



Civil Society Monitoring Report

on the Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy
and Decade Action Plan in 2012 in

BULGARIA



DECADE OF
ROMA
INCLUSION
2005-2015

Civil Society Monitoring Report

on the Implementation
of the National Roma Integration Strategy
and Decade Action Plan in 2012 in

BULGARIA

Prepared by a civil society coalition comprising the following organizations:

Open Society Institute – Sofia ■ Indi-Roma 97 Social Foundation ■ Health of the Roma People Foundation
Roma Academy for Culture and Education Association ■ Roma Solidarity Foundation ■ Integro Association
Nov Pat Association ■ Amalipe Centre for Intercultural Dialogue and Tolerance ■ World without Borders Association



Written by

Dimitar Dimitrov ■ Vania Grigorova ■ Joana Decheva

Coordinated by

the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation
in cooperation with the Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma programme
and the Roma Initiatives Office of the Open Society Foundations



Published by

Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation
Teréz körút 46.
1066 Budapest, Hungary
www.romadecade.org

Design and layout: www.foszer-design.com

Proofreading: Christopher Ryan

©2013 by Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any forms or by any means without the permission of the Publisher.

ISSN: 2064-0714

All civil society monitoring reports are available at www.romadecade.org

This report was prepared by a civil society coalition comprising the following organizations: the Open Society Institute – Sofia, the Indi-Roma 97 Social Foundation, the Health of the Roma People Foundation, the Roma Academy for Culture and Education Association, the Roma Solidarity Foundation, the Integro Association, the Nov Pat Association, the Amalipe Centre for Intercultural Dialogue and Tolerance and the World without Borders Association. The lead researcher of the coalition is Alexey Pamporov PhD, Head Assistant Professor at the Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and CSO at the Open Society Institute – Sofia and the project manager is Dimitar Dimitrov, Director of the ROMA programme at the Open Society Institute – Sofia.

The authors of the report are: Dimitar Dimitrov, Director of the “ROMA” programme at the Open Society Institute Sofia, Vania Grigorova, “Governance and public policies” programme consultant, Open Society Institute Sofia and Joana Decheva, Roma policy research fellow at the Open Society Institute. The following researchers have been involved in the project: Dragomira Belcheva, Petya Brainova, Albena Kostadinova, Dr Stefan Panayotov, Stela Kostova, Demir Yanev, Lilia Makaveeva, Kadrin Hasanov, Spaska Mihailova, Deyan Kolev, Maria Ivanova, Gancho Iliev.

The following organizations have been involved in the advising on the report: the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, the Central European University’s Department of Public Policy, the European Roma Rights Centre, Habitat for Humanity, the Roma Education Fund, and from the Open Society Foundation: Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma program, the Roma Initiatives Office, and the Roma Health Project.

In the pilot year of 2012, the Decade Secretariat decided to support reports from civil society coalitions in seven countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) and the Roma Initiatives Office commissioned an additional report from the Czech Republic. In addition, the Decade Secretariat made a template public in order to encourage additional civil society actors to monitor the implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) and Decade Action Plans (AP).

In the reports, civil society coalitions supplement or present alternative information to Decade Progress Reports submitted by Participating Governments in the Decade of Roma Inclusion and to any reports submitted by State parties to the European Commission on implementation of their NRIS. These reports are not meant to substitute for quantitative monitoring and evaluation by State authorities but to channel local knowledge into national and European policy processes and reflect on the real social impact of government measures. The civil society reports provide additional data to official ones, proxy data where there is no official data, or alternative interpretation of published data.

The project is coordinated by the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation in cooperation with Open Society Foundation’s Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma program and the Roma Initiatives Office.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	7
List of Abbreviations	15
Introduction	17
1. Structural Requirements	19
2. Anti-Discrimination	23
3. Education	33
4. Employment	41
5. Health	45
6. Housing	49
Case Studies	53
Bibliography	65



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present civil society monitoring report aims to provide thorough information and explanations about major challenges and obstacles with regard to the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the National Roma Integration Strategy in Bulgaria, as implemented by the Bulgarian government, along with recommendations. A specially designed research project was conducted in the period November – December 2012, in all neighbourhoods with predominantly Roma populations in Bulgaria. The sample for the study comprised 1000 households, equal to 100 clusters with 10 respondents in each cluster. The data-base was used for simple random sampling of segregated neighbourhoods, weighted by population size. The quantitative study was complemented by the work of eight focus groups consisting of Roma end beneficiaries in the following localities: Petrich, Sofia, Hayredin, Kuklen, Stara Zagora, Razgrad and Veliko Tarnovo.

Bulgaria's achievements in implementing its commitment of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the recently adopted National Roma Integration Strategy have been widely debated; however there has been no significant progress in the relevant priority areas related to Roma integration into mainstream society in Bulgaria.

The main conclusion of the present report is that the NRIS lacks synergy, coherence and equal distribution in its envisaged activities, measures and financial allocations. It overlooks major areas such as housing conditions, health care and educational integration.

In order to accomplish the measures outlined in the NRIS, the Bulgarian government should provide adequate structural provisions by combining consistent political will with a suitable legislative framework, expertise, knowledge, sensibility, flexibility and appropriate financial resources. Furthermore, these provisions should be based on the principles of transparency, inclusiveness, partnership, efficiency and effectiveness, all aimed at achieving measurable, long term impact.

Anti-discrimination

The gravest challenge faced by Roma in Bulgaria lies in the increasing levels of anti-Roma rhetoric and discrimination. Although Bulgaria has been rated as one of the most advanced countries in terms of legislative provisions designed to combat discrimination, in reality the situation has been deteriorating. About 26% of the respondents that took part in research conducted by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)¹ in 2009 with regard to discrimination declared that they felt discriminated against in the past 12 months because of their ethnicity.

Consistent efforts by all relevant stakeholders in all spheres are needed in order to overcome the widespread stereotypes and prejudices against Roma in Bulgaria. The NRIS in this regard is failing to address the wider society either by promoting successful role models or by closely involving the mainstream media.

1 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights *Data in focus*, 2009, available at: http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/413-EU-MIDIS_ROMA_BG.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).

Education

At present almost half of the Roma students in Bulgaria (48.3%)² are enrolled in school facilities situated in urban neighbourhoods with predominantly Roma populations, which creates conditions for the increased educational segregation of Roma students. Although the Bulgarian government has defined support for educational integration as a major priority in the area of education, no strategic or long-term results have been achieved apart from a very few financial interventions, primarily supported by the EU. Considering the low levels of educational achievement and the rising dropout rates among Roma students, targeted efforts to reinforce educational integration have been undertaken mainly by non-governmental organizations.³ Widespread illiteracy among ethnic Roma, in comparison to ethnic Bulgarian groups, is one of the findings of recent European Union/United Nations Development Programme/World Bank (EU/UNDA/WB) research on the situation of Roma in 11 EU member states, which also stresses the widely known fact that Roma children lag behind in educational achievement in their relevant age group.

Evenly distributed and properly resourced government efforts at all levels of education are crucial in order to address the abovementioned drawbacks suffered by Roma children.

As a result of low educational achievement, employment levels among Roma in Bulgaria have been falling as well. The research conducted for the purpose of the present report shows that only one third of Roma are currently employed. The most common reason for this, as stated by the majority of respondents in the survey, is widespread discrimination based on ethnicity, but respondents attributed their difficulties to a variety of causes: ethnic background was quoted by 25%, but low level of qualification was mentioned by 22% and lack of appropriate connections by 13.9%. The gravity of the situation is further confirmed by the fact that 44% of the respondents have never been employed at all. Although Roma find it difficult to start a career, almost 80% of those looking for employment stated that they were prepared to take on any kind of job.

Employment

The Bulgarian economy has been hard hit by the economic crisis that began in Europe in 2008, although foreign investors have been looking for investment opportunities in the country. However, Roma communities are not considered as the greatest human resource available, although they should be, in view of the rising average age of the population of the country. In this context the economic arguments in favour of employing a significant mass of people who have reached working age are unavoidable, but the Bulgarian government has not initiated targeted efforts to boost employment among Roma, preferring to relegate the debate to the issue of subsidized employment by presenting temporary solutions and recognizing Roma only as a social problem. Thus, it is already a matter of urgency for the government to undertake serious and well resourced measures to address the problems caused by the increasing anti-Roma discrimination on the labour market. It should also establish a favourable environment for private businesses by recognizing the Roma ethnic group as a human resource that has not been utilized for the betterment of the whole of society.

Unemployment has also turned the health care status of Roma in Bulgaria into an urgent challenge. One third of the Roma respondents who participated in the research which preceded the writing of this report stated they are without health insurance and have been without health insurance for the past 12 months, and thus have limited or no access to health care services. Although Roma evaluate their health status as "good" according to a survey conducted in 2009 by Fundacion Secretariado Gitano,⁴ European citizens live longer than Roma, whose longevity rate is 25.7%, while for Europeans it is 51%. The report makes a further point that could be instrumental in combating the most widespread stereotype about Roma birth rates: the decrease in Roma birth rates reflects the same phenomenon observable in the majority society.

2 Open Society Institute – Sofia *Beyond programming – measuring progress on the road to Roma inclusion in Bulgaria within the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and the National Roma Integration Strategy 2012-2020*: December 2012.

3 <http://sf.mon.bg/>.

4 Fundacion Secretariado Gitano, Health and the Roma community, analysis of the situation in Europe, 2009, available at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_health_en.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).

Health

The Roma community has been the subject of numerous strategic documents regarding health care; however these have not had any significant impact on the health status of Roma. It has to be said that current strategic documents such as the NRIS do not adequately address Roma health care shortcomings. The main objective stated by the NRIS is the provision of equal access to health care, which is to be ensured by legislation endorsing changes in the relevant regulations. Although this has been evaluated as a positive step towards improving the health status of Roma it has to be substantiated by activities that would serve as indicators for success.

Housing

Improvements in the health status of Roma can be expected only when housing conditions are brought closer to national standards. The present situation is illustrative for the appalling and formidable housing conditions of Roma in Bulgaria. About 55.4%⁵ of Roma live in urban areas, mainly in neighbourhoods which have all the characteristics of ghettos: poor social and technical infrastructure, lack of sewage systems and no proper mains water supply. Although a report by UNDP 6 states that there has been some improvement in terms of living space for Roma, which has risen from 15 square meters per head in 2004 to 18 in 2011, it is still insufficient and inappropriate to the needs of the Roma households. More than the half of the respondents in the research for the present report (60%) declared that they do not have hot running water within their dwelling; while 20% stated they do not have any running water in the house at all.

The NRIS in this regard envisages inadequate measures for improving Roma living conditions and relies primarily on interaction with and active participation on the part of municipal authorities. Furthermore the lack of financial allocations to a significant part of the NRIS activities related to housing conditions clearly indicates the need for reconsideration of the NRIS plan.

Recommendations

Regardless of the large number of strategic documents and operational programs that have appeared, it is clear that strong political will to improve the situation of Roma does not exist. The implementation and application of politically stated intentions have not become reality. One of the main obstacles to more significant results in the field of Roma inclusion is the inadequate financial provision of activities for integration. Therefore, within the development and the implementation of government policies and activities in the relevant sectors it is necessary to make distinct and clearly defined budgetary commitments – both from EU funds and from the state budget. A particularly strong recommendation in this regard is the provision of adequate resources from the national budget and optimal use of the EU funds under the “Human Resources Development” and the “Regional Development” operational programmes aimed at reinforcing Roma social inclusion.

The level of educational achievement among Roma remains low and policy measures are implemented only occasionally, on an individual-project basis, without sustainable results. The new Education Act contains a number of positive elements that would also affect Roma children and students. Its adoption, however, is still not assured, which in practice means that in the next few years the provisions of the Act may not become a part of the educational process. With the exception of the measures taken by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science specifically targeted at the education of children and students from ethnic minorities, mainstream policies hardly affect the education of Roma at all. The approach applied

5 European Commission, *National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria*, 2010, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_bulgaria_strategy_en.pdf (Accessed 12 May 2013), p.4

6 United Nations Development Programme, *Roma housing: separate and unequal*, 25 February 2013, available at <http://europeandcis.undp.org/ourwork/roma/show/20878C34-F203-1EE9-B29075D0AFDC41BB> (Accessed 12 May 2013).

by the state and the local authorities should be visionary and strategic. It should be oriented towards improvement and long term impact. NGOs are very important players, but provision of quality education to all children and students is a duty of the state and the state and its institutions should undertake this very important role. NGOs should only support the process, but main responsibility must be taken by the official authorities. Only then can sustainable and long-term results be expected and achieved – through logically framed public policies, implemented by the authorities, supported by civic organizations.

The main obstacle to Roma becoming equal citizens of Bulgaria is deeply rooted structural and societal discrimination. Social distances between Roma and non-Roma are widening⁷ and over the past five years the situation in this respect has been deteriorating, not improving. Cases of hate-speech and of direct discrimination on the part of institutions and individuals are frequent and are supported by the majority of the population in Bulgaria. Since most of the prejudices and stereotypes against Roma are not based on facts, but on myths, presumably they could easily be overcome. Developing measures for bridging the distance between Roma and non-Roma and for promoting multicultural dialogue will contribute to changing the status quo. An institutional environment apt to provide protection against discrimination is well-established, however its existence and operations should be improved in such a way that it can make its presence felt through more direct and aggressive activities.

A coherent and synergetic programming process is essential, taking into account both national resources and the structural funds of the EU, and removing and preventing the emergence of barriers such as extended bureaucracy from project implementation (as it prevents the beneficiaries from concentrating on the achievement of the planned results), along with simplification and acceleration of the procedures for application. Renewed regulations for distributing EU funds intended for combating discrimination and segregation and provision of equal access of Roma to public services must be reconsidered; as well as better use (at all levels) of EU resources for promoting the employment, education and the culture of the Roma. The EC should develop guidelines for Roma integration by defining minimal standards and indicators for social inclusion policies targeted at the Roma within EU member states. The sectoral policies need independent mechanisms for monitoring and providing early warning about the size and the effect of what is to be achieved under these commitments for each fiscal year. This applies both to the project cycle of EU programming and to the national budgeting cycle. Social inclusion requires the exploitation of existing human resources at national and local level in terms of improved coordination and collaboration between NGOs and municipal administrations.

Immediate legislative amendments must be made to enable every individual to register and obtain identity documents. Considering Bulgaria's commitment, as a signatory to a number of international and EU conventions, to observing the civil rights of every person in the country, the current Law on Civic Registration needs to be revised.

Preventive measures, based on municipal or local NGO projects, are not enough to reduce the tendency of Roma children to drop out of school or to encourage the educational integration of these children. A wider national programme to support early childhood development and to guarantee free access to pre-school education and kindergarten for all children should be developed. Early access of Roma children to education is problematic and requires the development of particular programmes for the provision of transportation to school, integration modules for children and parents in the educational system, etc. The education and training of teachers in non-discriminatory and inclusive education is a key factor that would contribute to the integration not only of students from the Roma community, but also of students with disabilities and those with deviant behaviour. Within the NRIS the section on Education is relatively well developed and as a whole represents a step forward. It sets out 40 interventions intended to achieve 16 tasks within 7 objectives. These continue the main trends of the Roma educational integration policy from previous years, expanding them with new activities which reflect the new realities in the Bulgarian educational system (delegated school budgets, the upcoming Public Education Act, standards for intercultural education, etc.).

At the same a number of gaps are noticeable. For example, within Objective 1 “Guaranteeing the right to equal access to quality education, including by integrating Roma children and students in ethnically mixed kindergartens and schools” (i.e. the de-segregation objective) four tasks are set. They relate to encouraging ethnically mixed education at pre-school and university level. The school level is missing and this is a serious failing, bearing in mind that most efforts during previous years have been directed at desegregation and ethnically mixed schooling at elementary and primary levels. In the draft prepared by an expert working group, activities at secondary school level were included and it is not clear why they subsequently disappeared. As explained above, another serious weakness in the education policy is that most of the planned interventions (27 out of 40) are not budgeted for. This makes any real progress in educational integration strongly conditional and dependent on uncertain political developments.

In the area of Employment, more targeted programmes and measures are needed to mobilise long term non-active people on the labour market. More literacy courses, and qualification and pre-qualification courses should be considered. Individual programmes should be available through labour offices and there should be clearer and more visible assistance with finding employment or starting individual businesses. Within the NRIS, the Employment section is one of the less developed fields. It contains only an insignificant number of interventions: altogether 8 activities for achieving 7 tasks and 5 objectives. The interventions are general in nature and often lack specifics. It seems that some of the important interventions carried out by the Ministry of Labour for Roma labour integration (for example assigning Roma labour mediators to the “Activation of Inactive People” program) are not included in the Plan. The entire section on Employment lacks a budget. Another serious omission is that the topics of social inclusion and social services in the Roma community are not included in the Plan. The greatest strength of the Employment part is that it envisages assigning Roma experts to the Labour Offices: this is an important step that should be implemented. Considering the fact that the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is responsible for the allocation and use of considerable financial resources (within the Human Resources Development Operational Plan and the National Action Plan for Employment), and that it is responsible for the social inclusion policy and for the social services it is possible and necessary to fill the gaps related to full integration on the labour market. Targeted efforts to promote the entry of new workers of Roma origin into the labour market could be supported by the state both financially and by the provision of training in acquiring on-the-job skills. Matching potential employers with qualified Roma by setting up venues for this purpose, encouraging for example regular one-to-one meetings at the Labour Offices, and also the provision of career counselling and professional growth activities would be essential for young Roma.

Improving access to health care and health care services for Roma is a long-term challenge, which made even more problematic by delays in overall health care reform in the country. The interventions envisaged in the NRIS are somewhat vague. Any legislative amendment is highly unrealistic in view of the unreformed nature of the sector, especially given the fact that at present a difficult process of resource optimization is being implemented. The provision of access to health care services has to be segmented accordingly to the target groups. It is obvious that not all Roma or economically disadvantaged groups are in need of this. The most deprived group of people that needs an urgent response by the government are the long-term unemployed who do not appear in the social system as beneficiaries, since they are the ones with no access to health care services at all. The NRIS must address this issue by designing better and more flexible social programs to allow access to emergency health care services. It is clear that in an economic situation like the one that the country is currently experiencing, the economic arguments for endorsing additional social services are not likely to be widely supported; however the provision of adequate health care to every Bulgarian citizen has to be a priority.

