

# **The Negative Influence of Adverse Living Conditions on the Overall Health Status of Roma Children in Eastern Slovakia**

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# RAMAD

## The Association of Roma Youth and Children in Slovakia



# Eastern Slovakia



- **Specific features I**
- The highest concentration of citizens declaring their Roma nationality
- 60% of the Roma live integrated with certain dispersion among major population
- 40% of such Roma population lives in:
  - 1. city or town municipalities
  - 2. settlements located in outskirts of a village or a town
  - 3. settlements, which are distant from a village or a town or which are separated by natural or man-made barrier

# Eastern Slovakia



- **Specific features II**
- Water system, sewer system, gas system, electricity, asphalt access road - problem
- The highest birth rate of whole Slovakia with the highest proportion of Roma birth rate
- Social - economic development of Eastern Slovakia keeps behind the development level of other parts of Slovakia
- Number of socially weak population groups grows
- Numbers of children endangered by environment increase

## Group of Children Endangered by Environment



- Higher mortality rate; especially infant mortality rate
- High occurrence of inborn development malformations, low birth weight and preterm births of Roma children
- **Risk factors:**
- Demographic, social - economic, genetic factors
- *Other factors:* number and order of births given by Roma mothers, high percentage of under-age mothers, single mothers, insufficient nutrition, increasing use of alcohol and smoking during pregnancy, increasing addiction to the most accessible drugs, miserable hygienic conditions, infectious diseases

## Group of Children Endangered by Environment



- Serious problems are deaths of children at home
- The unemployment rate of parents reaches even 100%
- Parents acquires just minimum education
- Hygienic standard is very low
- Families tend to live their own way
- They have insufficient health awareness with strange attitude to their health, health of their children as well as prevention and diseases treatment

## Birth Rate

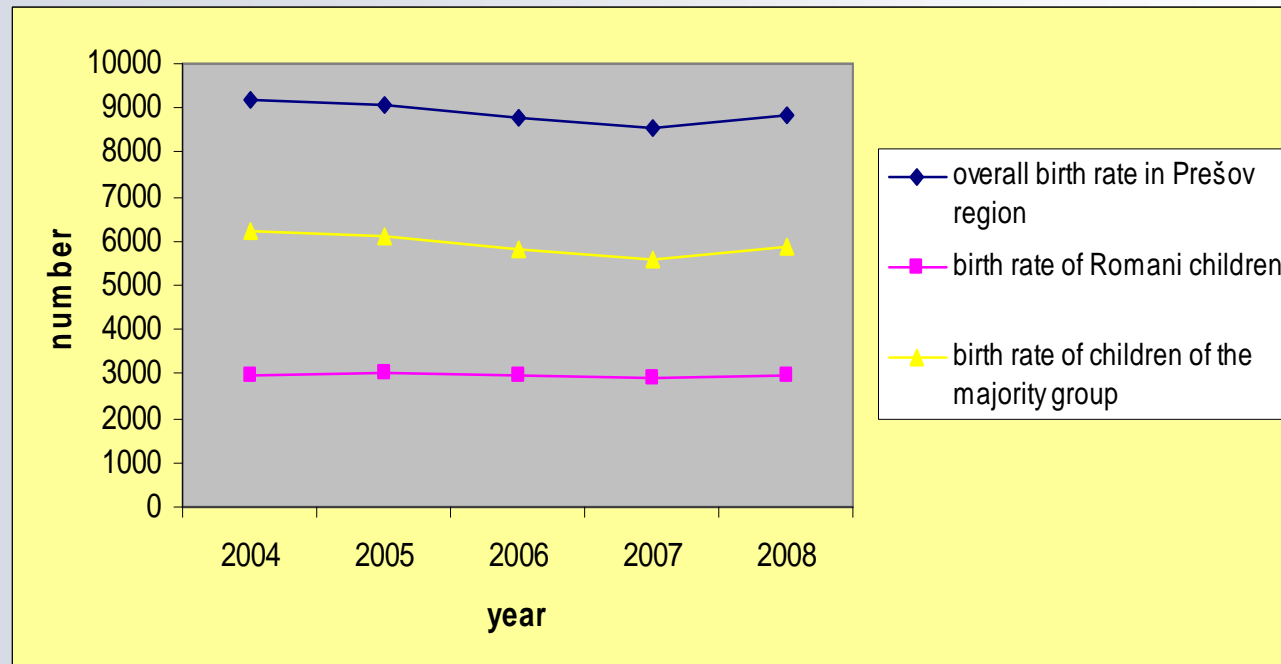


- The birth rate in Eastern Slovakia is the highest birth rate of whole Slovakia from long-term perspective
- In the last few years starting with 2004 the total birth rate expressed in absolute numbers is of decreasing tendency
- The birth rate of Roma children expressed in percents is of slightly increasing tendency
- The number of children endangered by environment in eastern region of Slovakia keeps growing
- In Eastern Slovakia in average 34% of all born children are Roma children

