

Background

Serbia / Moldova / Macedonia

Serbia

- Inhabitants: 7.5 million
- Capital: Belgrade
- Surface area: 77,500 km²

Moldova

- Inhabitants: 3.5 million
- Capital: Chişinău
- Surface area: 33,850 km²

Macedonia

- Inhabitants: 2 million
- Capital: Skopje
- Surface area: 26,000 km²

The Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority. With very high unemployment, poor housing, and limited access to education and leisure they remain excluded from society.

On average, only 30 per cent of Roma children in Southeast Europe complete primary school, 9 per cent attend secondary school and 0.01 per cent go to university.

Estimates suggest that approximately half of the 3.7 million Roma in Southeast Europe suffer from malnutrition. The official unemployment rate (90 per cent) lies well above respective national averages.

Serbia

After a short respite following war, economic sanctions and NATO-bombardments, Serbia

was hard hit by the recent economic and financial crisis. The country hopes to improve its situation by joining the EU, and in 2009 officially applied for EU membership. For accession to be granted, certain conditions have to be met: fight against corruption, modernisation of the legal system, improved cooperation with the International Criminal Court in The Hague, and resolution of Serbia's disagreement with Kosovo.

There are approximately 450,000 Roma in Serbia. With discrimination being wide-spread, Roma live in poverty with no access to resources. Hunger and disease are rampant. 80 per cent of Roma are unemployed, half of them make a meagre living collecting paper and rubbish, and only about 4 per cent of Roma children pursue schooling beyond primary school.

Moldova

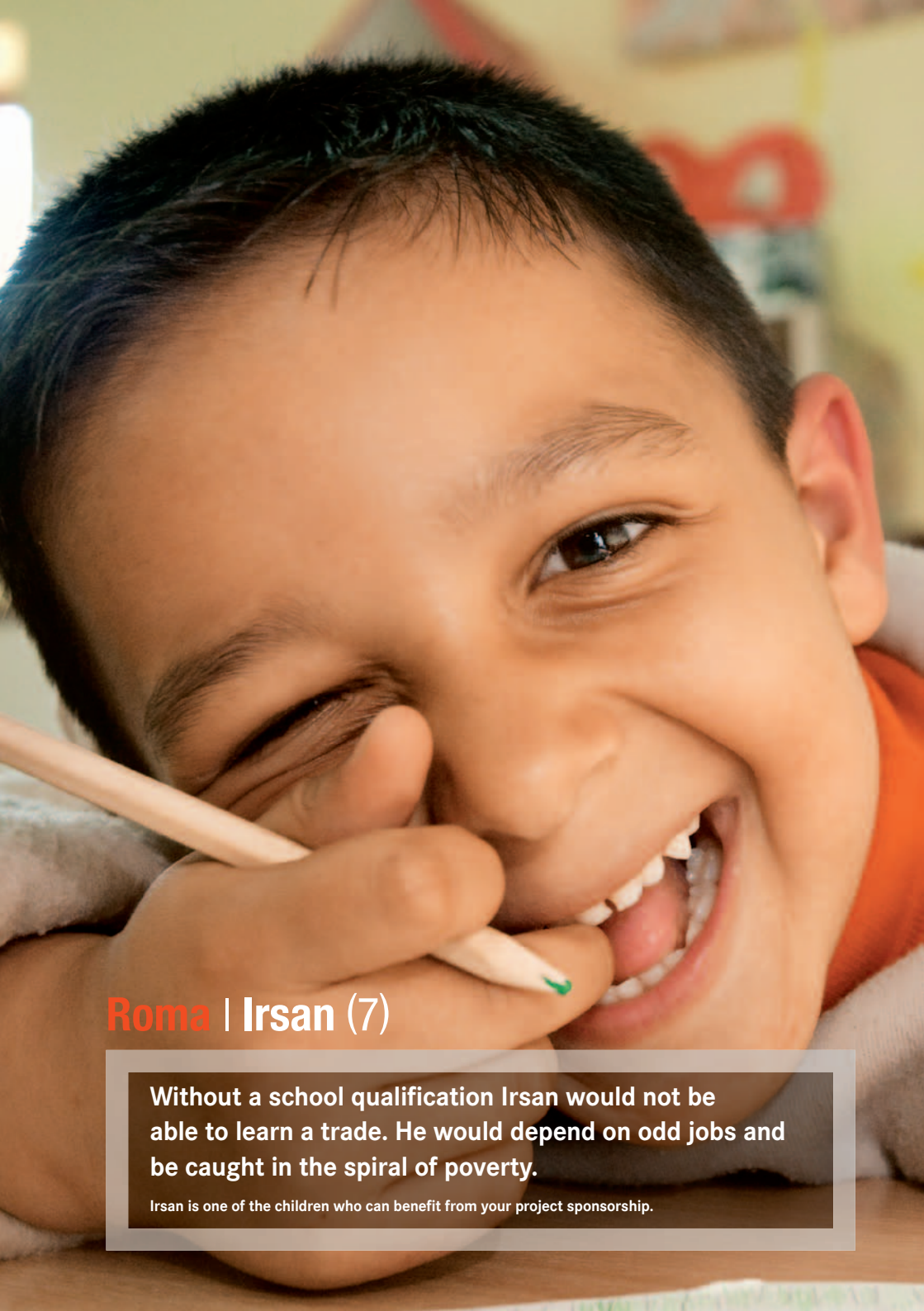
After one and a half years without a government and three parliamentary elections in a row, in January 2011 a new government was finally sworn in. Moldova is home to different ethnic groups. 64.5 per cent of the population is Moldovan, 13.8 per cent Ukrainian and 13.0 per cent Russian. The percentage of Roma is