Although the health mediator model has many weaknesses and is uncertain in terms of financial resources and impact, it still represents a step towards raising awareness amongst Roma of their rights and obligations in the area of health care. A recommendation to the government in this regard is that it should boost its financial investment in health mediators in order to increase their capacity, and improve the criteria according to which mediators are selected, by establishing medical education as a requirement, and subsequently increase remuneration to a point where it is commensurate with the level of expertise and assistance provided.

The Bulgarian government has to support all efforts related to building a new generation of young Roma health professionals, an initiative started by OSI and REF which constitutes a valuable and much needed in-

tervention and which will undoubtedly have an impact on improving the health status of Roma in Bulgaria. Moreover, targeted efforts are needed to combat and overcome discriminatory attitudes toward Roma. Young Roma health professionals could serve as an excellent role model for both communities.

In order to achieve tangible results in the health care area considerable efforts must also be made to cater for the requirements of pre- and postnatal health care for young Roma mothers and children, family and reproductive health and early childhood development. These must correspond to support for regular preventive check-ups and adequate treatment of chronic diseases amongst Roma. Information campaigns may be effective, but they would be more efficient if followed by opportunities for treatment in case of need.

The best way to ameliorate the health status of Roma is by improving living conditions, above all for those living in ghetto areas in slums and shanty towns with no mains water supply or sewage system.⁸ The NRIS has revived plans for interventions that were first proposed more than 10 years ago. Substantial improvements have not been observed in this area. It is important for the NRIS and the Bulgarian government to promote social housing as a tool for improving the living conditions of Roma; however these measures have to be combined with a powerful information campaign aimed at combating negative attitudes toward Roma. An intersectoral and integrated approach must be applied if success is to be achieved. More importantly, the NRIS must take into consideration the large number of segregated communities and the need to update the relevant regulations and property registration procedures. Although the present AP contains 18 interventions designed to achieve 9 tasks within one objective, most of the interventions (12 out of 18) are either not covered financially or very inadequately funded. The allocation made in the state budget is very modest – 550,000 BGN (230,000 EUR), which includes contributions from municipal budgets. The only (relatively) significant amounts are from the Regional Development Operational Plan (RD OP): 15,000,000 BGN for a social housing pilot scheme⁹ and 5,000,000 BGN for educational infrastructure. Bearing in mind the substantial financial resources managed by Ministry of Regional Development (within its own budget and also from RD OP funds) as well as the well prepared and detailed National Program for Improving the Living Conditions of Roma (approved in 2006), the housing provisions of the current AP appear to be a major step backwards. Significant measures need to be taken to make good the current failings.

It is necessary to introduce a system for collecting data on the victims of human trafficking of Roma origin in order to plan more effective policies and to measure the progress of their implementation. All successful practices related to the prevention of human trafficking in Roma neighbourhoods need to be publicised and transferred to all locations where vulnerable groups live. According to Article 34 of the 2004/38/EO Directive on the right of EU citizens to move and live within the EU, Bulgaria is obliged to distribute information about the rights and the obligations of EU citizens with regard to the issues of mobility through awareness-raising campaigns. In the case of Roma the labour and health mediators could be used to provide information. It would also be useful to provide information for the relevant institutions and the sections concerned with employment and social issues within the Bulgarian embassies abroad, (established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to inform the citizens of Bulgaria who take advantage of their rights to free movement and employment abroad).

The Rule of Law and Non-Discrimination section of the NRIS envisages 7 interventions aimed at achieving 4 tasks within 4 objectives. These include tasks such as ‘Increasing the number of Roma people employed in public administration’ and so on, which are reasonable in themselves but which are not backed up with interventions that guarantee their achievement. For example, delivering training to municipal experts on ethnic issues, creating a database of young Roma willing to start a career in public administration and providing internships for young Roma do not guarantee that the number of Roma who work in public administration will actually increase. The financial provision for the entire area is insignificant: 114,690 BGN (58,815 EUR) spread over 3 years. The fact that the area is considered at all and that it is included in the state budget is a positive initial step, but it needs to be further developed through the planning of a comprehensive set

8 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers in the European Union*, available at <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2011/housing-conditions-roma-and-travellers-european-union-comparative-report> (Accessed 12 May 2011), p. 45.

9 Initiated in 2011 by Tomislav Donchev, Minister of EU Funds and implemented at present in 4 municipalities.

of interventions as well as by using additional financing from the European funds (for example through the Administrative Capacity Operational Plan).

Sociological research projects should be used to develop the communication plan and media strategy of the NRIS. Special attention should be paid to the fact that the majority of Bulgarians consider the Roma as a privileged minority, an opinion that should be countered with examples and facts (e.g. Roma do pay their bills, go to school, etc.). The general message should be that Roma are the same as all other citizens of Bulgaria and the EU and that it is wrong to focus exclusively on their cultural diversity. People should become used to seeing Roma everywhere – in school books, on TV, in the National Assembly, in movies, in hospitals – everywhere; and this should not be an “exotic” event, but a norm. The Culture and Media section of the Bulgarian NRIS contains 8 interventions aimed at achieving 5 tasks within 2 objectives. Most of the interventions are mainstream activities carried out by the Ministry of Culture with an added formal “Roma” dimension: for example “2.2.1. Institutional strengthening of the *chitalishte*¹⁰ as modern centres for the development of local communities, including the Roma communities”. None of the interventions has dedicated funding.

It is difficult to imagine that the AP could contribute to achieving the objectives set in the NRIS in this area. It is necessary for the AP to be complemented with targeted interventions and for significant funding (from the state budget and European funds) to be attracted.

The present situation of Roma is characterized by many challenges and setbacks, and by the need for immediate action. Many barriers stand in the way of the comprehensive implementation of any plan related to Roma. Therefore, the following recommendations must be taken in consideration by the relevant state authorities, in order for sustainable and measurable impact to be achieved:

1. Provision of appropriate financial resources in each activity and programme area both from EU structural funds and from the national budget.
2. Strong political commitment to improving the living conditions of Roma by overcoming poverty, combating structural discrimination, and through facilitation on the labour market, improved living conditions with regard to access to public services; improved educational performance and achievement, and better access to health care services.
3. Provision of an adequate, fully functional and inclusive administrative structure, with an extended mandate for operations that would guide the process of overcoming the disadvantages faced by Roma.
4. Guarantees of the preservation of principles such as partnership, transparency, inclusion, accountability and credibility given by the state.
5. Approval of a relevant, regular and comprehensive EU-operated monitoring mechanism to oversee the implementation of the NRIS.

10 A form of archaic cultural community centre.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Action Plan
APAD	Act on Protection against Discrimination
CEICSEM	Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
CoM	Council of Ministers
CP	Call for proposals
CPD	Commission for Protection against Discrimination
EC	European Commission
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
GDP	Gross domestic product
GP	General Practitioner (Family Doctor)
GPS	Global positioning system
ID	Identification
MEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Science
NCCEII	National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategy
NSI	National Statistical Institute
NUTS	Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics
OPHRD	Operational programme “Human Resources Development”
OSI	Open Society Institute
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USCRADP	Unified system for civil registration and administrative service of the population
WB	World Bank

INTRODUCTION

Bulgaria is one of the EU member state with the largest share of Roma among its population. Although data from the most recent census (2011) indicate a slight decrease in the number of people identifying themselves as Roma: 325,980 people or 4.42%¹¹ of the total population of the country in comparison to the previous census of 2001, which counted 370,908 Roma or 4.68% of the total population. According to expert estimates, the latest census showed a smaller number of people identifying themselves as Roma because the number of those who did not self-identify as Roma was disproportionately high.¹² Calculating on the basis of other identification methods which do not depend on self-identification, Roma constitute 10.33% of the Bulgarian population. This estimate is quoted in an official European Commission (EC) document which invites the member states to develop national strategies for the Roma.¹³

As for territorial distribution, Roma are equally distributed across the country if counted at the level of “Planning regions” (NUTS II) and at the level of “Administrative districts” (NUTS III), but higher concentrations are reported at lower territorial levels in communities and segregated neighbourhoods in larger settlements. 17 districts of the country have higher than average proportions of Roma people. The district with the highest proportion of Roma is located in the North-western Planning Region of Montana (29%), followed by Sliven (28%) and Yambol (27%) in the South-eastern Planning Region.¹⁴ At local level, major differences have also been noticed, with Roma concentrated in certain communities. In some municipalities, there are villages where the whole population consists of Roma, as well as segregated Roma neighbourhoods in the large cities. Generally, the level of residential segregation is high, which reflects similar segregation in employment, public services etc. According to EUROSTAT data from 2010, the most underdeveloped regions in terms of poverty were in Bulgaria and Romania, with the lowest figures recorded in north-western Bulgaria (26% of the average GDP for the EU), followed by north-central Bulgaria and north-eastern Romania (both 29%), and south-central Bulgaria (30%). Despite the fact that the survey conducted for the purposes of the present report does not confirm a similar regional correlation between poverty and the size of the Roma population, the region identified by the EUROSTAT as the poorest in Europe is also the region with the highest proportion of Roma in Bulgaria.

The present report is developed within the “Beyond programming – Measuring progress on the road to Roma inclusion in Bulgaria within the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and the National Roma Integration Strategy 2012-2020” project, funded by the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation and implemented by the Open Society Institute – Sofia in partnership with the Amalipe Centre for Intercultural Dialogue and Tolerance, the Integro Association, the Roma Academy for Culture and Education, the Indi-Roma 97 Foundation, the Health of the Roma Foundation, the World without Borders Association and the Roma Solidarity Foundation.

11 National statistical institute (www.nsi.bg).

12 Alexey Pamporov, “Déjà vu: Disappearing Minorities”, *“Objective” Magazine* Number 195, 25 July 2011.

13 European Commission, *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, 5 April 2011, available at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).

14 Open Society Institute – Sofia, *Beyond programming – measuring progress on the road to Roma inclusion in Bulgaria within the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and the National Roma Integration Strategy 2012-2020*, December 2012.

This civil society monitoring report is intended to present alternative information to the Decade Progress Reports submitted by State parties to the International Steering Committee and to any other reports submitted by State parties to the European Commission concerning the implementation of their NRIS.¹⁵ The report is not supposed to substitute quantitative monitoring and evaluation by state authorities but to channel local knowledge into national and European-level policy processes and to reflect on the real social impact of government measures. Thus, the report seeks to provide additional data to official ones, proxy data where there are no official data, and subsequent interpretation of published data.

For the purposes of the report the authors have used available data on the topics discussed. The project has conducted large-scale representative research projects on the Roma living in neighbourhoods with predominantly Roma populations, which have resulted in a significant amount of data suited to the purposes of the civil society monitoring report. The research used common methods for data collection, both quantitative and qualitative, supplemented by a booster sample based on expert estimates concerning Roma. This contains basic information on all segregated neighbourhoods in the country such as locality (district, municipality and settlement), an expert estimate of the size of the population and other characteristics. The sample size is 1000 households, equal to 100 clusters with 10 respondents in each cluster. The data-base was used for simple random sampling of segregated neighbourhoods, weighted by population. GPS sampling was used to identify the households in each cluster, because of the very specific living conditions. For example, one neighbourhood may be spread out in an open field where there are neither addresses nor streets, but only buildings whose existence has never been officially registered. Another example is a neighbourhood where a single address refers to two, three or more different buildings, inhabited by independent households. These specific conditions in segregated neighbourhoods make it impossible to use a list of addresses from the electoral register. To guarantee the representative nature of this survey, an equal chance for each household to be selected was given by creating a grid over the area of the neighbourhood with size of each cell equal to the size of the largest yard in the neighbourhood. Then a sample of the cells from this grid were selected by geometrical rule. The aim here was to reduce the influence of the larger yards and to generate points (coordinates) randomly only in the selected cells. The questionnaire consisted of 6 modules relevant to the topics of the civil society monitoring report:

- Personal Information – (data at individual level) for each household member: demographic characteristics, marital status
- Education – (data at individual level) level of education, educational history (incl. type of school, (de)segregated, special), reasons for drop-out and government measures
- Employment status. The data presented are at individual level for each household member aged 15 and over
- Healthcare – healthcare status and access to healthcare services
- Antidiscrimination – registration documents, access to basic services, identity documents
- Housing – (data at household level) - living conditions and access to public utilities
- Structural requirements – assessment of capacity of local authorities and NGOs and level of participation in decision-making processes.

The report has been developed in accordance with a detailed template prepared by the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat (in cooperation with the Open Society Foundation's Roma Initiatives and Make the Most of EU Funds for Roma and in consultation with the European Commission).

15 The European Commission's view is that State parties are not required to report on implementation of their NRIS, although they may share the results of their monitoring system with the European Commission.

1. STRUCTURAL REQUIREMENTS

The National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues (NCCEII)¹⁶ is a consultative and coordinating body concerned with the design, implementation and monitoring of governmental policies on the integration of ethnic minorities in Bulgaria. The mandate of the Council is to consolidate the collaboration between state, regional and local authorities and the NGOs that work on the issues of the ethnic minorities.

The overall structure of the decision making process is constituted by an advisory body comprising of the Deputy Prime Minister, who chairs the Council, ministers and relevant deputy ministers. Civil society organizations are recognized as members of the NCCEII, the selection being made annually through an open call for membership. Members of the Council are also socially engaged state institutions such as the National Statistical Institute, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and the National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria.¹⁷

The NCCEII has been supported by a Secretariat with mainly administrative functions, to which experts and/or employees of Roma origin have not been appointed.¹⁸

The NCCEII faces a number of different challenges: low level of capacity in terms of programme design, implementation and monitoring, inconsistency of planned measures and interventions; low level of support by state administration and poor communications with, and engagement of, relevant ministries and state bodies. Overall there is only a low level of accountability and credibility for actions targeted at reinforcing Roma inclusion.

Although on paper the Council envisages preserving the principles of partnership, transparency and equality, a recent demonstration led by Roma civil society organizations provided evidence of the urgent need to reshape government policy on addressing widespread anti-Roma rhetoric and discriminatory attitudes. The level of readiness to interact with the wider society in the implementation of Roma targeted activities is so low as to be insignificant.

With regard to the implementation of the NRIS and the Decade of Roma Inclusion Action Plan many weaknesses have been observed. These are mainly related to the inability of the NCCEII to insist on the importance of political engagement and financial allocations for proper and successful implementation.

Part VII of the NRIS, "Mechanisms for implementation of the integration policy", re-affirms the existing institutional framework and division of responsibilities. It remains the role of the institutions of executive power to manage the integration policy in any given field (for example, the Ministry of Education is responsible for educational integration, etc.), while the coordinating role of the NCCEII is also re-affirmed. The Strategy calls for "forming and maintaining the necessary administrative capacity in the key responsible institutions", acknowledging an obvious need for an administrative infrastructure that deals with Roma integration in the key ministries at present. So far, no ministry has had any administrative unit responsible for Roma integration¹⁹ and in general only one expert is assigned to supporting activities related to Roma integration,

16 <http://www.nccedi.government.bg/page.php?category=63>.

17 http://www.nccedi.government.bg/upload/docs/Zap_NSSEIV_2012_2.03.2012.pdf.

18 At the time of finalization of the present report the country has a temporary government since the last government has resigned. National elections will take part on May 12th, 2013.

19 Such units at a lower administrative level – *отдели* / branches – existed in the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. They were disbanded in March 2009 and April 2011 respectively.

among several other issues.²⁰ In some cases the expert is not employed with a permanent contract but with a part-time “civic contract”.²¹

The NRIS envisages no need for changes to the current administrative infrastructure for Roma integration, but rather proposes “delegating certain responsibilities to directorates, branches, units or experts or forming specialized units”.

The same chapter also calls for the “inclusion of municipalities in implementation of the integration policy”, which is an important requirement considering the need to achieve substantial impact at local level. It does not, however, provide any mechanism through which this is to happen. There is no intention to provide administrative or financial support for this partnership; on the contrary the main principle is the delegation of responsibility “through delegating certain functions to directorates, branches, units and experts responsible for the integration policy” and requiring “Municipal experts on ethnic and integration issues to be assigned if necessary” the Strategy does not propose changes to the existing situation.²²

The NRIS only re-affirms the institutional infrastructure for Roma integration at central and municipal levels without providing for proper capacity development by establishing bodies and institutions with managerial (not only coordinating) responsibilities or forming administrative units solely responsible for Roma integration in key institutions. The lack of proper administrative back-up means that three possible options for NRIS implementation remain: purely formal implementation or even lack of implementation; a stronger role for NGOs and other stakeholders in initiating and implementing Roma integration activities; or changes in the administrative infrastructure that are not envisaged in the NRIS.

The National Council on Ethnic and Integration Issues has made efforts to involve regional and local authorities, as well as NGOs, in the elaboration of the NRIS as well as in regional/local strategies for integration of Roma. Between May and December 2012 the NCCEI organized a series of meetings dedicated to regional planning with regard to the NRIS. Regional governors and the experts from regional administrations who work on ethnic and integration issues, members of regional operative teams, representatives of municipalities and NGOs (members of the Council) discussed the elaboration of the regional strategies and municipal action plans. The last meeting took place on 19 December 2012 and was co-hosted by the Open Society Institute – Sofia. The relevant regional teams and municipal representatives participated in the meeting. In the course of the discussions, it became clear that local stakeholders may need systematic support with regard to the problems they face in regional and local planning. The strategies and the municipal action plans should be developed by the end of January 2013 and their adoption by the respective Municipal councils should take place by the end of February 2013.²³

To support the process of regional and local planning, the Council has developed a package of assisting tools, consisting of the text of the NRIS, the text of the Action Plan for Implementation of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, and a set of Guidelines; as well as the regional strategies of a few pilot municipalities.²⁴

In August 2012, a decree of the Prime Minister established an interdepartmental working group for provision of resources for Roma Integration based on financing from the EU funds. The group is chaired by the Minister on EU Funds Management. Members of the group are the managing authorities and the intermediary bodies of the Human Resources Development, the Regional Development and the Development of Rural Areas operational programmes, as well as representatives of NGOs working on Roma integration issues. The NGO representatives were selected through a procedure that preceded the

20 This is currently the case with the Ministries of Education, of Culture, of Labor and Social Policy, of Regional Development, the Ministry of Health and the Labor Agency.