# Birth Rate



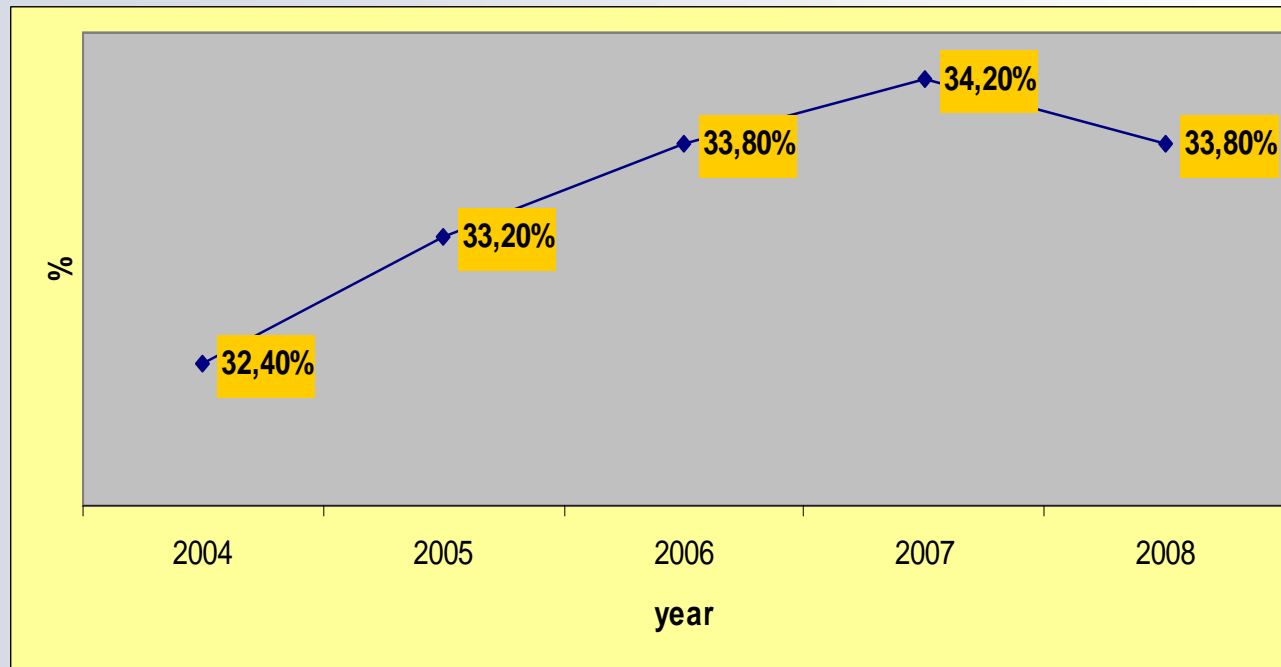
- Birth rate trends in Prešov region in years 2004 - 2008



