the sustainable development culture and has been advocating having culture in the form of a goal, or as a sub-goal of the sustainable development.

As the EU candidate country, the Republic of Serbia supports all EU standpoints on sustainable development, as well as the forms of their functioning. Within that context, we expect that the EU set its final position at the Third International Conference on Financing for Sustainable Development (Addis Ababa, 13-16 July of the current year). The Republic of Serbia believes that it is necessary to involve all financial flows in sustainable development financing - national and international, public and private, as well as combined. The Republic of Serbia pays special attention to the public-private partnership and it is interested in intensifying the application of the public-private financing model for the construction of the road infrastructure, through concessions, which has not been sufficiently used so far.

## List of tables

Table 1. Macroeconomic trends .....	13
Table 2. Absolute poverty rates 2002-2013.....	21
Table 3. Share of social transfers in BDP,%.....	22
Table 4. Roma unemployment rate .....	22
Table 5. Primary school enrollment rates, general population and Roma .....	26
Table 6. Primary school completion rates, general population and Roma.....	27
Table 7. Preschool coverage .....	27
Table 8. Preschool participation .....	27
Table 9. Child victims of violence.....	38
Table 10. Domestic violence, rates of criminal charges filed and criminal convictions .....	39
Table 11. Health protection of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and maternity .....	43
Table 12. Mortality of children under the age of 19 from external causes od death.....	43
Table 13. Breastfeeding of children .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 14. Immunization of children .....	45
Table 15. Child delivery.....	46
Table 16. Prevalence of smoking among children and young adults .....	52
Table 17. Sewage and water treatment access .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 18. Waste collection coverage .....	58

## List of figures

Figure 1. Activity, unemployment and employment (2004-2013) .....	15
Figure 2. Registered unemployment and disability .....	18
Figure 3. Secondary School Attendance 2014Source: MICS 2014 .....	28
Figure 4. Performance on standardized international test scores .....	32
Figure 5. Comparable activity, employment and unemployment by gender and Roma status.....	36
Figure 6. Female participation in public office .....	38
Figure 7. Child mortality rates.....	42
Figure 8. Mortality of women of fertile age.....	47
Figure 9. HIV/AIDS mortality and prevalence .....	49
Figure 10. Life expectancy at birth.....	50
Figure 11. Disease and cancer prevalence and mortality .....	51