21 This is the case with the Ministry of Health.

22 Republic of Bulgaria, *National Roma Integration Strategy of Bulgaria*, available at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_bulgaria_strategy_en.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013) part VII, p. 23.

23 <http://www.nccedi.government.bg/page.php?category=66&id=1861>.

24 <http://www.nccedi.government.bg/page.php?category=73&id=1861>.

establishment of the working group.²⁵ The procedure was initiated by the CoM and by the office of the Minister of EU Funds Management in particular. All NGOs registered in Bulgaria were eligible to apply. They were selected on the basis of their experience and involvement in the processes of development and application of public policies. The duties of the working group include planning resource provision and integrated interventions for implementation of the policies for integration of Roma people. The group will support the coordination of integrated interventions that will affect two or more programmes. The group will come up with a statement concerning the financial resources needed for the process of Roma integration during 2014-2020.

The establishment of the working group was proposed to the government by a few Roma NGOs: the Amalipe Centre, the World without Borders Association, the New Road Association and the Roma-Lom Foundation in October 2011.

Subsequently deputy ministers of relevant ministries – the Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Culture, as well as a representative of the NCCEI and a representative of the National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria joined the working group. Currently, the participants in the group are working on defining types of interventions to support the standardization of the multiple successful practices for integration (through development of methodology and financial standards), as well as for their sustainable financing (as state-delegated activities from the state budget, or from the Human Resources Development Operational Programme).

The working group is also discussing an annex to the NRIS entitled “Programmes for Supporting the Implementation of the NRIS”. It will hereafter provide a more substantial proposal of activities and budget provisions for the NRIS implementation.

The NCCEI is the governmental structure responsible for the implementation of the Strategy as well as for monitoring and evaluation, bearing in mind that ministries and other competent authorities are responsible for the “updating of the operational Roma integration documents in their respective areas, for the implementation of the planned measures and the monitoring, evaluation and reporting before NCCEI”.²⁶

The Strategy specifies that it will assign specific functions, tasks and budgets to departments (national, regional or local) in charge of its implementation as well as one employee to be appointed at each regional administration, with the basic task of working on the integration policy. In addition, at local level, the Strategy foresees a series of actions on a compulsory basis:

- Development of an annual action plan based on the Strategy with the participation of representatives of local Roma communities, ensuring that these are properly resourced;
- Delegation of activities for Roma integration at the municipal level, supported with municipalities’ own funds;
- Establishment of appropriate advisory and coordination mechanisms with the participation of civil structures;

However, procedures for monitoring and accountability are not envisaged.

The NRIS refers to active Roma involvement in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy as well as in other policy areas as a key success factor. In this spirit, it specifies that the Roma community will have to be involved in the administrative process, although it does not give any details about how this is to be realised. In relation to coordination with civil society organizations, the Strategy calls for an improvement of their role in the key participatory structures (NCCEI, Roma Integration Commission) though it does not specify what improvements should be implemented. The Strategy also encourages the establishment of advisory structures and mechanisms within ministries, regional governments and local

25 Deyan Kolev (Amalipe Centre), Gancho Iliev (World without Borders), Rumyan Sechkov (CEGA Foundation), Spaska Mihailova (New Road Association), Dr. Stefan Panayotov, (The Health of the Roma Foundation), Prof. Ivaylo Tournev (Ethnic Minorities’ Health Problems), Stela Kostova (Roma Academy for Culture and Education).

26 National Strategy for Roma Integration of the Republic of Bulgaria, Chapter VII, p.19-20.

authorities but does not clarify how these will be funded. The strategy does not, however, include any reference to financial resources to be dedicated to monitoring and evaluation.

The Action Plan has indicators aimed at monitoring and evaluating activities, but these are output indicators designed to measure only the performance of the activities and not their results (outcomes and impact). For example “number of delivered training events” measures the number of training events that take place without assessing the change in the trainees or the skills acquired as a result of the training. The indicators set are exclusively quantitative, while quality indicators do not appear. In addition, each indicator is linked only to a specific activity; there is no system of indicators, evidence of synergy and coherence of planned measures, prioritisation of activities or overall progress in implementing the Plan as a whole. The indicators envisaged could provide information only for the limited needs of so-called “administrative monitoring”. It is essential that the system of indicators should be developed into a strong, logical framework through the addition of quantitative indicators as well as outcome and impact indicators that measure both progress at priority level and overall progress in the implementation of the AP.

2. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

The Act on Civil Registration created an issue with the civil registration of the Roma population in the country because of the application of its provisions for the enforcement of the compulsory registration of a permanent and current residence. This requirement arose with the May 2011 amendments through which the parliamentary group of the ruling party – GERB – hoped to solve the problem of “election tourism”: in other words, they wanted to reduce opportunities to vote in one than more polling station, or to vote in a particular station with the purpose of manipulating the results. Trying to limit these and similar practices, the Council of Ministers, responsible for the bill to amend the Act on Civil Registration (21.03.2011) suggested certain limitations and additional requirements related to applications for the registration of permanent and current residence. These additional requirements included above all the existence (and proof of the existence) of documents of ownership and/or rental contracts bearing the name of the person seeking to register a permanent and current residence, as well as notarized declarations of the consent of the property owners, despite the fact that the registration was being done by a tenant or by a user/inhabitant of the property. The attempt to resolve an electoral issue via changes to the Act on Civil Registration, instead of by changing the electoral regulations, led to the establishment of requirements which, de facto, limited the right of citizens to choose to register their address; as well as making it impossible for particular groups of citizens to fulfil their obligation to registering a permanent and current residence.

The problem appeared to be a significant one for the Roma population (which would not have been difficult to foresee), since the majority of Roma in Bulgaria live in large urban and suburban ghettos, where the establishment of property rights, legal status and the movement of official documentation is traditionally a complicated issue, due to the irregular nature both of the property itself and of rental and similar arrangements. The Roma living in the ghettos traditionally do not have documents proving ownership of their property and are not able to present them in the departments of the Unified System for Civil Registration and Administrative Service of the Population (USCRADP) in the relevant municipalities, and as a result they are deprived of the right to choose a permanent or current address. The problem escalated almost immediately after the adoption of the Law on Civil Registration, with the amendments introduced on 20 May 2011, because the issuing of an ID card, in the relevant departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is dependent upon the individual providing a certificate of permanent address, because the document is issued on the basis of his or her permanent address. Without a certificate of permanent address, nobody can apply for an ID document. Thus, citizens whose documents expire while their addresses are not included in the National Registry, and who cannot therefore receive a certificate of permanent address, were trapped in an absurd situation without a permanent and current address, and as a result without an ID document.

Following the requirements of the Act on Bulgarian ID documents, in 2001 and 2002 most citizens of Bulgaria exchanged their ID cards and Passports for new ID documents which were valid for 10 years. In 2011 and 2012 these documents expired and people had to start applying for new ones. It was at this point that the problem with the new provisions emerged. Naturally, it turned out that a large proportion of Roma citizens were not able to fulfil the new requirements of the Act on Civic Registration by providing documents of ownership or lease for their place of residence to the departments of the USCRADP. As a result, they were unable to receive the certificates of permanent address that should have been submitted to the offices of the Interior Ministry and accordingly they could not apply for new ID documents. Thus, within a period of a few months large numbers of citizens, mainly Roma, found themselves without valid ID documents. This affected a number of their basic rights which affected their private lives, and they lost their right to participate in public life and to undertake legal actions of any kind, since they could not legally prove their identities. First of all, and also as a matter of principle, such citizens do not exist in the legal world of the

country. As a result they are deprived of a series of basic human rights – the right to education and training, the right to employment, the right to marriage, to family life and inheritance, the right to own property, and the right to receive social and health insurance. The problem was multiplied in the procedures for issuing ID documents of the children of these citizens. And thus the absurd situation became a vicious circle.

It should be highlighted that the above-mentioned limitations of the civic rights constitute a breach of the right to private and family life. They also infringe the Bulgarian Constitution, as well as Art. 8 of the European Convention on Rights and Freedoms: the right to private and family life. According to the very highest level of Bulgarian Law, the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, which no other legal provision may contradict,²⁷ every person has the right to freely choose his or her residence, to move freely within the country and to leave its borders. This provision may be limited only through an act for the protection of the national security, the people's health and the rights and freedoms of other citizens.²⁸ In this case, the limitations on free choice established by the Act on civil registration cannot be sustained with any of the possibilities offered by Art. 35, p. 1 of the Constitution of Bulgaria. What is more, in practice those limitations disproportionately affect the Roma population in the country, as mentioned above. Those provisions are also in contradiction with Art. 6, p. 1 and 2, according to which all people in Bulgaria are equal before the Law. This Constitutional text specifies that no limitations of rights and privileges are allowed on the basis of ethnicity too, which is thematically further developed by the Act on Protection against Discrimination.

The above mentioned difficulties and infringements of rights necessitated a new legal initiative with the purpose of resolving (with legal measures and provisions) the problem that had been created. The result was a new bill for amendments of the Act on Civil Registration, proposed to the National Assembly by the "Coalition for Bulgaria" parliamentary group.

With the amendments to the Act on Civil Registration which came into effect on 5 June 2012, a new option for registering residence has been provided, using other documents that prove the ownership or the use of property, not limited to documents proving ownership or lease. Those documents might be contracts for public services – water, electricity or heating supply, etc. The Act on Civil Registration has kept the requirement for written consent from the owner of the property (through a personal declaration of consent or through a notarized declaration). The Act provides for exceptions in the case of registration of the spouse and the immediate relatives of the owner or the user of the property. If this is the case, the Act provides that neither documents of ownership nor the consent of the owner are mandatory. In this case registration involves an official check in the register of the population for the relationship between the owner/user of the property and the person applying for registration; inspection is also done through the local taxation department to establish for the ownership of the property. For registration of a person who lives in a situation of de facto marital cohabitation, only the written consent of the owner/ or user is required: it may be provided in person or notarized. The amendments provide opportunities for the registration of citizens by showing a contract for provision of a residential type of social service and a contract for accommodation in special institutions. For the registration of people accommodated in state or municipal properties, the written consent of the owner of the property is not required, but only an order for accommodation or a contract of lease. If the requested documents cannot be provided, the Act allows the establishment of a commission, called by an order of the Mayor of the municipality, involving officials from the municipal administration and from the territorial structural units of the Ministry of Interior, and of the Agency for Social Assistance. The commission has the obligation to undertake an inspection of the situation and to provide a recommendation for address registration within a 7-day period. The amendments of 5 June 2012 have left in force the limit on the number of the people that can be registered at one address with the consent of the owner. The number may not be more than three times the number of people that could usually inhabit the relevant residence; however the meaning of "could usually inhabit" is not legally defined in the Act on Civil Registration.

Almost 30% of the Roma people interviewed for the purposes of this report stated that they do not currently hold an ID card. The gender difference is not significant: the ratio of Roma men to Roma women without ID cards is almost 50/50.

27 Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2007, Art. 5, available at <http://www.parliament.bg/en/const> (accessed 12 May 2013).

28 Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, Art. 35.

As a democratic country the Republic of Bulgaria, through its Constitution, guarantees the human and civil rights of all Bulgarian citizens²⁹. Since 1 January 2004, the Act on Protection against Discrimination (APAD) has been in force in Bulgaria. APAD should provide for equality before the Law, equality in treatment and opportunities for participation in public life and effective protection against discrimination. The Act gives a definition of the term “discrimination”, describing in detail the features on the basis of which discriminatory acts are prohibited. Two forms of discrimination are outlined: direct³⁰ and indirect.³¹ Article 3 (1) of the Act says that “This Law shall protect against discrimination all natural persons on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria”. Article 3 (2) adds that “Associations of natural persons, as well as legal persons, shall enjoy the rights under this Law when they have been discriminated on the grounds referred to in Article 4, Paragraph 1 regarding their members or the persons employed by them”.³² Article 4 (1) defines the prohibited discriminatory grounds: “Any direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, nationality, ethnic origin, citizenship, origin, religion or belief, education, opinions, political conviction, personal or public status, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status, property status, or on any other grounds, established by the law, or by international treaties to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party, is forbidden”.

Article 5 of APAD says that “Harassment on the grounds referred to in Article 4, Paragraph 1, sexual harassment, instigation to discrimination, persecution and racial segregation, as well as the building and maintenance of an architectural environment hampering the access of people with disabilities to public places shall be deemed discrimination”.³³

Compliance with the Act is monitored by the Commission for Protection against Discrimination³⁴ (CPD), established in 2005 and currently with 18 regional representations. According to the Rules for Procedures of the CPD (Art. 6, par 1 to 12), the Commission identifies breaches of the APAD or of other legislative provisions that regulate equality in treatment, the implementer of the breach and the affected person; The Commission has the power to decree measures for the prevention and suspension of the violation; to apply the provisioned sanctions and measures for administrative procedures; etc.³⁵ The members of the CPD number nine, including the Chair and the Deputy Chair.³⁶

The reports published on the internet during the years since the establishment of the CPD³⁷ show that in 2010 the CPD reviewed 8³⁸ complaints and reports, and initiated 268 proceedings. (Unfortunately, there is no information on specific ethnic groups involved in the cases). Tracing the activities of the permanent composition of the judicial commission, we find the following pattern:

29 Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, Art. 4(2).

30 Direct discrimination shall be any less favorable treatment of a person, on the grounds referred to in paragraph 1, than another person is, has been or would be treated under comparable circumstances. Bulgaria, *Act on Protection against Discrimination* (APAD), 2003, Art. 4 (2)), available at: http://www.google.hu/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CDo-QFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mlsp.government.bg%2Fequal%2Fequalen%2Fanti-discrimination%2520law%2520en.doc&ei=nGSPUzbvl_Lb4QTP5ICgDQ&usg=AFQjCNGCE3P2fFXAtw6e4QFgkIaq4f68_g&sig2=aTWsYsHIFj1tgZC56d-MrA&bv=mv.46340616,d.bGE, (accessed 12 May 2013).

31 Indirect discrimination shall be to put a person, on the grounds referred to in Paragraph 1, in a less favorable position in comparison with other persons by means of an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice, unless the said provision, criterion or practice has objective justification in view of achieving a lawful objective and the means for achieving this objective are appropriate and necessary. (APAD, Art. 4, (3)).

32 APAD, Art. 3(1).

33 APAD, art. 5.

34 <http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/layout/>.

35 For more information on the power of the CPD see the Rules for Procedures of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, available at: http://kzd-nondiscrimination.com/images/stories/pdf/dokumenti/pravilnik_KZD.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).

36 The Deputy chair and one of the members of the CPD are of Roma origin: Mr. Baki Huseinov and Mr. Lalo Kamenov

37 <http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/>.

Table 1: Files on proceedings related to ethnicity per year³⁸

Year	Total number of proceedings	Proceedings for cases on ethnicity
2006	183	46
2007	215	57
2008	278	23
2009	299	18
2010	268	22

If the relative proportions of the proceedings related to ethnic background are compared, it emerges that in 2006 they constituted 25% of the total number of proceedings, while in 2010 they constituted only 8%. Three conclusions could be drawn from these data: the first would be that discrimination based on ethnicity has decreased; the second is that people in general do not know about APAD and are not aware whether, in what cases and where they can ask for assistance or how to use APAD to protect their rights; the third explanation is that the total number of cases before the CPD has increased and compared to the total number, the proportion of complaints based on ethnic grounds has fallen. It would be vital to inform people, in understandable language, about both the activities of the CPD and APAD itself, but there is no word of any initiatives being planned in this regard. CPD was very proactive in the case of Belov (electricity metering) which it very unusually referred to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ex officio for some clarifications on the application of the Race Equality Directive. The outcome of the proceedings in Luxembourg was disappointing, as the CJEU ruled that it could not hear the case because the CPD did not qualify as a 'court or tribunal'; but the case does seem to indicate an unusual degree of seriousness on the part of the CPD in its attempts to develop its practice and jurisprudence.

According to the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee publication³⁹ despite the number of legislative barriers, hate speech towards various communities – mostly ethnic and religious minorities – finds fertile ground in the Bulgarian public and media space.⁴⁰ Regardless of the existence of multi-dimensional relevant legislation, hate speech proliferates in a disquieting manner. There is also a degree of misunderstanding or unfamiliarity on the part of Bulgarian law enforcement authorities with the notion of 'hate crime'.⁴¹ When members of the far-right Ataka party attacked Muslims who had congregated for Friday prayers in Sofia's Banya Bashi mosque on 20 May 2011, the ultra-nationalists' actions were defined as 'hooliganism' rather than as hate crime.⁴² The Bulgarian Criminal Code is deficient in recognizing and punishing hate crime; that is, crimes perpetrated with discriminatory motives. The drawback of this legislation is that it does not recognize bias and hatred as aggravating factors.⁴³ On 17 April 2011, a group of far-right VMRO party supporters, along with skinheads from the city of Burgas, attacked the Jehovah's Witnesses' place of worship in the city.⁴⁴ Video recordings from the incident reveal beatings accompanied by hate-speech slogans and chants.⁴⁵ Although the police and the Prosecutor's Office announced that an investigation is under way, neither the former President of the country Georgi Parvanov, nor the speaker of Parliament, nor the former Prime Minister Boiko Borisov has officially expressed any position on the disturbing incident.

At the same time, hate speech against ethnic, religious and sexual minorities continues to dominate in some media. These are principally the SKAT television channel, and the Ataka newspaper, the publication of the extreme nationalist party of the same name. Hate speech is manifested in many other places, including in media which have signed the Code of Ethics of the Bulgarian Media. The ethics committees in

38 <http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/>.