# Birth Rate



- Birth rate trend of Roma children in Prešov region



## Infant Mortality Rate

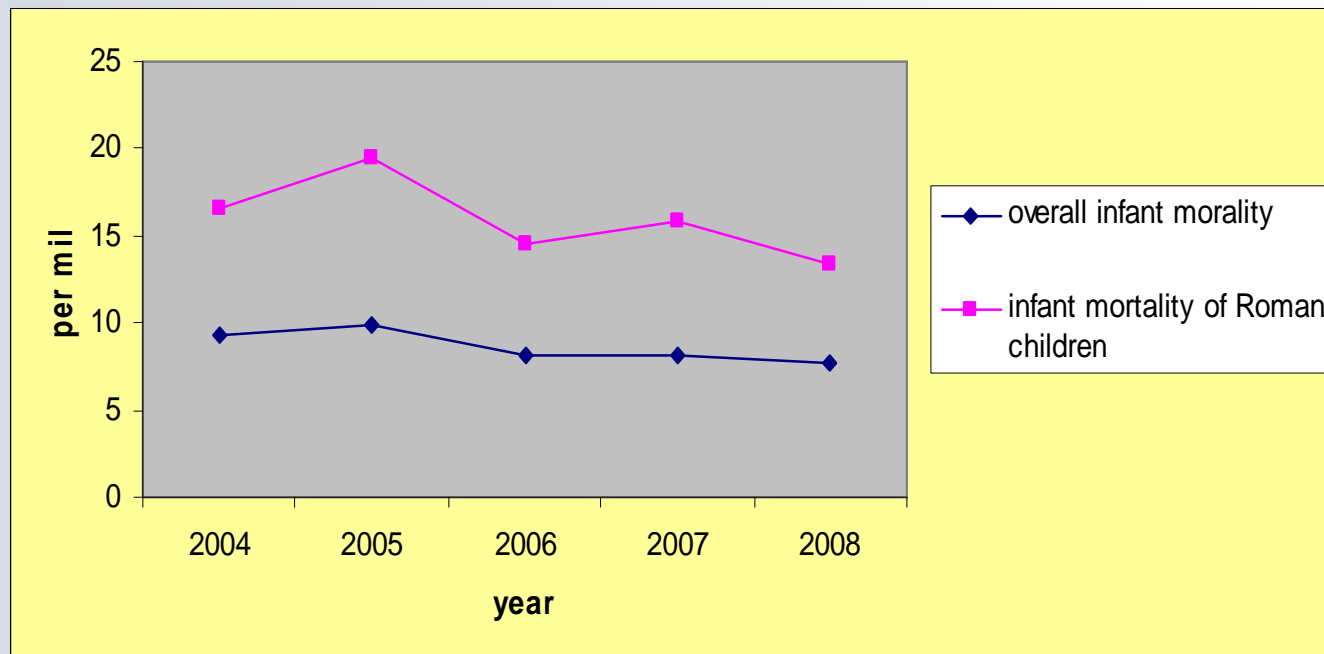


- Infant mortality rate is the most important indicator of cultural and economic condition of any country, it increases with poverty and social exclusion, which limits availability of health care
- Infant mortality rate of Roma children in Eastern Slovakia has been reaching the value of 15,8 ‰ in the last 8 years and in average it is *three times higher* than the value of infant mortality rate of majority group
- The total infant mortality rate of children has been of slightly decreasing tendency since 2004, but in the group of children endangered by environment it is still high!

# Infant Mortality Rate



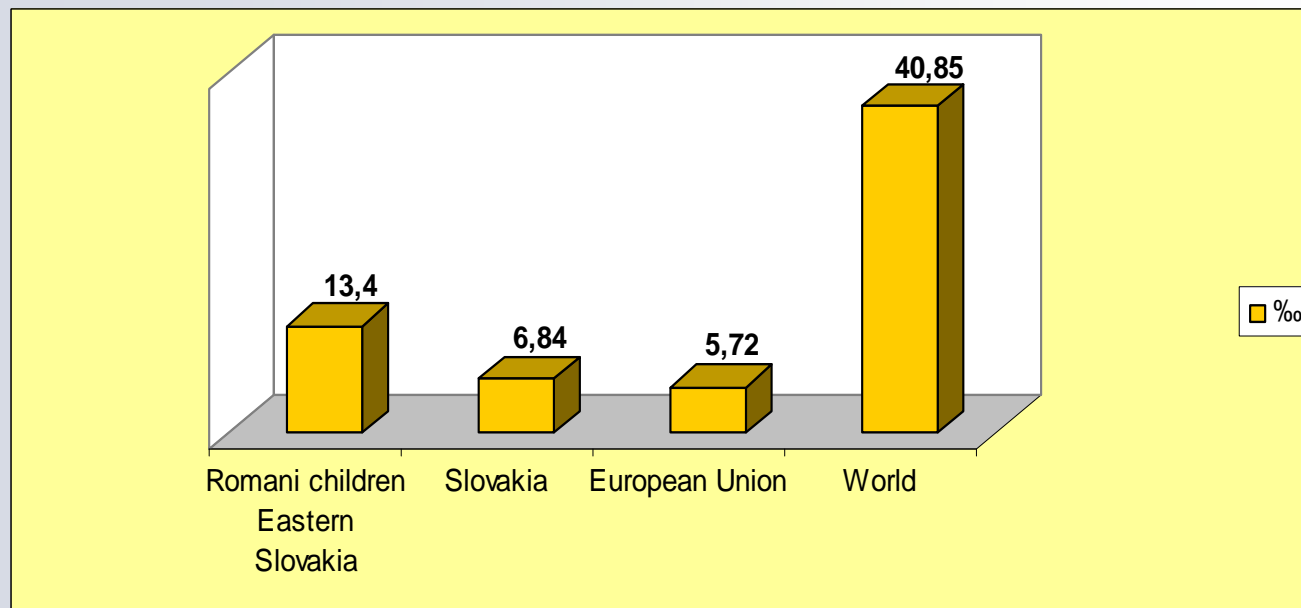
- Infant mortality rate trends in Prešov region in years 2004 - 2008