low but the community is severely marginalised. Roma poverty in Moldova is striking, even when compared to the impoverished situation of Moldova's overall population.

Macedonia

When former Yugoslavia dissolved in 1991, Macedonia managed to escape getting drawn into war, and in 1992, the country was recognised as an independent state. In 2001, economic difficulties and the marginalisation of ethnic Albanians residing in Macedonia led to a crisis. Being excluded from civil service and deprived of equal representation, ethnic Albanian insurgents took up arms in pursuit of the implementation of their rights. The Roma in particular became a political football for both sides. International mediation resulted in a treaty, stipulating legislative changes guaranteeing equal rights for ethnic minorities. However, Macedonia's rapprochement with the EU is slowed down by inter-ethnic tension, economic difficulties and the still unresolved dispute with Greece over its name.





Roma | Irsan (7)

Without a school qualification Irsan would not be able to learn a trade. He would depend on odd jobs and be caught in the spiral of poverty.

Irsan is one of the children who can benefit from your project sponsorship.

Sponsorship of Roma: Educational opportunities and tolerance for Roma children

As soon as school is over, Irsan goes straight to the education centre for Roma children and youth, «Vrama Si» in Kumanovo, Macedonia, where he does his homework. Roma children can rarely rely on parental support with their homework as their parents often lack the required knowledge. «When I go to the centre, at least I can be sure that I do my work correctly,» Irsan explains.

Irsan knows exactly what he wants to be when he is grown up. He dreams of becoming a policeman so he can arrest the drug dealers and the murderers. He wants to ensure that the law is respected.

The «Vrama Si» in Kumanova is a non-formal education centre for Roma children and youth. During the morning hours they attend government school, in the afternoon they come to the centre to receive help with their homework, and to play. The centre also provides material assistance such as school materials, clothing, and a meal at lunchtime, for many the only warm meal of the day. Besides offering practical assistance, the centre encourages children to become more aware of, and accept, their culture, which Roma tend to deny, perceiving it as the root of prejudice and marginalisation.

PCF's broad-range projects in Serbia, Macedonia and Moldova seek to ensure general acceptance of the right of Roma children to

Irsan knows exactly what he wants to be when he is grown up. He dreams of becoming a policeman.

education. Besides non-formal education centres we also support peace education for non-Roma children by encouraging the introduction of related subjects into mainstream curricula. We offer further training for teachers, thus helping to integrate intercultural education into the national curriculum and raising awareness about the special needs of ethnic minority children.

What can my sponsorship of projects for Roma children achieve?

Your sponsorship enables Roma children and youth in Serbia, Macedonia and Moldova to receive non-formal educational support and benefit from improved intercultural national curricula. We offer teacher training in intercultural education and peace education, thus laying the foundation for peaceful cohabitation.

- 90 francs a year buy educational material such as books, exercise books and pencils for ten Roma children.
- 180 francs a year finance intercultural teaching for four non-Roma children.
- 360 francs enable four Roma children to go to school for one year.