39 Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *Hate/Speech Crimes*, n.d., available at <http://www.bghelsinki.org/en/rights/hate-speechcrimes/> (accessed 12 May 2013).

40 Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *The image of Roma in central and regional printed media*, n.d., available at: <http://www.bghelsinki.org/media/uploads/books/etnicheskite-maltsinstva-v-pechata-1.pdf>.

41 Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *Hate/Speech Crimes*, n.d.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*

44 Бият "Свидетели на Йехова" в Бургас, available at <http://www.trud.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=861102> (accessed 12 May 2013).

45 Неонацисти и ВМРО - Бургас 17.04.2011, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlEXsYcpgwk> accessed 12 May 2013).

the press and in the electronic media, as well as the Electronic Media Council, do not regulate this practice although functioning media self-regulation is one of the key factors in the freedom of expression.

In October 2012 a photo of a group of Roma students making fun of portraits of Bulgarian national historical figures, King Simeon the Great, King Boris and Vasil Levski, went viral on the on-line social networks, sparking a massive wave of discontent. The national prosecutor's office took up the case, the Ministry of Education started an investigation, followers of the Ataka party and VMRO supporters surrounded the school shouting Nazi slogans, insults and threats towards the three students. The case went so far that the police had to be sent for to protect the three students and their parents. As a result, the three boys of Roma origin have been expelled from the school. They have incurred different penalties, but all of them have been removed from regular education. They are now supposed to proceed as individual students, not attending classes, but studying by themselves at home. One of them is attending a rural school far lower in quality than his previous one. The case has been widely reported in the media and it has become obvious that the attitude towards Roma in the country is negative and that this trend is worsening⁴⁶. In the meantime similar photos of non-Roma students have been published, but without evoking any reaction at all.

According to the Country report 2011 for Bulgaria on measures to combat discrimination published by the European network of legal experts in non-discrimination fields⁴⁷ (p.5) the definition of racial segregation under the APAD is not compatible with European law because it explicitly requires the state of separation to be 'forced'; and thus implies that segregation may be chosen, i.e. that segregated persons may have waived their rights not to be discriminated against, including the right not to be segregated on racial grounds. Yet, the European Court of Human Rights has consistently held in Roma segregation cases that no waiver of the right to non-discrimination is possible in this context because it would conflict with an important public interest.⁴⁸

The year 2012 marks the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the European Convention on Human Rights: on 7 September 1992 it became a part of Bulgarian law. Most of the cases heard by the European Court on Human Rights (ECHR) concerning Roma fall under Art. 3, Art. 8 and Art. 14 of the Convention: the right to private and family life. A case which should definitely be outlined is that of *Yordanova and others v. Bulgaria*.⁴⁹ In September 2005 the regional Mayor issued a decree ordering 180 people living in the Batalova Vodenitsa neighbourhood to leave their homes within 7 days. On 28 September, a Committee of the Roma living in the neighbourhood and the Municipality of Sofia signed a memorandum under which the Mayor accepted responsibility for providing the people with alternative accommodation before demolishing their dwellings. In 2006 there was a second attempt to expel the Roma from their homes and to demolish the buildings, but under pressure from members of the European Parliament the attempt was abandoned. There was a third attempt in June 2008, when a message was sent to the people in the neighbourhood that they should leave, because the 2005 decree had not been revoked and should be implemented. On July 8 2008, based on a request for interim measures (and on Art. 39 of its regulations), the ECHR stated to the Government of Bulgaria that the applicants should not be expelled before 23 July 2008; in the meantime the Government was to provide the ECHR with all relevant information. After the revocation of the decree for eviction, the ECHR also cancelled its temporary measure under Art. 39 of its regulations. In a decision reached in April 2012, the ECHR noted that the Government of Bulgaria had not provided evidence that the clearing of the land inhabited by the Roma in Batalova Vodenitsa was justified

46 Novinite.com, *Roma Deriding Bulgarian Heroes Expelled from School*, 22 November 2012, available at http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=144377 (accessed 12 May 2013).

47 Margarita Ilieva, *Report on measures to combat discrimination: Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC, Country report for Bulgaria 2011*, available at http://migpolgroup.org/public/docs/196.2010_BULGARIA_Countryreportonmeasuresstocombatdiscrimination_EN.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).

48 European Court of Human Rights, *D.H. v. Czech Republic, judgment of 13.11.2007*, full text available at <http://www.errc.org/cms-upload/media/02/D1/m000002D1.pdf>, (accessed 12 May 2013); *Sampanis v. Greece, judgment of 05.06.2008* full text available at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?#%22mdocnumber%22:%222836273%22,%22itemid%22:%22001-86797%22> (accessed 12 May 2013);

Orsus v. Croatia, judgment of 16.03.2010 (GC), full text available at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?#%22mdocnumber%22:%222864619%22,%22itemid%22:%22001-97689%22>, (accessed 12 May 2013).

49 European Court of Human Rights, *Jordanova and others vs Bulgaria, Judgment of 24.4.2012*, full text available at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-110449#%22itemid%22:%22001-110449%22> (accessed 12 May 2013).

by important needs of society at that particular moment. On the other hand, no measures have been taken to change the status of the residents in such a way that they, as socially disadvantaged people, would be able to apply for accommodation in municipal housing. The ECHR emphasised that the disadvantaged status of the complainants should have been taken into account by the official authorities.⁵⁰

Both the NRIS and the Action Plan for the implementation of the NRIS include measures for overcoming discrimination. The NRIS, however is not the only operative and strategic document related to the integration of Roma. The issue is also dealt with in the following documents:

Strategy for Provision of Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities (2008-2015),⁵¹ Joint Memorandum for Social Inclusion of the Republic of Bulgaria,⁵² National Report for the Strategies on Social Protection and Social Inclusion of the Republic of Bulgaria (2006-2008),⁵³ Human Resources Development Operational Programme (2007-2013),⁵⁴ National Programme for School Education and Pre-school Preparation (2006-2015),⁵⁵ National Plan for Integration of Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Chronic Diseases in the System of the People's Education,⁵⁶ National Strategy on Migration and Integration (2008-2015),⁵⁷ Strategy on Demographic Development (2006-2020),⁵⁸ Strategy of the Child (2008-2018),⁵⁹ Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities,⁶⁰ Strategy for Youth (2010-2020),⁶¹ National Action Plan for Implementation of the Decade for Roma Inclusion (2005-2015),⁶² National Programme for Improvement of the Living Conditions of Roma (2005-2015),⁶³ National Programme for Reforms (2011-2015),⁶⁴ etc.

In the Bulgarian NRIS 2012-2020, the vision and the strategic goal of the document highlight the principles of equity and non-discrimination as priorities. The section outlining the vision explicitly points out that "the integration of Roma and Bulgarian citizens in vulnerable situations who belong to other ethnic groups, is an active two-way process of social inclusion targeted at overcoming the existing negative social-economic features and creating prosperity in society."⁶⁵

-
- 50 Решенията на Европейския съд по правата на човека срещу България през 2012 г., *Правен свят* 2 January 2013, available at http://www.legalworld.bg/show.php?storyid=29261#_ftn12 (accessed 12 May 2013).
- 51 Republic of Bulgaria, *СТРАТЕГИЯ ЗА ОСИГУРЯВАНЕ НА РАВНИ ВЪЗМОЖНОСТИ НА ХОРАТА С УВРЕЖДАНЯ 2008-2015 Г.*, available at http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/law/regulation/disable_strategy.doc (accessed 12 May 2013).
- 52 Republic of Bulgaria, *Joint memorandum for social inclusion of the Republic of Bulgaria*, February 2005, available at <http://www.ncedi.government.bg/en/JIM.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2013)
- 53 Republic of Bulgaria, *National report for the strategies on social inclusion and social protection of the Republic of Bulgaria*, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?pager.offset=20&langId=en&mode=advancedSubmit&policyArea=0&subCategory=0&year=0&country=0&type=3&advSearchKey=nsr%20psi> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- 54 Republic of Bulgaria, *Operational Programme "Human resources development"*, 3 October 2007, available at http://ophrd.government.bg/view_file.php/14405 (accessed 12 May 2013).
- 55 Republic of Bulgaria, *National programme for school education and preschool preparation*.
- 56 Council of Ministers of Republic of Bulgaria, *National plan for integration of children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases in the system of the people's education*, 2003.
- 57 Republic of Bulgaria, *National strategy on migration and integration (2008-2015)*, 5 June 2008, available at <http://www.esc.bg/en/documents/category/11?download=91%3Anational-strategy-of-the-republic-of-bulgaria-on-migration-and-integration-2008-2015> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- 58 Republic of Bulgaria, *Strategy on demographic development of Bulgaria (2006-2020)*, 30 November 2005, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=1446&langId=en> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- 59 Republic of Bulgaria, *National strategy for the child 2008 – 2018*, n.d., available for download at http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID_ITEMS=26593 (accessed 12 May 2013).
- 60 Republic of Bulgaria, *Strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities*, 11 June 2004, available at http://www.ncedi.government.bg/en/1_EDUCSTRAT.htm (accessed 12 May 2013).
- 61 Republic of Bulgaria, *Strategy for youth 2010-2020*, n.d., available at http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/strategies/documents/National_Youth_Strategy.doc, (accessed 12 May 2013).
- 62 Republic of Bulgaria, *National action plan for implementation of the Decade for Roma inclusion (2005-2015)*, n.d., available at http://www.ncedi.government.bg/en/NAP_REPUBLIC%20OF%20BULGARIA.htm (accessed 12 May 2013).
- 63 Republic of Bulgaria, *National programme for improvement of the living conditions of Roma (2005-2015)*, 14 May 2004, available at <http://www.ncedi.government.bg/en/NRP-071%2003%202006%20Final%20en%20%282%29.htm> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- 64 Republic of Bulgaria, *National Reform Programme (2011-2015)*, 13 April 2011, available at http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nrp/nrp_bulgaria_en.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).
- 65 Republic of Bulgaria, *National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) (2012 - 2020)*, n.d., available at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_bulgaria_strategy_en.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013) NRIS of Bulgaria, p. 24.

The Action Plan for implementation of the NRIS of Bulgaria contains 122 interventions under the different priorities, only 7 of which come under the priority area of “Rule of law and non-discrimination”. Apart from being too limited in number, those activities are also very specific – mainly defined as training sessions for certain groups of people and professionals: for ordinary police officers and for 70 members of the Security Police in “ethnic minorities’ rights”; training sessions for young Roma who work in public administration and for social workers. The only area that envisages broader activities targeted at more people is the promotion of tolerant ethnic attitudes through the development and implementation of a project named “Искам да бъда” (“I want to be”): to provoke a sense of sympathy towards young people by involving sporting celebrities in a media campaign. Training activities for small groups of people may help to some extent, but they are not targeted at the core of the problem: the need to attack discriminatory attitudes and overcome discriminatory practices. This is where a massive awareness-raising campaign should be included - in clear language, targeted at both Roma and Bulgarians – on what discrimination is and how the individual can react to cases of discrimination. Besides this, permanent monitoring of hate speech in the key media should be included, as well as periodical investigations into discriminatory attitudes and the identification of the factors which can lead to their reduction. To some extent, this problem is addressed by the activities which form an obligatory part of the CPD within the “Rule of Law and Non-Discrimination”⁶⁶ Priority area. They are more widely formulated, but at the same time with a larger focus on discrimination; but in order to follow up on the results of these activities they should be included in the Action Plan. We cannot afford to reduce the stated goal of an “Increase of the guarantees for effective protection of the rights of Bulgarian citizens in vulnerable social position, belonging to different ethnic groups” to “Improvement of the effectiveness of the activities of police officers in multiethnic environments in compliance with the standards of human rights”, which is the first goal of the Action Plan. We cannot afford it for two reasons: firstly, it gives the impression that the main problem and a main feature of the Roma is criminality; and secondly, the fact is that police officers who work in multiethnic environments are still constantly infringing standard human rights.

Up to a point, the failings of the Action Plan⁶⁷ in this area are compensated for by the detailed Communication Plan⁶⁸ included in the same document, with the main goal of “changing negative attitudes within Bulgarian society towards the Roma community through provision of better publicity and transparency of the activities for implementation of integration policies and examples in the area of Roma integration.”⁶⁹ The goals, and also the messages, are very well formulated. One particularly important message is that Roma should be perceived as a societal resource like any other citizens, not as a problem; as well as the message that “the state does not support one Bulgarian citizen at another Bulgarian citizen’s expense” – because one of the new stereotypes about Roma is that they are a more privileged group.⁷⁰ Within the Communication Plan, there is also a goal that corresponds to part 5 of the NRIS (Rule of Law and Antidiscrimination): “Overcoming existing practices, e.g. early marriages, domestic violence, human trafficking, etc.” Particular measures for action should be developed in this area. Generally speaking, the standards achieved under the “Rule of law and anti-discrimination” priority should be significantly improved.

Equity is often a synonym of equality before the law, which should mean that all Bulgarian citizens, including such vulnerable groups as the Roma, have the right to be treated on equal terms with the others (by the Law). Bulgarian legislation in the area of healthcare, social assistance, labour and education recognises the reality of social inequality and seeks to correct it, transforming it into a legislative equity (equality) through different measures, some of which are mentioned above. Equality, however, presents as irrelevant the fact that in real life there are deep social disparities and people are not equally treated because of their situation. And it is from the perspective of the actual situation of vulnerable groups such as the Roma that the legislative framework for social inclusion will now be reviewed.

66 NRIS of Bulgaria, p. 17.

67 Republic of Bulgaria, *Action Plan for the Implementation of the NRIS of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015)*, available at http://www.nccedi.government.bg/upload/docs/1_12RH001_pr1_EN_2.doc (accessed 12 May 2013).

68 *Chapter 6 of the Action plan for implementation of the NRIS of Bulgaria.*

69 *Action plan for implementation of the NRIS in Bulgaria*, p. 52.

70 Кабакчиева, П., Ние и „другите“ – степени на толерантност и възможни конфликти, *Политика*, бр.5/12.

The fastest-developing segments in this area are probably the policies related to children and those that promote de-institutionalization in particular. With the adoption of the National Strategy for De-institutionalization⁷¹ in 2010, and its Action Plan, it is expected that the process of bringing children out from those institutions (while experts assume that many of those children are Roma) and accommodating them in another type of service will accelerate. Improvements are envisaged in the area of family support and in the reduction of the risks of child abandonment and its negative consequences for the wellbeing of the children (from limited access to education to healthcare and other communal services). One of the most important laws, in terms of the social inclusion of Roma, is the Law on Education.⁷² According to this legislation, schools and kindergartens are obliged to accept all children, regardless of their ethnic background, social situation or physical disabilities etc., since this corresponds to the principles of equity and equality enshrined in the Constitution of Bulgaria. A legal regulation provides assistance from the state with the education of the Roma children in such a way that they are placed in an equal position with their peers. It is a fact, however, that the legislation does not provide equal chances for children with special needs and for the Roma in particular, who do not speak the Bulgarian language very well, through legal provisions, pedagogical curricula etc. Another important problem is the unfriendly environment: the remoteness of the school, the lack of transportation, the discriminative attitudes at school and so on.⁷³ Thereby the policy for social inclusion through education provides non-equal chances to children from the very moment they enter first grade. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Science (MEYS) is one step ahead in the efforts it makes through amendments to the law, which now incorporates mandatory preparation for school of children at the age of 5. The change comes from the planning of the “Education and Training 2020” working programme⁷⁴ intended to implement the Lisbon strategy of the EU. The amendments to the Law are targeted at socializing those children, including the Roma, for whom Bulgarian is not their mother language. The amendments provide the opportunities for free transportation for children and students from locations without a school or kindergarten to the nearest place within the municipality where there is a kindergarten or a school.

In the spirit of the relationship (mentioned above) between equity, equality and social equality and equal access, a definite achievement of the Law will be the various specific texts that guarantee equal access for children with special educational needs and their integration into the so-called “mainstream schools.”⁷⁵ In the same time, however, equal access and the educational integration of Roma children remain problematic for many reasons. The efforts of the Government to improve access to early childhood education have not reached the most vulnerable Roma: those whose income is below the poverty line, who live in remote areas, do not speak the official language of the country well etc., despite the amendments to the Law on Education. The provisions of the Law assume that the educational level of the Roma in Bulgaria is the same as the general level of education and no further efforts for the incorporation of specific provisions encouraging activities to promote educational integration of Roma children, incorporation of intercultural education and avoidance of the artificial separation of Roma children in segregated classes are needed. The social benefits and the sanctions for the parents of Roma children who do or do not send them to school are more a result of social engineering than a prerequisite for the achievement of social inclusion of Roma through education.

An important weakness of the NRIS is the lack of sensitivity towards the specific challenges facing the integration of Romani women. The Strategy lacks a gender perspective: the issue is not articulated as a specific chapter;⁷⁶ nor is it mainstreamed in the other chapters; and multiple discrimination has not been mentioned at all. For example Education and Employment priorities do not articulate any national goals linked with Roma women.

71 Republic of Bulgaria, *National Strategy “Vision for Deinstitutionalization of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria”*.

72 Republic of Bulgaria, *Public Education Act*, promulgated in SG 86/18.10.1991, last amended with SG 99/16.12.2011, available at http://www.erisee.org/downloads/2013/2/b/Public_Education_Act%20ENG.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).

73 Roma Education Fund, *Advancing education of Roma in Bulgaria*, 2007, available at <http://www.erisee.org/downloads/2013/2/b/Advancing%20Roma%20Education%20ENG%202007.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2013).

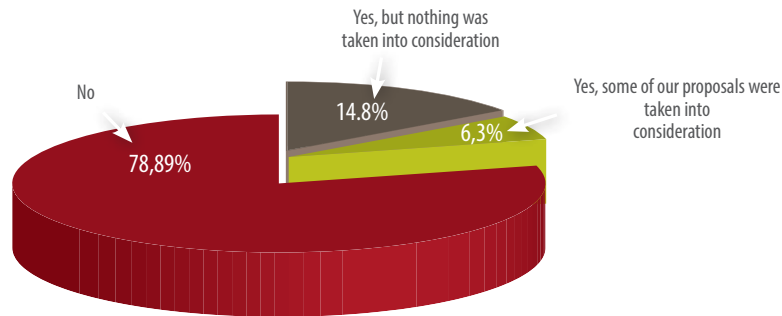
74 European Union, *Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020)*. 12 May 2009, available at http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/general_framework/ef0016_en.htm (accessed 12 May 2013).