# Infant Mortality Rate



- Comparison of infant mortality rate - *the latest data in accordance with <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook>*



# Morbidity Rate and Hospitalization

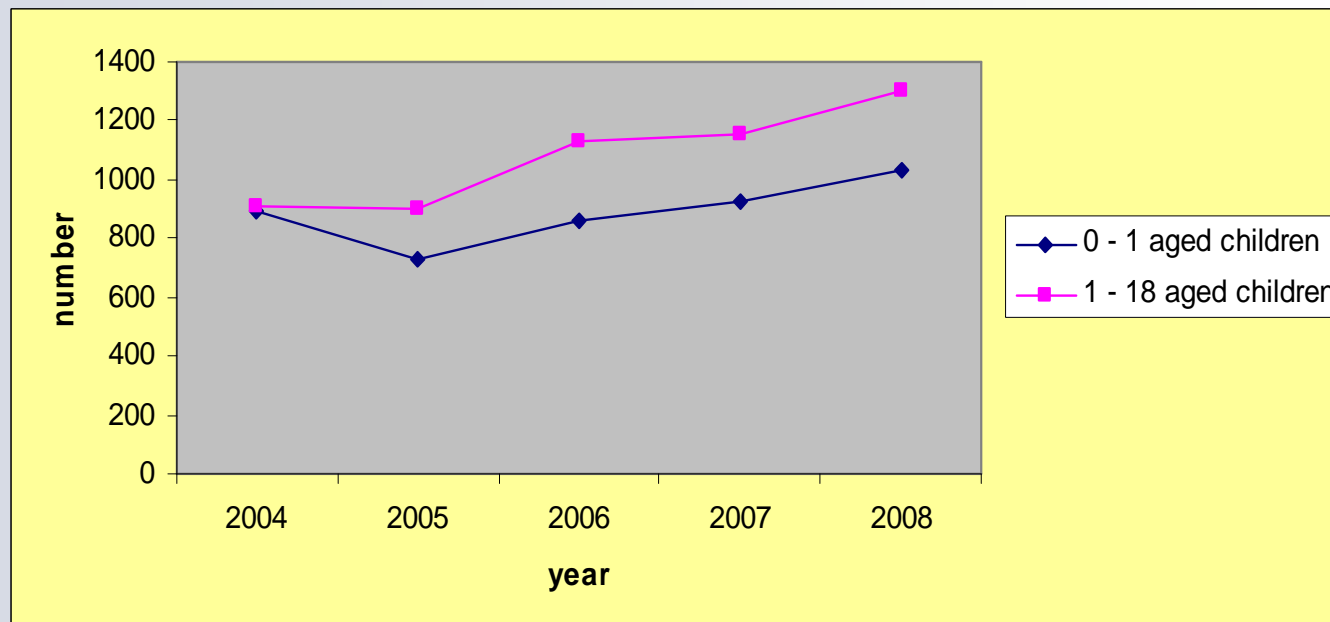


- Since 2004 in the region of Eastern Slovakia the number of hospitalized children endangered by environment has been increasing and this includes children of all age categories
- Roma children count for more than 80% of the group of hospitalized children under one year of age
- Later their proportion among all hospitalized children keeps decreasing
- The proportion of Roma children in age group 1 to 3 years is 63% and in the age group of older children their proportion is 40%

