



© UNICEF Serbia / 2019/Pancic

Child marriage – one of the most severe forms of violation of child rights and violence against children, a form of gender-based discrimination with numerous serious emotional and physical consequences. Although girls and women are more affected, boys are also at risk.

Often, when we are faced with problems, we look for the easiest way out – and sometimes girls, lost in their problems, choose child marriage as a “solution” to the current crisis, an escape from poverty, violence and other challenges. However, instead of a solution, such marriages often create permanent problems with severe consequences extending throughout the entire life, that are reflected in the interrupted education, continued poverty, health risks for mother and child, limited personality development, etc.

The system sometimes tacitly tolerates this phenomenon as characteristic of the Roma community or responds retroactively after child marriage, and even childbirth, have already happened. Due to the existence of prejudices and stereotypes towards the Roma community, the envisaged normative and strategic measures are not always applied or are not applied in a timely and continuous fashion, citing the Roma tradition as a reason. However, it is important to understand that the causes of child marriage are most often found in poverty, domestic violence, in traditional norms according to which it is a disgrace for a girl not to marry by the age of 18, which is not something specific to the Roma culture but a challenge faced by communities worldwide regardless of their ethnic or national backgrounds. The escape from poverty should lead to empowerment, not limitations, because child marriage is not only a loss of childhood, but also a lost opportunity for a future fulfilling and quality life. However, I would like to point out that tradition is like an old, dilapidated house about to fall apart – if it is not thoroughly renovated, it will kill the people living in it.

Today, in the 21st century, there are terms that should not stand to each other in the same sentence, such as the terms of child and marriage, because a child should never be a partner in a marriage relationship, or the terms of a child and a soldier, because children in war are always victims, and should never be participants. What is happening to our civilization when there are life situations in which children find themselves, which are depicted by the terms child marriage and child soldiers?

The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, as the central institution responsible for preventing discrimination and promoting equality, constantly points out that ending early and child marriage is one of the important levers for the prevention of discrimination, which needs to be addressed with dedication and synergy by all social actors, from the local community, to schools, health care and social protection systems, but also the NGO sector and others, which the National Coalition to End Child Marriage insists on. Education on the negative consequences of child marriage, along with supporting families, is crucial for combating this serious problem. All of us can and must work together to create societies where children are not forced into adult roles in order to survive various challenges. I believe that only together can we change this reality and ensure that every child has the right to a happy childhood and deserves the opportunity for sleep, play, carefreeness, health and education – so let child marriage become a thing of the past, not destiny.

Brankica Jankovic
Commissioner for the Protection of Equality



This year's campaign of the **Roma Women's Network of Serbia**, which runs from March 8 to April 8, is aimed at abolishing the practice of child marriage that is present in the Roma community.

Activities during the campaign include meetings, round tables and social dialogue through which the implementation of policies that are set as a normative strategic framework for combating child marriage will be advocated, as well as the improvement of prevention and protection services against violence against Roma women.

A social dialogue on the subject of child marriage was held during the Month of Roma Women's Activism campaign, on April 5, in cooperation of Roma Womens' Network and the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue. A comparative analysis of the Study "Child, early and forced marriage" and the Study "Examples of good practice, girls who have not married by the age of 18", was presented to representatives of institutions, international organizations and donors, the National Council of the Roma National Minority, organizations of the Roma Women's Network, other relevant domestic non-governmental organizations and media.

Praxis has prepared the **Annual report on child marriage in Serbia for 2023** within the project **Legal Aid to Persons at Risk of Statelessness in Serbia**, funded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

This year's report presents findings from workshops with children organized in 8 primary schools in Novi Sad, Bačka Palanka (Tovariševo), Leskovac, Vranje, Niš, Pančevo and Lazarevac (Veliki Crljeni) with the aim of preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage in Serbia. The report also contains information from meetings with representatives of schools in the form of their experiences in reporting cases of risk of child marriage, highlighting examples of positive activities carried out in schools with the aim of preventing child marriage and other risks in the best interest of children. The report points out



the scope of risks in every case of child marriage, as well as the urgent need for normative changes, more complete statistics on the scope of this problem and the necessity of a networked, urgent and adequate response of all authorities responsible for the protection of child rights. The report is available at the [link](#).

On 28 February 2024, the **National Employment Service** published **public calls for the implementation of a package of measures** within the **Youth Guarantee scheme** – the project “**Implementing innovative active labour market measures and approaches to increase the integration of the long-term unemployed, young people, women, people with disabilities and hard-to-employ groups in the labour market**” – IPA 2020, which will be implemented in 3 branches of the National Employment Service – Niš, Kruševac and Sremska Mitrovica. The project is funded by the European Union as a form of support for active labour market policy measures.



The **Youth Guarantee scheme** is aimed at facilitating the transition of young people to the labour market and encouraging their employment,

through the cooperation of various sectors and social partners. The Youth Guarantee is a programme that responds to youth unemployment through the cooperation of various sectors and social partners and through it, young people up to the age of 30 receive quality job offers, continued education or internships within four months of entering the unemployment status or leaving or completing formal education.

The National Employment Service, as the main implementing partner in the programme, i.e. the main entry point of the **Youth Guarantee**, has the obligation to provide *improved individualized support to young people, which will be additionally backed up by the implementation of specially designed financial support measures*. The improved support basically involves fully individualized work with the person, which should be achieved by better profiling and, in accordance with the obtained results, by intensifying contacts with the young person. The target group of people who will be included in the scheme are young **people up to the age of 30** who apply to the unemployment register starting from **1 January 2024**,

in three pilot branches of the National Employment Service, in Sremska Mitrovica, Niš and Kruševac.

The **package of measures within the Youth Guarantee scheme** will be implemented, among other things, through public calls:

- Public call for the implementation of the internship measure for young people with higher education in 2024 who are included in the IPA 2020 **Youth Guarantee scheme**;
- Public call for the implementation of the internship measure for young people with secondary education in 2024 who are included in the IPA 2020 **Youth Guarantee scheme**;
- Public call for the implementation of the practical skills training measure in 2024 for unemployed persons who are included in the IPA 2020 **Youth Guarantee scheme**;
- Public call for participation in funding training measures at the employer's request in 2024 for unemployed persons who are included in the IPA 2020 **Youth Guarantee scheme**;
- Public call for organizing the execution of public works with the engagement of unemployed persons in 2024 who are included in the IPA 2020 **Youth Guarantee scheme**;
- Public call for wage subsidies for persons with disabilities without work experience in 2024 who are included in the IPA 2020 **Youth Guarantee scheme**;
- Public call for awarding subsidies for self-employment of unemployed persons in 2024 who are included in the IPA 2020 **Youth Guarantee scheme**;
- Public call to employers for awarding subsidies for the employment of unemployed persons from the hard-to-employ category in 2024 who are included in the IPA 2020 **Youth Guarantee scheme**.

The public call for awarding subsidies for self-employment of unemployed persons who are included in the IPA 2020 Youth Guarantee scheme is open until 29 March 2024, while the other public calls until 31 December 2024.

The texts of public calls and the list of necessary documents for applying can be found on the website of the National Employment Service, in the Competitions section: <https://www.nsz.gov.rs/sadrzaji/nzs-konkursi/10>