75 Draft of new Law on Public Education.

76 Such a chapter did exist in the *Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma* (1999), available at <http://www.ncedi.government.bg/en/RPRIIRBGO-English.htm> (accessed 12 May 2013).

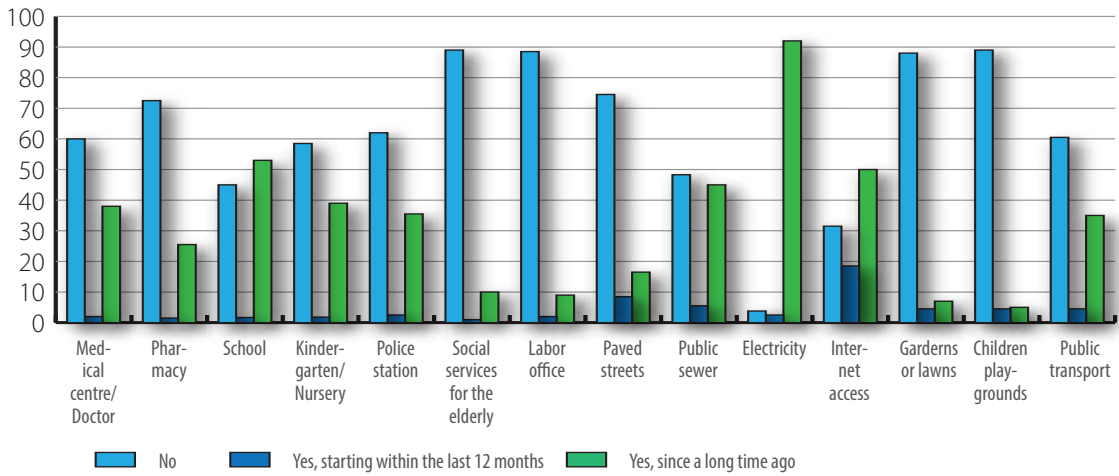
Despite the fact that most people like the neighbourhood they live in, most of the public service providers are not present. The situation of Roma people at local level is being neglected, even if some people are actively engaged and express their opinions openly. As is shown on the table below, during the last year only 15% of the respondents reported positive attitudes on the part of the local officials. 80% of the responses show that the Roma were not even consulted about their opinions on any potential improvements in the neighbourhood.

Figure 1: Over the past 12 months, have local officials held a consultation with residents of the neighbourhood about improving living conditions there?



In the meantime, people from Roma neighbourhoods report that they do not have legal access to sewerage (24.35%) and the road infrastructure (streets) needs improvement (44.5%), which is actually the most common answer, reflecting one of the most important issues related to infrastructure, living conditions and housing. In 8.3% there is no legal access to water or electricity (3%). One of the main problems for people in the Roma communities is also the lack of a garbage collection service (6.7%). There is no medical centre or even doctor in the neighbourhood, and this is a very important problem for 5% of the Roma people, while the lack of a pharmacy is mentioned as an issue by 4.4% of the respondents. The residents in segregated Roma neighbourhoods also suffer from the lack of kindergartens and schools, police stations and labour offices, access to public transport, community centres, places of worship, access to communications (internet and phone centres), ATMs and bank branches. A convenient excuse for the officials who are unable to provide these services in the community is that most of them are implemented by private companies/individuals and the state/municipality is not able to motivate the providers to extend their services to Roma neighbourhoods. The progress reported by the respondents in terms of the improvement of the situation over the last year is negligible.

Figure 2: In your neighbourhood is/are there ... : (%)

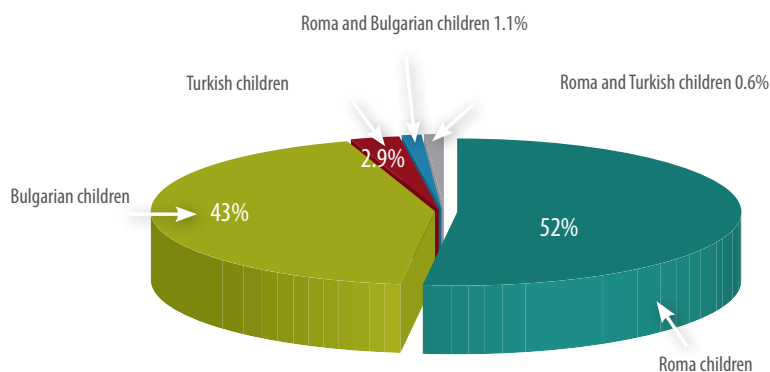


3. EDUCATION

The results from the survey conducted among 1000 Roma households for the purpose of the present report show that 63% of the respondents aged 15 and over are enrolled in the education system in Bulgaria. About 18.5% of household members of school age⁷⁷ are enrolled in kindergarten, 75.5% attend regular primary school; 3.5% attend vocational secondary schools, and 1.3% are enrolled in regular secondary schools. An insignificant number of the respondents, about 0.8%, are enrolled in specialized, elite secondary schools studying arts, mathematics, languages, etc., which is indicative of the quality of high school education obtained by Roma students. The survey also reveals a decreasing trend in terms of Roma attending special schools: only 0.3% of the Roma in school age are enrolled in special schools for children with mental disabilities. It is evident that the tendency to enrol Roma children in special schools still persists. Since there is lack of recent data on this issue, comparison is not possible, but the fact that this type of school still exists and enrolls Roma students is evidence of the need for an urgent governmental response.

On the other hand the strong tendency for Roma children to be enrolled in schools situated in Roma neighbourhoods still persists: in 34.5% of cases; the educational institution attended is located in the Roma neighbourhood. The reason for this is the tendency to choose the closest school in terms of distance, with the result that 53.4% have chosen to attend school in the neighbourhood. It appears that for 28% of the survey respondents the local school is the only school institution in the settlement. Figure 1 illustrates these preferences for school enrolment. The ethnic composition of the students in those schools is pre-defined by the ethnic composition of the residential area. More than half of the Roma of school age (51.8%) attend education institutions where the majority of students are of Roma origin.

Figure 3: The students from your school are mainly of what ethnic origin?



For 11.4% of the respondents this is the best known school, which means that they are following the local trend in terms of preferred school institution. In 1.3% of the cases this is the school institution which is the closest to a member of the household's (e.g. one of the parents') workplace.

In terms of gender distribution the most recent regional research conducted by EU/UNDP/WB in 2011 indicates that 37% of female respondents aged 25-64 have completed primary education, compared

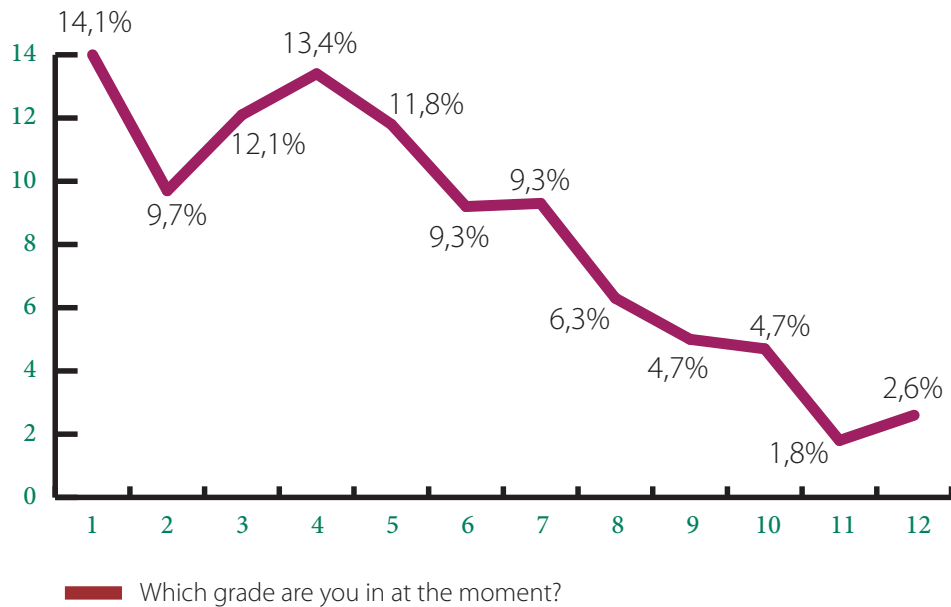
77 Education in Bulgaria is mandatory for children up to 16 years of age.

with 28% of male respondents. In the 20-24 age group the distribution is at similar levels: 34% for female and 27% for male Roma respondents. Although the figures are suggestive there are various possible reasons for the distribution; one is that men and boys in Roma communities leave school earlier in order to support the household in terms of income.

Despite efforts and strategic intentions on the part of government and civil society organizations, a stable trend is observed in terms of enrolling Roma children in education facilities segregated in territorial terms and with a majority of Roma students. Obviously the initiatives undertaken so far have not led to significant change.

Only 4.3% of the interviewees had completed their education at the time of the research, and 4.6% stated they did not expect to continue studying. The level of impoverishment among the Roma communities is still perceived as a major reason for early dropout and for the lack of desire to continue schooling. Persistent discrimination and negative attitudes toward Roma remain the most significant reasons for Roma children not enrolling in mainstream schools. Further obstacles to Roma students accomplishing higher educational achievements are the inappropriate environment in terms of support by parents and teachers, the burdensome curriculum and the overall school environment.

Figure 4: Which grade (class) are you currently enrolled in? (%)

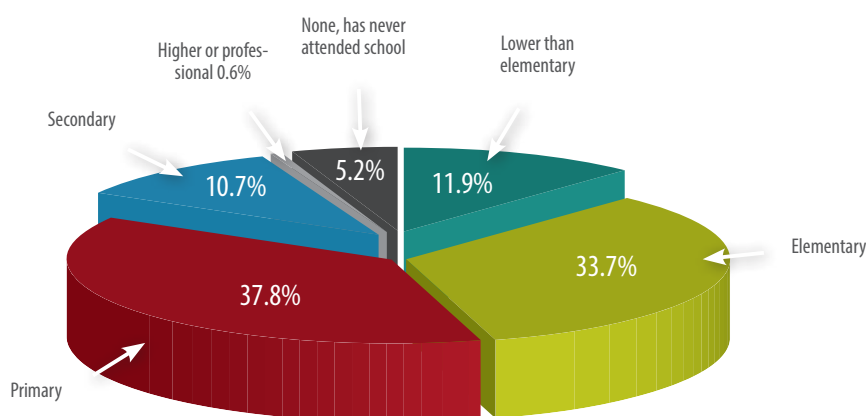


The table above clearly shows the drop-out pattern of Roma students. The highest proportion of students are between 1st and 4th grade. After that the drop-out rate increases steadily by approximately 2% per grade: 13.4% of the Roma students are in 4th grade while in 12th grade there are fewer than 3%. It seems that most students leave school in the 4th grade.

The main drawback of the Bulgarian education system is that it is based on sanctions rather than incentives. Parents are forced to send their children to school in order to be eligible for social benefits. Salaries received by teachers and pedagogic staff at schools are standardised, and no differentiation on the basis of students' achievements has been endorsed so far, which constitutes a major challenge in terms of motivation.

Therefore, it is not surprising that an almost equal proportion of Roma have completed elementary (33.7%) and primary education (37.8%).

Figure 5: What is the highest level you have completed?



Official information on the educational achievements of Roma students enrolled in mainstream and segregated schools is not being collected, which constitutes a further impediment to the design of adequate and relevant interventions for improving educational attainments for Roma children.

According to the data collected for the present report⁷⁸ 50.4% of Roma children are enrolled in kindergartens or schools attended mainly by Roma children while 42% of respondents state that they or their children go to school attended primarily by Bulgarian children. The main reason for attending a segregated school is because it is the closest one to the neighbourhood and thus to home (53.4%). As the funding method of the Bulgarian school system follows the pro-capita principle ("the money follows the student"), schools with more students receive larger budgets and cannot be closed. Segregated schools usually have more students than the average mainstream school. On the other hand, in the rural areas and in small villages and towns, the ethnic composition of the population is mainly of Roma origin and the schools are, as a result, attended primarily by Roma.

The Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from the Ethnic Minorities has the lowest possible normative status (Decision by the Minister issued in 2004, updated in March 2010) and if it is not mainstreamed in the Public Education Act this Strategy will remain no more than a formal document. The latest Bill, (announced in February 2009) contained no points that would support Roma and minority educational integration; indeed, it contained a number of points that would actually damage the integration process.

In 2012 a few calls for proposals aimed at promoting school desegregation were initiated. In compliance with the activities listed in the Action Plan of the Bulgarian NRIS, the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (CEICSEM) announced two competitions:

- CP 33.11-2012: "Education in a spirit of tolerance and non-discrimination in kindergartens and schools through protecting and enhancing the cultural identity of children and students from ethnic minorities", and CP 33.10-2012 "Creating opportunities for equal access to quality education for Roma children
- CEICSEM usually publishes a report with an overall evaluation of the effect of the projects implemented under specific initiatives. These initiatives are still in progress and their assessment is expected at the end of 2013.

78 Survey within the project "Beyond programming – measuring progress on the road to Roma inclusion in Bulgaria within the decade of Roma inclusion 2005-2015 and the national Roma integration strategy 2012".

In 2012 the MEYS issued another call for proposals under the OPHRD for “Educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities”. There were three deadlines and 157 projects were approved.⁷⁹ The budget for the call was initially less than 7 million BGN, but due to the huge demand shown by the large number of applications, the Monitoring committee of the OPHRD has decided to increase it by adding unused financial resources from other OPHRD activities. Thus, the budget was increased to more than 16 million euro.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, contracts for implementation of the proposals were concluded only for those approved after the first deadline. The rest are still not being implemented and contracts have not yet been signed, because there are no financial resources available within the MEYS for the procedure. There is no information about the number of Roma children who will be affected by the projects, nor on the activities they will be involved in. However, the intention is to improve educational integration and access to quality education for children from ethnic minorities.

In 2012 the MEYS, again through the OPHRD, started the implementation of a project for “Inclusive Education” intended to “provide a supportive environment for equal access to education and to open the education system for inclusive education.”⁸¹ The main objectives of the project are:

- Early identification of children at risk with learning disabilities and their successful inclusion in pre-school and school education, successful socialization and integration;
- Increasing the role of mainstream schools in building an inclusive learning environment and implement quality education consistent with the individual needs of each student;
- Strengthening the capacity of special schools for children with multiple disabilities in order to build a functional working model to support inclusive education of children with sensory disabilities;
- This project should help children with special educational needs to be integrated into public schools. In addition this project includes the training and introduction of psychologists who will work with all students in the school. The project activities are still in progress and there not enough information is available to evaluate their overall effect.

March 2012 saw the beginning of the parliamentary debate on the new Pre-School and School Education Act which envisages reforms to the whole educational system, including new measures for the provision of inclusive education. The bill for new Education Act has been developed by MEYS through a wide process of consultations, including consultations with Roma NGOs. The process of working out the draft law was a long one, but it was worthwhile since many of the NGOs’ proposals for texts and regulations have been accepted and incorporated. The draft was to have been passed into law before the end of the mandate of the National Assembly. Unfortunately, Parliament was dissolved earlier, due to circumstances of force majeure.

Despite the fact that refusing to admit a child to school is against the law, the practice is widespread. The main reason for denying Roma children enrolment in mainstream schools is because if they are admitted, Bulgarian students gradually and progressively leave the school (the so-called *white flight* phenomenon) and the school risks losing its image and prestige. In order to hold on to their successful students, most of the “elite” schools will refuse to enrol Roma children. In compliance with the requirements of the NRIS, every region has had to develop and adopt a regional strategy and action plan for the integration of Roma. One of the measures that should be incorporated in the strategies is provision of equal access to education and non-discriminatory treatment to Roma students.

A study conducted by the Commission for Protection against Discrimination shows that discriminatory attitudes are endemic in the Bulgarian educational system. According to the research ¼ of Bulgarian teachers believed that children from different ethnic backgrounds should study in separate schools, 20% of the respondents were convinced that children that come from different ethnic backgrounds have different abilities.⁸² Results from the research show that Bulgarian schools are remarkably passive towards the differences. School is “inadequate to the reality and existing human relationships and it is not able to teach

79 MEYS, *Call for proposals*, 2 February 2012, available at <http://sf.mon.bg/index.php?w=archive> (accessed 12 May 2013).

80 *Ibid.*

81 Official site of the Inclusive Education Project: <http://vkluvashto.mon.bg/>.

82 DARIK NEWS, *КЗД откри дискриминация в училище*, 7 August 2012, available at http://dariknews.bg/view_article.php?article_id=944172&audio_id=115600, (accessed 12 May 2013).

children how to understand and accept differences". The results regarding discriminatory attitudes among the children themselves are very alarming: such attitudes were found even among 4-5-year-olds in kindergarten, which is extremely worrying and requires immediate and appropriate action.

Results from the same study show that measures undertaken to address discrimination during the past years have been ineffective or insufficient. The fact is that children at an early age are already equipped with negative stereotypes and prejudices. What is even more dangerous is that teachers make distinctions between their students (based on ethnicity) and believe that a child's abilities are defined by their ethnic origin. Thus, it is hard to identify any progress in the area of discrimination against Roma students and their equal access to the public educational system.

The draft of the Pre-School and School Education Act was an object of discussion throughout 2012. It envisages radical changes in special education: within a period of five years after the passing of the new act, special schools which provide education for children with special needs combined with residential care are to be closed down and replaced by centres for personal development for those children who are not able to go to mainstream state schools. Those students who are eligible and able to attend mainstream state schools will be redirected from the centres for personal development.