# Morbidity Rate and Hospitalization



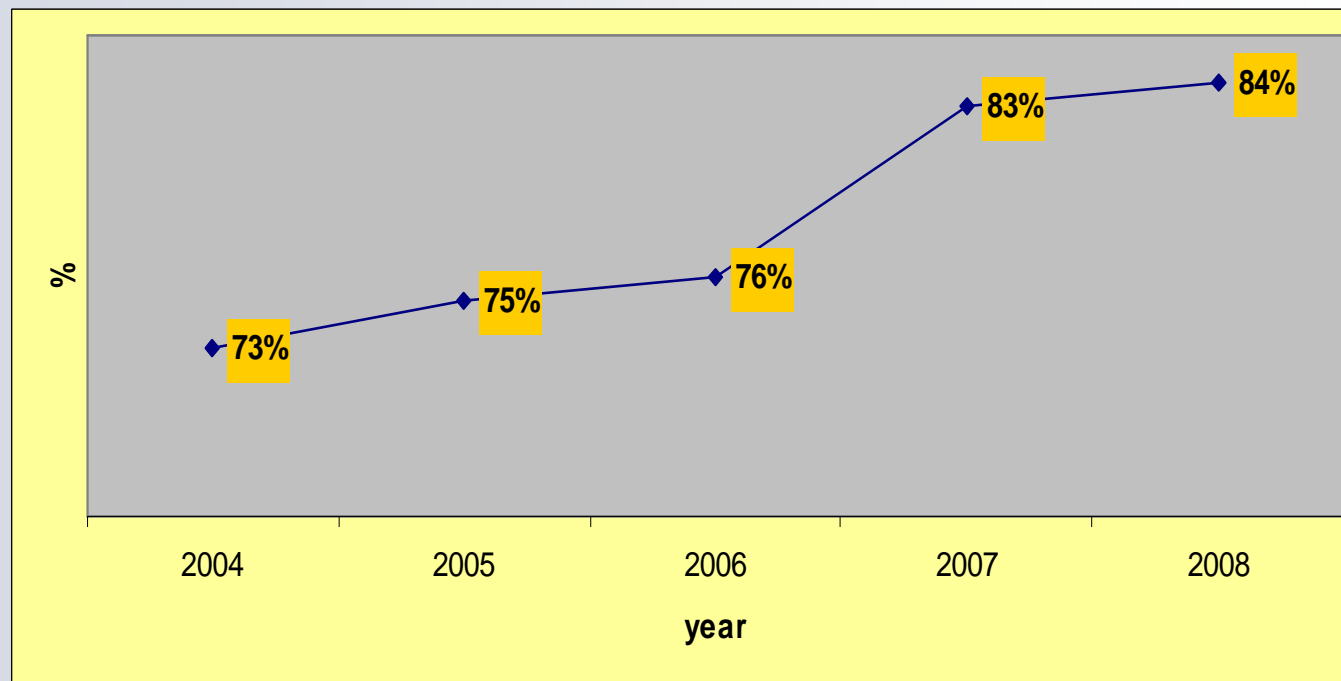
- Number trends of hospitalized children endangered by environment of age group 0-1 year and 1-18 years



# Morbidity Rate and Hospitalization



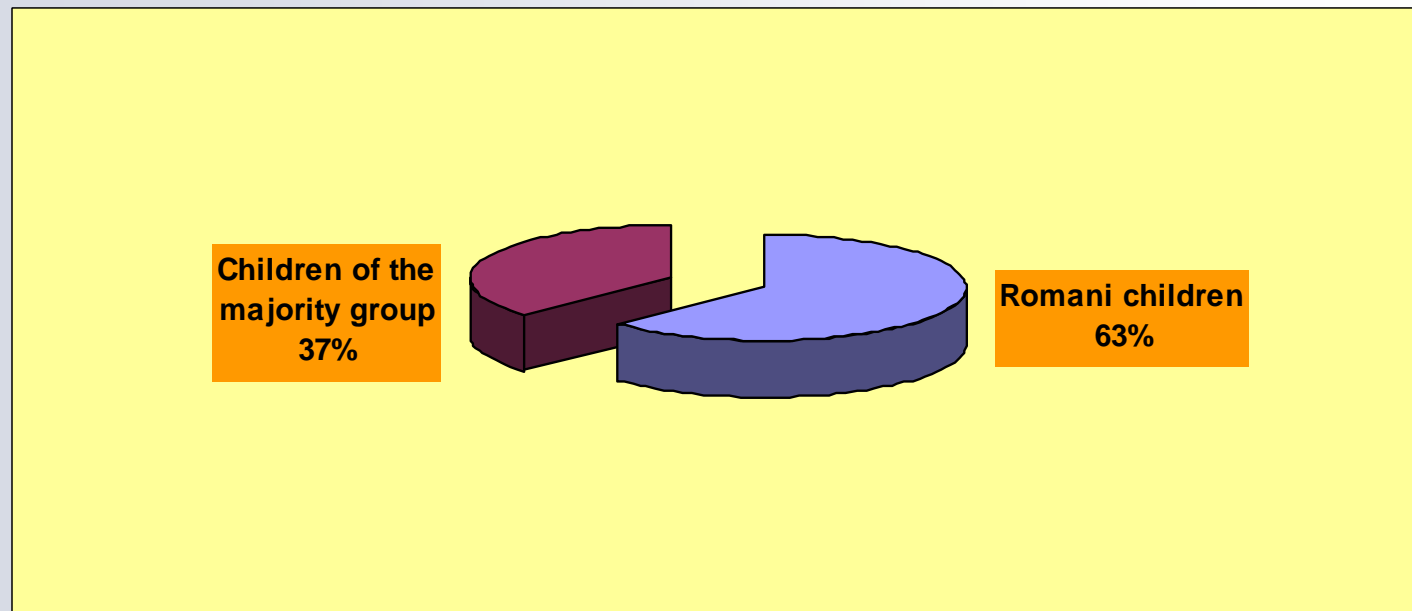
- Trend of hospitalization of Roma children of age group 0-1 year %