It is known that significantly lower numbers of Roma than of other students manage to complete compulsory education. One of the reasons for this is the scarcity of programmes and activities which exist at upper educational levels for tackling early school leaving. As mentioned above, there are no official data on the number of Roma children who drop out from school, however various publications claim that the largest group at risk of early school-leaving consists of children from ethnic minorities, especially if these children are from socially excluded families and they speak the official language of the country with difficulty. A number of measures aimed at tackling problems like the enrolment and retention in class of Roma students have been implemented by MEYS and most of them have been shown to be successful (e.g. in 2011 a number of national projects were launched: for the provision of free textbooks, additional classes for students with lower grades and tutoring for students from first to seventh grade). Through the implementation of these measures and initiatives MEYS managed to reduce the drop-out rate to 12.8% in 2011, while in 2001 the early school leaving rate was 20.5%.⁸³ There are two institutions that independently collect and analyze data related to early school leaving – NSI and MEYS – through the on-line platform ADMIN84 and the Organization, Control and Inspection Directorate at MEYS. The data presented by these two institutions differ every year, because of the methodology used to collect information. It has been recommended that they should standardise their research approaches, but so far there have been no signs of such collaboration.

In 2012 a national program called "At school and without absences"⁸⁵ was adopted and initiated. It aims at reducing the number of missed lessons and absences as a precondition for achieving high quality education; and taking substantive and effective measures to motivate school students in regular attendance and active work during school hours and to attract parents as partners in school life.

The national program entitled "Care for every student" has been extended.⁸⁶ This program provides additional training for children from preparatory classes and school students in order to increase their level of performance in general education. 2012 saw the continued the implementation of the projects funded by the BG051PO001-4.2.05-0001 USPEH ("SUCCESS") scheme, which provides schools with the opportunity to offer their students different kinds of extracurricular activities. The main objective of the project is to enhance children's motivation to take part in the educational process, to stay in school and to develop new knowledge and competences.

83 EKIPINEWS, *Намалява процентът на отпадналите преждевременно от системата ученици*, 31 October 2012, available at http://www.ekipnews.com/news/bulgaria/obrazovanie_i_kultura/namalqva_procentyt_na_otpadnalite_prezhdevremenno_ot_sistemata_uchenici_/141860/ (accessed 12 May 2013).

84 *Информационна система на образованието – 2012/2013 учебна година*, n.d., available at <http://www.adminpro-bg.com/ws/index.html> (accessed 12 May 2013).

85 MEYS, *НАЦИОНАЛНА ПРОГРАМА „НА УЧИЛИЩЕ БЕЗ ОТСЪСТВИЯ*, n.d., available at http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/projects/national_programs/2012-9-na-uchilishte-bez-otsystvia.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).

86 MEYS, *Програма „Деца и младежи в риск“ Компонент 1 – Грижа за младежи в риск*, n.d., available at http://www.minedu.government.bg/left_menu/projects/ (accessed 12 May 2013).

During the 2012/2013 school year, MEYS launched a web-based register of movement of children and students, but the information is available only to the principals of schools and kindergartens, and to governmental and local authority officials. This system makes it possible to eliminate the duplicate enrolment of students and provides detailed information on the current location of each child, which helps to improve the enrolment rates.⁸⁷

A “National Strategy for the Reduction of Early School Leaving” has been developed, but is still in draft form and has not yet been adopted. Roma children are identified as one of the largest groups at risk of early school leaving and the document proposes additional measures, some designed to promote vocational training among groups at risk and to raise parental awareness about the importance of education.

A draft version of Vocational Education and Training Act has been developed, which aims to change and to upgrade the system of vocational training in order to attract more students. Currently vocational training is an unpopular and unwanted option for career development. In 2012 a new system for career guidance in school was launched with funding from OPHRD, which will cover 466,000 students from vocational schools and more than 260,000 others who have just entered the educational system.⁸⁸

Activities to encourage the involvement and active participation of parents in school life are initiated by school personnel, primarily teachers. There are no specific campaigns or funding at national level designed to raise parental awareness of the importance of education. Every school has its own approach to working with parents and attracting children to school. Teachers who participate in such activities do not usually receive any additional reward for them and soon lose motivation.

Under the terms of an amendment to the Education Act made in 2010,⁸⁹ from the 2012/2013 school year all children aged of five must be enrolled in pre-school education. A series of sanctions, mostly financial, are envisaged for those parents who fail to ensure the presence of their child in pre-school education. The amendment has already been in force for 7 months, but there is still no known case of parents actually being fined. The purpose of making pre-school education compulsory was to raise enrolment rates, especially of Roma children, in the educational system, but the negative stimuli that were introduced as measures to coerce parents are not efficient. The majority of Roma families that would be punishable are already living in poverty and would not be able to pay the fine. In practical terms this provision does not motivate parents to enrol their children in pre-school education.

Pre-school education was made compulsory with the aim of providing children with even chances for success at school. It is expected that the measure will raise the enrolment rates of Roma children in primary education, but it is still early to assess its effect. Still, various improvements could be made during the implementation of the measure. First, pre-school education should be of high quality and no disparities should be allowed between pedagogical approaches and child training. A new system for sanctions should be developed as well as some positive stimulus to encourage parents to keep their children in school.

Measures for retaining enrolled children have been in place for a few years. A very effective one is whole day schooling,⁹⁰ which is provided to all children from first to third grade. To address the socio-economic factors associated with early school leaving, the programme also provides hot lunches and snacks. Currently MEYS is implementing a project called “Improving the quality of education in the focal schools through the implementation of whole day schooling”, with funding from HRD OP.⁹¹

87 <http://www.adminpro-bg.com/ws/index.html/>.

88 MEYS, *ОПЕРАТИВНА ПРОГРАМА „РАЗВИТИЕ НА ЧОВЕШКИТЕ РЕСУРСИ“*, n.d., available at http://www.minedu.government.bg/left_menu/projects/OP-HR/ (accessed 12 May 2013).

89 Глава първа ОБЩИ ПОЛОЖЕНИЯ, n.d., available at <http://www.erisee.org/downloads/2013/2/b/Education%20Law%202012%20BL.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2013).

90 <http://allday.mon.bg>

91 *Ibid.*

Recommendations made by participants in focus-groups during the survey undertaken for the present report include the provision of out-of-class and out-of-school activities, additional classes for Roma students to improve their command of the Bulgarian language; mandatory introduction of school uniforms (to avoid wealth status comparisons between children); provision of free transportation for all children attending schools in other villages (this is not mandatory at present), free hot lunches for students involved in all-day schooling, participation of Roma parents in parental school boards, and provision of free textbooks for students in the secondary school.

During the 2012-2013 academic year the Roma Memorial University Scholarship Program has offered scholarships to 204 Roma university students from Bulgaria,⁹² and the number of applicants was almost twice as high. The Open Society Institute – Sofia is coordinating the implementation of the Roma Health Scholarship Program of the Roma education fund and the Open Society Foundation is providing support to approximately 80 Roma university students in medical faculties. Since the demand for scholarships proved to be so high, the Open Society Institute – Sofia has received a grant for the implementation of a programme called “Medics of tomorrow” which in the 2012-2013 academic year offered scholarships to pursue medical university studies to about 30 Roma students who had not been granted scholarships under the Roma Health Scholarship Program. Since interest in medical studies is high, the Ministry of Health is planning to establish a scholarship program under the EEA Mechanism for Bulgaria.



4. EMPLOYMENT

The survey conducted for the purpose of this report has shown that during the previous 4 weeks (as of November 2011) only 31.2% of the interviewed Roma had been in work, including unpaid work in a family business or family farm or even a few hours of casual work. Approximately 33.6% of the interviewed Roma had actively searched for employment and 66.4% of the respondents had not. One of the main reasons for not looking for job is that Roma do not believe there is a chance of finding one (19.4%). 24.6% of the people who were actively looking for jobs believe that they cannot find employment due to their ethnicity, and 22% admitted that they are not educated enough to get a job. Only 24.5% of the unemployed Roma were registered with the Labour office. 26.8% of the respondents stated that they received unemployment benefits. More than 44.1% of the Roma had never had a paid job. Only 14.9% of the Roma had participated in employment programmes organized by the Labour Offices (within the previous 12 months).⁹³ 40% of the employed Roma were employed by a private company or enterprise; 17.4% were employed by state institutions, the army, or in the public sector; 10% were engaged in public works programmes and for 16.7% the employer of the Roma was a private individual. 58.8% of the Roma were paying their social security contributions.

Results of sociological surveys conducted in 2010 and 2011 by the research team of the Open Society Institute Sofia indicate that Roma employment in Bulgaria is strongly cyclical in nature. The employment rate is lower in the winter and higher in the summer, the average rate for the analyzed period being 31%. It has to be noted that in the case of Roma, a significant decrease was observed in comparison with the period of 2007 and 2008, when the proportion of employed Roma was 43-50%. In fact, the Roma employment-to-population rate for 2010-11 reverted to the levels recorded in the first years of the transition.⁹⁴

Monitoring of the labour market in Bulgaria shows that, regarding the level of economic activity of the population aged over 15 in the period 2003-2008, a constant increase took place, but it started to fall in the first year of the financial and economic crisis, in 2009, reaching 52% in 2010. The decline continued in the first quarter of 2011, and the level of employment in the economy reached a quarterly minimum value in 5 years of 50.8%, rising slightly to 51% in the second quarter.

In the framework of the implementation of the NRIS a call for proposals named "New Workstation" was announced. The aim of the scheme was to provide training for young people aged up to 29 who are registered as unemployed in the Employment Offices; as well as to provide employment to successful trainees by opening up new posts in private companies.

Sporadically, the Government undertakes measures and activities for temporary, subsidized employment. These measures cover some of the long-term unemployed, but do not contribute significantly to resolving the issue of the high levels of unemployment among Roma in the country.

93 Before December 2011.

94 Alexei Pamporov, *Demographic processes labor force in Bulgaria*, Chapter V of "Characteristics of the Roma employment" – (prepared by Najdenova P., G. Mihova), 2008, Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Centre for Population Studies, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of Bulgaria.

Table 2: Roma male employment by residence, age group and economic sector⁹⁵

	Roma male employment by residence, age group and industry					
	Urban			Rural		
	Up to 30 years old	31-49 years old	50 years old and above	Up to 30 years old	31-49 years old	50 years old and above
Agriculture	21.7%	15.9%	18.5%	30.8%	17.4%	40%
Utility services	13.3%	15.9%	14.8%	0%	13.0%	0%
Construction	15%	18.2%	14.8%	23.1%	26.1%	20%
Retail trade	5%	15.9%	14.8%	0%	8.7%	10%
Manufacturing	15.7%	4.5%	7.4%	15.4%	4.3%	0%

When analyzing the distribution of employed persons by economic activities, certain typical features emerge, determined by membership of one of these categories/groups. Men below the age of 30, for instance, are largely absent from the retail trade (Table 1). Conversely among young Roma women, the retail trade sector is the sector of main choice, in both urban and rural areas. However, women above the age of 30 in the rural areas and women above 50 in urban areas drop out from this sector (Table 2).

Table 3: Proportions of employed Roma women by residence, age group and economic sector⁹⁶

	Proportions of employed Roma women by residence, age group and economic sector					
	Urban			Rural		
	Up to 30 years old	31-49 years old	50 years old and above	Up to 30 years old	31-49 years old	50 years old and above
Agriculture	18.6%	13.3%	12.5%	18.2%	37.5%	28.6%
Utility services	18.6%	16.7%	25%	18.2%	18.8%	42.9%
Construction	4.7%	3.3%	0%	0%	6.3%	0%
Retail trade	11.6%	5%	0%	36.4%	0%	0%
Manufacturing	11.6%	3.3%	4.2%	9.1%	6.3%	0%
Healthcare	7%	16.7%	12.5%	0%	0%	0%
Education	0%	3.3%	8.3%	0%	0%	0%
Public administration	0%	0%	4.2%	0%	12.5%	0%

The utility services sector is the typical employment area especially for the urban population and for women living in villages. In fact, due to their low level of education, the employment identified by Roma women relates to cleaning services ("cleaning woman", "hospital attendant"). This explains the relatively high proportion of elder urban Roma women employed in the healthcare, education and public administration sectors (Table 2). Employment is determined both by sector and by region because the differences in the Roma regional employment rates depend significantly on the general level of employment in the respective region. The ethnicity factor has an approximately similar effect throughout the country.

95 European Union, *Beyond myths and prejudices: Roma in Bulgaria*, EU Inclusive project, available at: <http://www.eu-inclusive.eu/bg/%D0%B8%D0%B7%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5> (accessed 12 May 2012).

96 European Union, *Beyond myths and prejudices: Roma in Bulgaria*.

Employment fairs for meetings between employers and Roma seeking work were organized by the NGO sector. According to information from different NGOs those meetings were partially successful, contributing to the employment of a limited number of Roma people.

As a result of the increase in the minimal wage, the wages of Roma labourers will also be increased in 2013 to the sum of 340 BGN (c. 170 EUR), which will equal the minimum wage. This will not ease their work in the community as large swathes of the unemployed do not believe that registration with the Employment offices brings any benefits. Registration requires regular attendance at the Labour Office and cannot provide assistance (beyond training courses for motivation and additional qualification), introducing them only to potential employers who are not able to offer employment that would provide enough income to cover the minimum living necessities.

In spite of the generally privatised economy and the lack of state-owned companies, the government is still able to create employment. The authorities could give priority to employing people who are registered within the Labour offices, in municipal enterprises and companies where the state participates as co-owner. In cases where municipal enterprises are subsidised, this prioritisation could be a pre-condition for subsidy contracts.

The state policy of freezing wages over the last 3 years has contributed to an increase in the group of employed poor people. The freeze weighs heaviest on poorly qualified and ill-educated people; because if they work at all, they receive the minimal wage or very little more. The proportion of employed poor people, according to data of the National Statistical Institute for 2010, stands at 8.2% of employed people. The chances of people who work on a part-time basis falling below the poverty line are five times higher than for people who work full time. Based on these data, the concerns of the EC that hiring poorly qualified workers is too expensive are not legitimate. Implementing the recommendation of the EC to raise the number of the people who work on a part-time basis would worsen the situation in Roma communities, especially if it entailed moving from full-time to part-time employment.

The Table 3 (below) shows a very important and interesting correlation between level of education and employment status. The data prove that being educated above the level of academic secondary school directly affects the employment opportunities to a notable extent: Almost 70% of Roma with university or post-secondary professional education were employed at the time of the survey; however, the number of Roma with this level of education was low – only 0.6%. The level of schooling most often completed by Roma was the primary level: 37.8% of the interviewed Roma had completed eighth grade (primary education) and 35% of them were employed. Half of the people with secondary education had jobs at the time of the survey. Just over 30% had completed elementary education and approximately 25% of them were employed. Only 22% of those who did not complete elementary education had jobs and the ones who are the most likely to be unemployed are the Roma who have no education at all: only about 5% of them had jobs at the time of the survey.

Table 4: Proportions of employed Roma by level of education who had been employed in the previous four weeks⁹⁷

Proportion of employed Roma by level of education who had employment in the last four weeks		
Level of education	Proportion of Roma graduated	Proportion of Roma who were employed in the last four weeks
University or professional education	0.6%	68.8%
Secondary education	10.7%	49.8%
Primary	37.8%	35%
Elementary	33.7%	25.5%
Lower than elementary	11.9%	22.3%
None	5.2%	14%

⁹⁷ Survey within the project "Beyond programming – measuring progress on the road to Roma inclusion in Bulgaria within the decade of Roma inclusion 2005-2015 and the national Roma integration strategy 2012".

The highest percentage of employed people in the Roma community are, in the case of the young people, between the ages of 18 and 30. In terms of the key indicator for Europe 2020 of employment of the age group 20-64, in the second quarter of 2011 Bulgaria registered an employment rate of 63.4%. In order to reach the national objective of Bulgaria in terms of this indicator of 76% by 2020,⁹⁸ a leap of almost 13 percentage points is required in the employment rate; it is obvious that this is one of the most important opportunities for a significant increase regarding the employment of Roma.

98 The general objective of the EU-27 countries is 75%.

5. HEALTH

According to the research conducted for the purposes of this report, an increasing limitation of access to healthcare for Roma can be observed. The number of people without health insurance is rising. Within the present study, 32.5% of the Roma interviewed stated that they had no health insurance, while 12 months ago the share of Roma people without health insurance was slightly less: 31.1%. 16.7% of the respondents have not selected a general practitioner (GP), because they do not have health insurance (83.3%), or because there is no doctor in the village (6.2%), or they do not know how to approach the GP (4%), or because they think that they do not need a GP (5%). About 13% of respondents said that during the previous 12 months, they would have needed specialized medical care, but did not receive it for various reasons. Reasons given included: lack of money to pay for the necessary service (6.3%), absence of a doctor in the village where they live (1.7%), lack of health insurance (4.7%), reluctance of the doctor to treat Roma (0.5%). 86.9% of the respondents needed emergency care during the previous 12 months, but about 7% of them were refused such services, because their case was not considered urgent. 3.7% of the Roma who needed emergency care did not receive it because the ambulances declined to enter Roma neighbourhoods. 1.8% of the respondents stated that they did not receive emergency care because emergency units do not admit Roma. 82.6% of the interviewed Roma needed hospital care and received it, while 6.8% of them could not afford to pay for hospital care, and 3.9% could not receive hospital treatment due to lack of health insurance. According to the expert opinions collected during the research conducted for this report the low levels of health insurance coverage and health awareness are in most cases attributable to high levels of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty.

As was discussed in detail earlier, one third of the Roma in Bulgaria live without an ID card, which already offers one way of estimating the number of the Roma people without health insurance, since the absence of ID documents automatically excludes them from any kind of public services: these people simply do not exist for the state.

Both the quantitative survey and the interviews and focus groups implemented for the purposes of this report show that the overall health status of communities with a predominant Roma population remains worse than the health status of other population groups of the population in Bulgaria. A survey on immunization rates among Roma conducted by the Open Society Institute – Sofia in 2012⁹⁹ shows that many socially significant¹⁰⁰ and chronic diseases are more common among the inhabitants of segregated areas with a predominantly Roma population than in other communities. Other negative features of neighbourhoods and settlements with a predominantly Roma population are the high rates of child mortality and disability. The main causes for poor health status are poverty, poor living and housing conditions and limited access to medical services, according to an Open Society Institute – Sofia study on Roma health status carried out in from 2007.¹⁰¹ With regard to the high rates of infant mortality, the same study also showed that in 4.1% of the interviewed households one child younger than seven had died, and in every seventh of those families, there had been more than one case of infant mortality.