# Morbidity Rate and Hospitalization



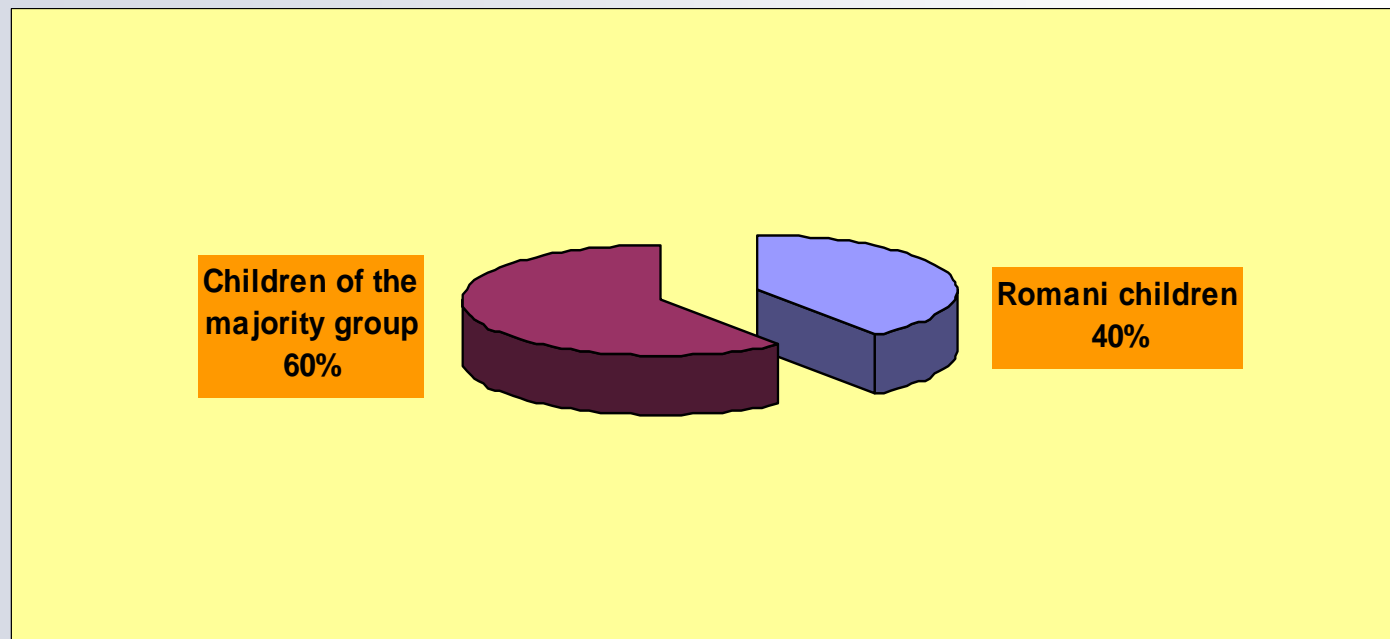
- Comparison of number of hospitalized Roma children and children of the majority group of age group 1-3 years in years 2007-2008



# Morbidity Rate and Hospitalization



- Comparison of number of hospitalized Roma children and children of the majority group of age group 4-18 years in years 2007-2008



# Morbidity Rate and Hospitalization



- The most vulnerable and the most suffering group are small children under one year of age, they are fully dependent on their parents' care in all aspects
- Status of numerous Roma settlements creates totally unfavorable conditions for life of newly born children
- Insufficient infrastructure significantly decreases hygienic standard of population living in such settlements
- It is nearly impossible to satisfy at least minimum hygienic needs of small children
- Fast development and transmission of infectious diseases can be observed with high occurrence

## Morbidity Rate and Hospitalization



- The children are often born to under-aged mothers, mothers who smoke during their pregnancy, drink alcoholic beverages or take even easily accessible drugs
- Roma mothers themselves suffer from malnutrition, very often they are anemic, they suffer from chronic diseases, such as hepatitis B or C and lately higher occurrence of syphilis has been reported
- All the referred factors on mothers' side predetermine embryo during pregnancy to insufficient development, children are born with low birth weight and numerous births are given preterm with various development malfunctions and serious inborn infections

# Morbidity Rate and Hospitalization



- Non-availability of health care due to separation of settlements, unemployment rate, lack of financial means, insufficient education of parents and insufficient health awareness prevents mothers living in such environment from visiting a doctor during their pregnancy and later even a doctor of their born children
- Preventive behavior does not exist
- Organism and immunity system of preterm born children with low birth weight are not developed sufficiently; therefore common disease may get more complicated and results in hospitalization of a small child

## Morbidity Rate and Hospitalization



- Abandonments of newly born children by mothers often as soon as the second day after the birth
- Children abandoned by their mothers are not breastfed, which is an important pre-determining factor of diseases occurrence
- Children who are not breastfed are fed by instant milk diluted with water from the river or are fed only with the water from river, which results in serious diarrhea and serious dehydration and shock, which may further result even in failure of vital functions
- Wrong nutrition of children slows down their growth and leads to damage of other body apparatus

## Morbidity Rate and Hospitalization



- Insufficient or even no vaccination results in repeated occurrence of infectious diseases, even those, which have almost totally disappeared, such as tuberculosis occurrence
- Since summer 2008 until now, epidemic spread of acute hepatitis A has been cyclically occurring with focus point being in Roma settlements
- Children of higher age suffer from various transmitted skin diseases such as psora and lice with often empyemic skin complications
- Almost 90% hospitalized Roma children preschool and younger school age have parasites

## Conclusion



- Since 2004 the number of children born to unfavorable living conditions keeps increasing, high mortality rate of children endangered by environment remains and the morbidity rate and hospitalization of children endangered by environment increases as well
- The number of children hospitalized due to social reasons keeps growing
- Repeated and long lasting hospitalization due to social reasons results in emotional deprivation of children

## Conclusion



- Increasing proportion of under-aged mothers and large number of single mothers also contribute to worsened child care and subsequent increase of morbidity rate of those children for many reasons
- Very often high morbidity and mortality rates of Roma children living mainly in separated villages are caused by insufficient availability of health care services mainly due to village segregation
- *„How to protect children endangered by environment and how to improve their living situation ?“*

## Conclusion



- *Answer ?*
- The problems are complex and finding a solution requires systematic, well-managed attitude as well as coordinated cooperation of the state with the legislation, social sphere, insurance companies, health sector, communal sphere and the third sector
- Prevention as one of the most effective ways to avoid diseases, high mortality rate and negative phenomena in the society in general, remains the number one
- Improvement of prevention quality at the level of self-governing regions, towns and villages

## Conclusion



- Range of health prevention itself is very broad
- Individual activities are interconnected
- It is useful when they are not performed solely by medics – doctors and nurses but also by trained employees of other organizations as well as social workers
- There is a significant increase in the level of awareness and in impact of this information on socially deprived groups mainly in Roma villages

## Conclusion



- *The main aim* is to affect and increase responsibility of the adults belonging to such groups for their own health and health of their children,
- to improve attitude to prevention, vaccination and treatment of diseases,
- to improve awareness of mothers as far as care for a child is concerned starting with pregnancy through giving birth to care for an infant

*„Right to healthy life of high quality is given to all children regardless of where and to which social conditions they were born“*

**Thank you very much for your attention**