99 Open Society Institute – Sofia, Tailoring the immunization programme: Research on vaccination and immunization seeking behavior among vulnerable groups in Bulgaria, 2013.

100 Socially-significant diseases are those that define the profile and the structure of morbidity and mortality in a particular settlement, region or country. Such diseases should correspond to certain criteria. In the developed countries these include diseases of internal organs and blood circulation, cancer, traumas and poisonings, diseases of respiratory diseases, tuberculosis, diseases of the nervous system, diabetes, sexually transmitted diseases. (<http://etilena.info/med/so/u0021.html>).

101 Open Society Institute – Sofia, Roma Health Status, 2007.

Poverty limits access to medical services for more than half of the citizens living in areas with a predominantly Roma population. It appears that more than half of the citizens living in such segregated areas live on incomes that are lower than the median income for the group (BGN 160 or USD 110), and more than 21% of them belong to the poorest group of all, with a monthly median income under BGN 96 (USD 66).¹⁰²

As in most areas of public policy, the strategic documents on the integration of Roma are also well developed and defined in the area of healthcare, especially since Bulgaria joined the European Union, (however, the relevant section of the NRIS has failed to incorporate the suggestions made by NGOs and there is still space for development even in those strategic documents). That, however, has proved not to be enough for the effective inclusion of Roma in society and there are still many barriers and obstacles that should be overcome. Most of the measures relevant to Roma are mainstream national policies and do not explicitly target Roma, which leads to inefficient implementation and to the Roma ethnic minority remaining outsiders in Bulgarian society.

The interventions in the area of healthcare were designed to address access to services, prevention and treatment of diseases, information and awareness raising campaigns and support for the establishment of a network of Roma Health Mediators. EU funds were allocated to support the implementation of the Health Strategy for persons from vulnerable groups and ethnic minorities (2005-2015).¹⁰³ Separate projects were implemented by NGOs with EU and other donor funding.

A study carried out in 2002 found that life expectancy among the Roma was 10 years lower than among Bulgarians and that the situation was deteriorating. Among the causes for ill health and early death mentioned were poverty, malnutrition, unhealthy environment and early and frequent childbirth.¹⁰⁴ Discrimination and poverty, leading to marginalization, lack of work and limited access to public services such as health care, education and housing, are the main problems faced by the Roma population. A recent survey¹⁰⁵ showed an increased level of perceived sense of discrimination among Roma compared to 10 years ago.

Discrimination is a fundamental cause of the limited access of the Roma community in Bulgaria to public services. The perception of discrimination due to their ethnic origin, when seeking medical services, is declared by 42.3% of the interviewed Roma persons; 34% reported this about access to social services and 32% in seeking access to employment. All of this leads to an increase in poverty and exclusion for one of the most vulnerable community groups, the Roma minority.

There are no specific mechanisms for Roma people to complain about medical mistreatment. There are however, different mechanisms that exist to protect patients' rights. Complaints may be sent to the National Health Insurance Fund,¹⁰⁶ to the website of the Bulgarian Association for Protection of Patients,¹⁰⁷ or to the "Medical Audit" executive agency of the Ministry of Health.¹⁰⁸ Procedures provide that within 30 days after the receipt of the complaint an inspection of the case is to be undertaken, and no more than 30 days

102 Open Society Institute - Sofia, Tailoring the immunization programme: Research on vaccination and immunization seeking behavior among vulnerable groups in Bulgaria, 2013 NOT FIND TEXT ANYWHERE.

103 ЗДРАВНА СТРАТЕГИЯ ЗА ЛИЦА В НЕРАВНОСТОЙНО ПОЛОЖЕНИЕ, ПРИНАДЛЕЖАЩИ КЪМ ЕТНИЧЕСКИ МАЛЦИНСТВА, n.d., available at http://www.ncedi.government.bg/zdravna%20strategia_prieta.htm (accessed 12 May 2013).

104 Tarnev, I., Kamenov, O., Popov, M., Makaveeva, L. and Vasilka Alexandrova, *Health Problems of the Roma. Essence, Consequences and Ways to Go*, OSI, 2002, 3.

105 Soros Foundation Romania, *Project EU INCLUSIVE – Data transfer and exchange of good practices regarding the inclusion of Roma population between Romania, Bulgaria, Italy and Spain.*, n.d., available at <http://www.soros.ro/en/program.php?program=48>, (accessed 12 May 2013).

106 *Гражданите могат да се оплакват в НЗОК при недоволство от оказаната им помощ*, 17 March 2010, available at <http://www.mediapool.bg/%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B6%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5-%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%B0%D1%82-%D0%B4%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%B5-%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%BB%D0%B0-%D0%BA%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%82-%D0%B2-%D0%BD%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BA-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%B8%D0%BC-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%89-news163092.html> (accessed 12 May 2013).

107 http://www.patient.bg/index_bg.php.

108 <http://www.eama.bg/signals-info.html>.

after that the author of the complaint should be informed about the outcome. There is no information about the number of complaints, inspections and measures undertaken as a follow up.

According to the Health Act,¹⁰⁹ a patient is any person who seeks or receives medical treatment (Art. 84, par. 1). Health status may not be assessed on the basis of race, gender, age, ethnicity, background, religion, education, cultural level, commitments, political affiliation, sexual orientation, private and public status or wealth (art. 85). Each patient has the right to respect of his civil, political, economic, social, cultural and religious rights. Each patient has the right have his rights explained in accessible language and to receive clear information about his health status and the methods of treatment that will be applied (art. 86).

According to art. 222, par. 1 of the Health Act, a medical practitioner who refuses to provide medical treatment shall be punished with a fine of 5,000 to 10,000 BGN (2,500 -5,000 EUR), if more severe punishment is not meted out. If this happens a second time, then the punishment is double: from 10,000 to 20,000 BGN (5,000-10,000 euro). A practitioner who violates the rights of patients shall be fined 300 to 1,000 BGN (150-500 EUR) and if the case is repeated the fine rises from 500 to 1,500 BGN (250-500 EUR) (art. 221).

Medical information should be provided to patients in a way that would support their free choice (art. 88, par. 2.) Any medical practitioner who “forgets” to provide patients with information regarding the conditions of their medical treatment shall be fined with 300 to 1,000 BGN (150-500 EUR), and in case of repetition the practitioner is disqualified from exercising the medical profession for a period of six months to one year (art. 220, par. 1).

The available sociological data show that members of the Roma community are four times poorer than Bulgarians. Their difficult access to the labour market and lawful employment is often a major cause of their difficult access to health services too. A survey carried out by the Open Society Institute Sofia in 2009 showed that there was a higher risk of Roma being excluded from the health insurance system in Bulgaria compared to other ethnic groups. Housing and living conditions are another major issue. In the 21st century, there is still a considerable proportion of the Roma population living in shacks or caravans, while many others live at unregistered addresses. Continuing obstacles to effective Roma inclusion in Bulgaria, together with the financial and economic crisis, are the reasons for the increased emigration to other EU countries by Roma in search for a better life that followed Bulgaria’s accession to the EU accession.

A recent report by the World Health Organization concludes that “one and a half million inhabitants are not covered by the statutory national insurance scheme, and even for the insured population, patient cost-sharing obligations remain very high”. The report puts private costs at 42% of the officially reported health expenditure. The final conclusion is that “the level of financial protection provided by the health system in Bulgaria is the worst among the countries of the European Union, and this puts people at risk of impoverishment as a result of ill health or forces them to forego seeking care when needed”.¹¹⁰ A European Parliament report also mentions that ‘in Bulgaria, ‘out-of-pocket’ expenditures by individual patients are relatively high, with negative consequences for health service provision for vulnerable low income groups such as the Roma’.¹¹¹

Roma women are an especially vulnerable group. The self-reported health status data in a study carried out in 2008 reveal that only about 37% of Romani women’s health status was either “good” or “very good”. This is a very low figure compared to the population average on a similar indicator, which according to a Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2006 was 60%. It should also be borne in mind that perceptions of a healthy life among Roma and Bulgarians may well differ widely. The most prevalent understanding of what it means to be healthy among Roma is the absence of a serious chronic disease.¹¹²

109 Republic of Bulgaria, *Health Act*, 30 December 2008, available at <http://www.mh.government.bg/Articles.aspx?lang=bg-BG&page-id=380¤tPage=3&categoryid=1058> (accessed 12 May 2013).

110 Tamas Evetovits et al, *Report of a Diagnostic Mission on the Health Insurance System in Bulgaria*. World Health Organization, 1. (May, 2010).

111 European Parliament, ‘*Measures to promote the situation of Roma EU citizens in the European Union*’, 2011, 17., available at <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/businessAndConsultancy/LSEConsulting/pdf/Roma.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2013).

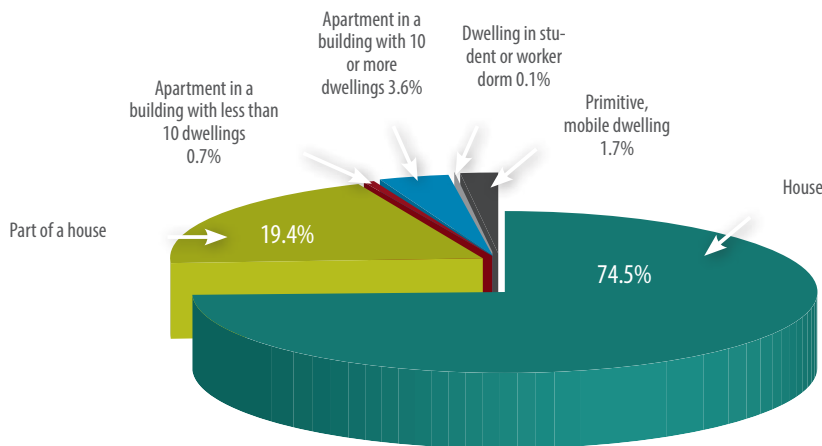
112 *Ibid.*

Thus, poorer health of Roma and the inequalities faced by them in access to healthcare constitute one of the main obstacles to their social inclusion in Bulgaria. The fact that a large number of Roma people have no health insurance has created a gap between Roma and non-Roma that should be addressed by the Bulgarian National Roma Integration Strategy, as identified by the European Commission. In 2012 nothing was undertaken even to start addressing this issue. This is a huge challenge and although results cannot be realistically expected to materialize within one year, there is nevertheless an urgent need to change the general pattern of the functioning of the health care system, which is currently a source of systemic exclusion. The lack of health insurance is both a cause and an effect of this exclusion.

6. HOUSING

Roma rarely live in a condominium. The most common type of housing is a single house or part of a house. Roma households usually live in overcrowded accommodation and the living conditions are much worse than those of the rest of the Bulgarian population. The data from the present survey¹¹³ confirm the conclusions of the National Roma Integration Strategy: the main type of dwelling, typical of Roma households who live in segregated neighbourhoods, is a single house (74.5%) or part of a house (19.4%). 0.1% live in student or worker dormitories, and 1.7% live in primitive mobile homes.

Figure 6: Type of dwelling¹¹⁴ (percent)



Most of the dwellings are built of masonry (73.4%) or sun-dried bricks (16.3%). 1.6% are made of wood and 0.7% are made of stone. The number of rooms used by Roma households (not counting kitchen, W/C, bathrooms and rooms used for offices/business) is 2, and the average size of the dwelling is 50 m². In 83% of cases the dwelling belongs to the household. 11.3% live in somebody else's house where rent is not requested, 3.7% live in dwellings rented from the local municipality or the state; 1.9% rent their dwellings from private persons.

79.2% have access to running water in their dwelling (mains water supply), 39.9% have hot running water. 94.9% have access to electricity and 44.7% are connected to a sewerage system. 46% have flush toilets in their dwellings, 50.9% have bathrooms. 67% are connected to cable TV and only 23.9% are connected to the Internet, while according to the National Statistical Institute in 2012 more than half of the overall population has access to high-speed internet.

113 Survey within the project "Beyond programming – measuring progress on the road to Roma inclusion in Bulgaria within the decade of Roma inclusion 2005-2015 and the national Roma integration strategy 2012-2020".

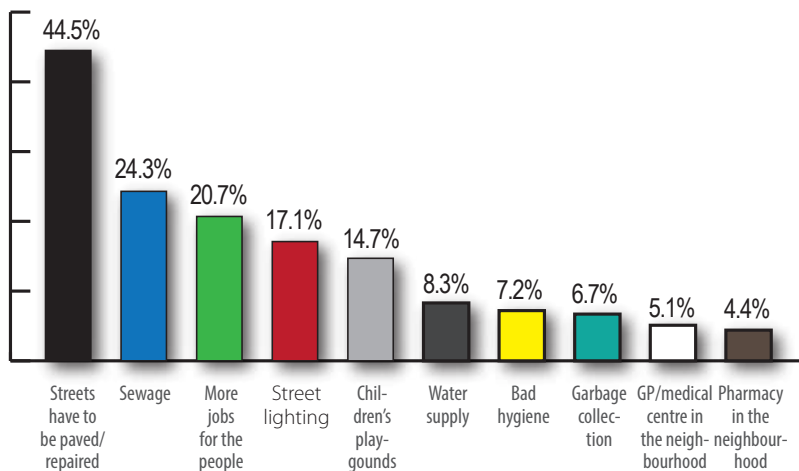
114 Survey within the project "Beyond programming – measuring progress on the road to Roma inclusion in Bulgaria within the decade of Roma inclusion 2005-2015 and the national Roma integration strategy 2012-2020".

According to data from the Report on Public Policies for Inclusion of the Roma Population in Bulgaria and the Main Issues of Social and Economic Inclusion of the Roma Community,¹¹⁵ houses in rural villages are larger – 59.9 m², while those in urban areas measure 52.9 m². However, the most significant differences are geographical. The report¹¹⁶ mentioned above states that in the North-west Planning Region the Roma houses measure on average 66.2 m², while in South-east and South-central Bulgaria the size is 49.9 m². The cheapest houses are found in North-west Bulgaria.

The construction of social housing is an important priority in the area of social inclusion, since the social housing fund represents less than 3% of the total number of dwellings: far less than the average for the EU. The National Programme for Improving the Living Conditions of Roma¹¹⁷ which envisaged investments of 1,500,000,000 BGN (750,000,000 EUR) in social housing and public infrastructure, has not been implemented or even started. Even before the economic crisis, the resources allocated to the Programme were insufficient in comparison with the plans. In 2009 the implementation of the Programme stopped. The planned public investments for improvement in the living conditions of Roma until 2013 are about 7,000,000 EUR: enough to implement pilot projects in four municipalities. Unfortunately, the NRIS does not envisage serious state investment during the next few years in this very important area. There is no public information on the provisions of the draft of the partnership agreement with the EC for the next programming period of 2014-2020; however the Position issued by the Commission Services on the Development of Partnership Agreement and Programmes in Bulgaria for the period 2014-2020¹¹⁸ explicitly recommends that Bulgaria should allocate adequate funds to promoting integrated measures to eliminate the segregation of Roma from the labour market, general and vocational education and training, social services, healthcare and housing (p.10).

In the meantime the Roma neighbourhoods continue to suffer from the lack of equal access to public services. Sewerage is available to only 24.3% of the interviewed Roma.

Figure 7: Main issues for the Roma people from segregated neighbourhoods¹¹⁹



115 Available at: <http://eu-inclusive.eu>.

116 *Ibid.*

117 НАЦИОНАЛНА ПРОГРАМА ЗА ПОДОБРЯВАНЕ ЖИЛИЩНИТЕ УСЛОВИЯ НА РОМИТЕ В РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ ЗА ПЕРИОДА 2005-2015 годин, available at https://www.google.bg/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0C-COQFJAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.strategy.bg%2FFileHandler.ashx%3FfileId%3D581&ei=bAJ6UYDhKofuswb774GwBA&us-g=AFQjCNHSSjDSmY-Qvh2e_HYmSI7BywHhew&sig2=z4ek9PVRDPJN38XGIhewlw&bvm=bv.45645796,d.Yms (accessed 12 May 2013)

118 European Union, *Position of the Commission Services on the development of Partnership Agreement and programmes in BULGARIA for the period 2014-2020*, available at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/pdf/partnership/bg_position_paper.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).

119 Survey within the project "Beyond programming – measuring progress on the road to Roma inclusion in Bulgaria within the decade of Roma inclusion 2005-2015 and the national Roma integration strategy 2012-2020".

Only 38.3% of the respondents state that there is a medical centre or a doctor in the neighbourhood and only 1.9% say that access has been provided in the last 12 months. Only 27.7% say that there is a pharmacy and only 1.7% say that it was built during the last 12 months. Access to school and kindergarten is also limited since there are no schools in the neighbourhoods of 45% of the respondents and no kindergarten in the neighbourhoods of 59.1% of the respondents. According to 69% of the Roma there is no police station in their neighbourhoods, nor is there any social care for the elderly or the sick (89.3%), nor a labour office – almost 90%. The road infrastructure is very bad according to 75% of the respondents, there is no public sewer – 48%, (but 6.1%) say that access has been provided during the last 12 months. According to 90% of the interviewed there are no playgrounds, but where they do exist, they have been built during the last 12 months – 5.3%.

A very important finding of the survey, which dispels the myth that Roma would prefer to live in compact Roma neighbourhoods is that most Roma would prefer to live in an area with better infrastructure and better housing, even if the Roma are not in a majority: 66.7%.

As has been mentioned above, both the State and the local authorities are only minimally involved in the provision of social housing. There are, however, a few examples initiated by NGOs and some of them have proven to be successful, such as the one by the ADRA Foundation implemented in the town of Kyustendil, which is presented later in this report.

In March 2012 the Open Society Institute – Sofia interviewed 298 households in the town of Dupnitsa with the purpose of collecting data on their income, living and housing conditions. The data are to assist planning of the upcoming construction of about 120 social houses a short distance from Gizdova Mahala (the name of one of the Roma neighbourhoods in the town). The dwellings will be constructed within the framework of Operation 1.2. "Housing policies" of the "Regional development" 2007-2013" Operational programme under the scheme "Support for provision of adequate social houses for accommodation of minorities and socially vulnerable groups of the population and other groups in disadvantaged situations". The survey showed that the status of the Roma neighbourhoods in Dupnitsa has not changed during recent years. The size of the dwellings of the Roma people is relatively small. The area available to an average (median) Roma household is 33.5 m², while most of the dwellings are below 20 m². The indicator for subjective overpopulation shows that most households define the number of rooms as insufficient. In the largest, and probably the poorest Roma neighbourhood in Dupnitsa, around 90% of the dwellings do not have a bath or an inside toilet. Around 40% of the people do not have their own bed (excluding couples who use the same bed). Roma households in Dupnitsa live in overpopulated dwellings, where the private space is minimal. Every other household has the feeling that it lives in a tiny house and needs more rooms. Each fifth household does not have legal access to public services (e.g. water and electricity), since they live in an illegal dwelling.

Both focus-group discussions and the quantitative survey have shown that a serious problem is the lack of children's playgrounds. Another serious problem for the smaller settlements is the lack of (enclosed) space where the people could organize gatherings and celebrations. There are no clubs for pensioners or for young people. The number of communal dwellings is limited everywhere. There are almost no opportunities to buy plots for building houses.

Public transportation is well developed in regional towns, as are connections between the regional towns and the municipal centres; while for the smaller settlements the transport services are weak and in most cases people rely on private, "illegal" means of transport. It is almost impossible to travel to a municipal centre and to come home on the same day.

CASE STUDIES

Educational integration in the Municipality of Petrich

In 2006 the Municipal council of Petrich adopted a Municipal Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities. In conformity with the Framework Programme for Equal Integration of the Roma in Bulgarian Society and with the policy of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science for optimization of the school network, the priorities of the Strategy are: complete educational integration of the Roma children and provision of equal access to quality education out of the segregated schools and kindergartens; the optimization of the school network in the Municipality of Petrich, including support for the focal schools in order to guarantee the quality of education provided by them.

Beyond the common educational problems, relevant to all minority children, the strategy reflects the specific issues for the Roma children, defining the following objectives:

1. Complete integration of the Roma children in ethnically mixed groups in the kindergarten and the Roma students in classes with mixed ethnic background in focal mainstream schools, situated outside the Roma neighbourhoods.
2. Improvement of the equipment of the focal schools and kindergarten.
3. Improvement of the qualification and pre-qualification of the teachers to work in ethnically mixed environments.
4. Prevention of the practice of enrolling Roma children in special schools.
5. Prevention of discrimination in the kindergarten and schools.
6. Educating qualified teachers in Romani language.
7. Introduction of the 'teacher's assistant' in preparatory year and first grade.
8. Literacy courses for illiterate adult Roma.

The period for implementation of the Strategy is linked to the timeframe of the Decade of Roma Inclusion – 2005-2015 and the World "Education for All" programme of UNESCO and UN.

The Municipal strategy lists the specific activities for implementation of each strategic goal and priorities, expected results, periods for implementation, responsible institutions and needed resources. Coordination has been entrusted to the Municipal "Education and Culture" Directorate. Needed resources for each year are planned under the budgets of the relevant focal schools within the framework of the state delegated budgets.

So far, the Strategy has been partially successful. Some of the positive results are related to

- Improvement of attendance rate and decrease in early drop-out rates from school – due to the free transportation provided by the Municipality from the Roma neighbourhoods to the focal schools.
- Almost 100% coverage of the children at first grade age and their proportionate enrolment in different mainstream schools in the town. The appointment of an expert on educational integration, with Roma background, is being highly evaluated. The person is in a constant touch with the Roma children and the directors from the schools within the Municipality.
- Improvement of environment for socialization of the children and students in focal schools and kindergarten, improvement of the conditions for their safety and security during transportation. A special person with Roma background has been appointed to accompany the children during transportation.

Significant gaps:

- There is no reduction in the cases of discrimination in the kindergartens and schools. In some of the schools there are manifestations of ethnic non-tolerance, aggression and racist demonstrations against the Roma students by the students from the majority.
- No measures have yet been taken to train teachers in the Romani language, since the school management does not consider it appropriate.
- The low level of salaries for the teaching assistants and the negative attitude towards them from the non-Roma teachers has not led to positive results. On the contrary, they became demotivated and left their posts.
- The results of retention at school of the Roma children are not sustainable. The number of children dropping out is still increasing.

Recommendations

1. With the implementation of initiatives related to Roma integration, the participation of Roma themselves is extremely important, indeed essential. For many years the Municipality and the school managements have not considered partnerships with representatives of the Roma community as important.
2. With the purpose of improving the socio-psychological and institutional climate around the values of the education-integrative policy and increasing of the institutional and wider social support for its implementation, regular meetings between the stakeholders is necessary.

Practice shows that for the implementation of certain activities, the funding from the municipal budget and the school delegated budget is too limited. To achieve better and sustainable results, there is a need of real commitment of political will, efforts to attract resources under the available EU funds and commitment of real financial and human resources.

“The Land – A Source of Income” Programme – provision of agricultural land to landless and indigent Roma people living in the rural areas of Bulgaria

The programme

The “Land – source of income” programme started in 1993. It began in the district of Plovdiv with the provision of specialized consultancy services and micro-credit for purchasing land and, if needed, materials and equipment for economically disadvantaged communities. The main goal of the programme is to reduce Roma unemployment in rural areas. The beneficiaries are expected to contribute up to 20% of the price of the land, while the Foundation provides the remaining 80% as a 3- to 5-year loan at 6% annual interest. The participants become owners of the land once the loan is fully paid off. If they do not pay the loan, they lose the invested financial resources, as well as the sum they have invested themselves, all of which is returned to the Foundation.

The fact that the participants are “almost” owners from the very beginning is very important, as the prospect of complete ownership is a real one. The scheme differs from most programmes because of the combination of social features and market rules.

80 Roma families (almost 300 people) from the region of Plovdiv have received financial support to start agricultural activities. There are already small farms in Perushtitsa, Parvomai, villages around Plovdiv and Pazardzhik. A Roma male from the village of Chalakovi, Plovdiv, bought 3.2 hectares of agricultural land with a low-interest 5-year loan. More than 10 families from Perushtitsa are cultivating over 10 hectares of agricultural land. Some of them have even bought tractors, again with low-interest loans. In 2011 a Roma man from Kuklen was granted 25,000 BGN under the “young farmer” programme for cultivating vegetables. Another Roma family has rented 1 hectare of municipal agricultural land to develop agricultural activities.

The Agro-Information Centre in Plovdiv, part of the “Land – source of income” programme, provides a wide range of consultancy services and specialized information, organizes training sessions and agro-technical consultations with on-site visits. The Agrocentre provides information, technical and judicial assistance for landless families that are willing to participate in the process of acquiring land. Its activities cover 5 municipalities from the region of Plovdiv. Meetings with the local authorities are being implemented with regard to the regulation of provision of land. There are 3 specialized professional schools in the region – at Perushtitsa, Kuklen, Sadovo. There are more than 100 Roma students enrolled who develop their skills in viticulture, horticulture, apiculture and raising rabbits and pigeons and who will work to establish modern farms for efficient agriculture and stock-raising.

One problem facing the agricultural producers is the low price at which they can sell their products. Another problem which causes serious difficulties is the issue of administrative documents that they have to submit periodically to various institutions.

Franchising the model

In 2010 the America for Bulgaria Foundation offered financial support for replicating the model in other parts of the country. The main objectives of the project were:

1. to demonstrate that the Land Foundation Integrated Model for Entrepreneurial Support can be expanded
2. to support communities & assist in local development
3. to provide examples and information to help change prejudiced attitudes inside and outside of Roma communities.
4. to help develop ways to improve local, regional, and national policy to create a more favourable entrepreneurial environment for Roma and other disadvantaged minorities.

After a thorough review in terms of management capacity and willingness to take part in the programme replication, five local organizations were selected to apply the model locally. These were chosen using a specially developed assessment methodology including capacity building: Vidin, Rakitovo, Pazardzhik, Razgrad and Kyustendil. At present the Land Foundation has provided both financial and capacity support for the development of agricultural and non-agricultural initiatives, ranging from a hair-styling salon and a coffee shop to a strawberry farm and a nut-processing facility. The program results indicate that the high level of unemployment among Roma in rural areas is an issue that could be addressed by the model developed by Land Foundation.

The added value of the Land Foundation Programme

Most Roma are not considered reliable and belong to what the banking institutions called the “high risk category”, since they either cannot prove regular income or cannot provide collateral. Therefore the finan-

cial status of self-employed families and members of Roma families is particularly low. In addition to this the low level of educational attainment further hinders self-employment.

There are a number of challenges that have to be taken into consideration. In most cases Roma or Roma-led NGOs lack an agricultural background and thus the need to identify local expertise and its availability is pressing. Close monitoring and timely guidance for each agricultural and non-agricultural initiative is also a prerequisite for success. And yet the Land Foundation assists Roma in acquiring entrepreneurial skills for supporting their own families.

The programme participants are the beneficiaries and the key element of the Land Foundation approach. The selection process is both intensive and careful, and it varies from one beneficiary to another. However, the Foundation seeks to ensure that knowledge, training, funding and support are provided in accordance with the needs identified. Obviously once all of this has been done the small business functions by itself, solely managed by the Roma household.

Identifying local partners with equal or even higher motivation and dedication to help economically disadvantaged groups is a precondition for starting a successful entrepreneurial programme. The tools, expertise and support available from the local partners help to develop successful initiatives in the local communities. It is also extremely important in terms of programme sustainability to engage strong and empowered partners to nurture local groups willing to develop agricultural or non-agricultural activities.

Successful private entrepreneurship

Valentin Kasabov is an agricultural producer of Roma origin, from the village of Tarnava. Currently he runs a farm with 30 cows and 80 pigs. His main activity is the production and sale of milk and animals. Since last year, the farm has been placed in the highest category. Besides the farm, the entrepreneur has also opened a shop and a sales point where he buys milk from smaller milk producers. He has taken on 5 employees on permanent contracts and the average salaries he pays are in the range of 2000-2200 BGN (1000-1100 EUR).

“The farm has been established through the efforts of the family and with investment of the profits into improving the conditions and increasing the number of animals. The investment in the production and the extension of the activities is the main precondition for the successful development of the farm”, says Valentin Kasabov.

The development of the farm has continued for almost 20 years. Kasabov does not rely on loans, but on the gradual and sensible investment of a large part of the profits. An important factor in the success of the farm is the vision of the owner for its development. He was never involved in any training courses, but learnt only through practice.

The social impact of the farm is not limited to the creation of a few permanent jobs. A very important activity is the purchase of milk from smaller dairy producers, providing them with income. After building up some capital and a regular income, Kasabov is now striving to help the children from the Roma neighbourhood in the village of Tarnak, through the establishment of a Children' Centre. His idea is to build it on a municipal plot and give all children access to it. Dealing with the local authorities, however, involves a great deal of bureaucracy: they have already spent over four months examining and clarifying the status of the plot in question. Another of Kasabov's ideas is to build a chapel at the local cemetery.

The case of the Nadezhda neighbourhood in Sliven

The Nadezhda neighbourhood in Sliven is situated in the town of Sliven and is one of the largest Roma ghettos in Central Eastern Europe. According to the participants in the interviews and focus groups used for the purposes of this report, the people living there number about 30,000, while official statistics say that

there were 10,342 people living there during 2011.¹²⁰ Contrasts of poverty are sharp and quite unacceptable in an EU country.

The neighbourhood is characterized by unpaved streets; water accessed directly from the mains, limited access to legally provided electricity, and poor hygiene, low levels of health culture and the lack of a medical centre or a GP in the neighbourhood. Between November 2009 and March 2010 more than 900 people were hospitalized with measles. 10 out of them died.

The programme described in this case study combines medical treatment and prevention in such a way as to ensure that services are accessible, low threshold, and effective in the longer term. Two general practitioners have been involved, with practices established in the neighbourhood itself: Dr. Panayotov (of Roma ethnicity) and Dr. Kolev (of Bulgarian ethnic origin). A health-social centre has been established in the neighbourhood. It has been managed by a foundation called “The Health of the Roma”, supported by an expert as well as community expertise and capacity (assistants and coordinators have been selected from the representatives of the neighbourhood), and the two GPs mentioned above are also involved. Four health mediators working in the neighbourhood have also been involved in the activities of the centre. Thus, a public-private partnership has been established, with multiple sources of funding and support including GPs, the Foundation, the Municipality (by supporting the health mediators). Preconditions for social impact on the people of the neighbourhood have been provided:

- Involvement of resources from the local community
- Provision of role models for young Roma to motivate them to work for the development of their community
- Increasing the provision to ensure some security and predictability in the use of health services, also including low threshold services and consultations

The combination of activities and measures listed above have created the necessary conditions for identifying a number of serious diseases among the people living in the neighbourhood. In the meantime, the collaboration between the stakeholders ensured access to specialized medical assistance, including access to gynaecological and paediatric services in the neighbourhood. Several innovative elements have contributed to the success of the initiative, namely the use of the centre for activities related to civic and youth participation and education, training sessions for improving interpersonal skills, information and education for families expecting children.

The participating parties plan to extend the range of services offered by the health-social centre in the near future. New group-training modules will be developed to improve the job-seeking skills of the Roma and to enhance their entrepreneurship; motivational training programmes and activities will be conducted for children and students to continue their education; the development of multidisciplinary teams will be undertaken in order to work on certain cases; increasing the capacity of the centre's team.

Sustainable social housing in the Kyustendil

ADRA – Bulgaria was registered on 10 July 1992. In a short period of time ADRA established a sustainable network of partners and a stock of materials for humanitarian activities in many regions throughout the country. The foundation has distributed material aid to various social, educational and health-care institutions. Starting with humanitarian aid, ADRA continued its activities in various areas: education, access to medical services, provision of better living conditions, at local level.

One of the first locations where ADRA-Bulgaria started its operations was the town of Kyustendil and the Iztok Roma neighbourhood. Besides distributing humanitarian aid, the organization established a medical centre in

120 <http://www.sliven.bg/index.csp?f=news-42660>.

the Roma neighbourhood where Roma are still able to go and receive high quality medical services. Beyond this, the organization regularly organizes different community activities: cleaning up the environment in the neighbourhood, training sessions and seminars on different topics (Health, Education, Employment, etc.).¹²¹

At the beginning of the 2000's, a representative of ADRA Austria was on a mission to Bulgaria. Following his request to visit a deprived Roma neighbourhood, his colleagues from ADRA Bulgaria took him to the Iztok neighbourhood in Kyustendil. What he saw made him think that working to provide better housing conditions for Roma would make sense as a way of raising the standard of living of the local community.

Description of the intervention

In 2002-2003, with the collaboration of ADRA Austria, 11 prefabricated modular houses were transported to the area. They were placed in the old part of the neighbourhood where the most deprived families live. The houses were assembled by Austrian specialists on a plot belonging to the Municipality of Kyustendil. The Municipality also contributed by providing mains water and electricity. When the houses were finished, ADRA donated them to the Municipality, which is now responsible for their upkeep. The houses themselves consist of a living room, bedroom and a bathroom. The inhabitants pay a monthly rent of about 5 euro. They are also responsible for paying the monthly water and electricity bills.

As the appearance and the quality of the houses created great interest within the community and there were many families who declared their wish to be accommodated, the foundation established a "housing commission" which included representatives of the local community. Based on certain criteria, the commission decided which families were eligible for accommodation. Since ownership has been transferred to the Municipality of Kyustendil, ADRA is not in charge of collecting the monthly rents, nor of the further maintenance of the houses and the surrounding environment.

Following this example, in 2004-2005 ADRA Bulgaria began a second initiative to build houses in the Roma neighbourhood in Kyustendil. A plot was bought from the Municipality and 10 more houses were constructed. This time, the houses were built not as prefabricated modules, but as solid structures using all the necessary construction materials: bricks, concrete, etc. All the preliminary documentation was developed on a voluntary basis, e.g. architectural plans, and the building work itself was done by workers from the Roma community. The mains water and electricity connections were provided by the Municipality of Kyustendil. The difference from the first initiative is that both the land and the houses themselves belong to the ADRA Bulgaria foundation.

The question of who would live in the houses was solved in the same way: the housing commission of community representatives decided who would be admitted to accommodation.

As the demand for better housing and popular interest continued to grow, ADRA Bulgaria continued working on the provision of better housing for the Roma in Kyustendil. Thus, in 2007 the foundation opened 6 more houses and in 2010 another 4, each of them with a living room, bedroom and a bathroom.

As a result ADRA Bulgaria, in collaboration with ADRA Austria, ADRA Germany, the Municipality of Vienna, the Municipality of Kyustendil and volunteers from the local community and from other parts of the country has managed to provide better living conditions for 31 Roma families.

The new houses are built in the so-called "new part" of the neighbourhood. The land and the houses are the property of ADRA Bulgaria foundation. One of the conditions for accommodation is that inhabitants pay a monthly rent of 10 BGN (about 5 euro). The money is collected by an unofficial "housekeeper", elected by the families who live there, and used for further maintenance.

After accommodating the families, ADRA Bulgaria continues working with them in order to build up their interpersonal skills and to further their education and knowledge and awareness in diverse areas: Education, Health, Safe environment, etc.

121 <http://adra-bg.org/web/Aboutus/tabid/405/Default.aspx>.

ADRA Bulgaria field workers are in constant touch with the community and the inhabitants of the ADRA houses in particular.

Since then, there have been several cases of families being removed from the houses, following a decision by the housing commission. The cases involved people who behaved in an unacceptable manner (selling the furniture, perpetrating criminal acts, infringing the privacy of the other residents, etc.). After their removal, the commission of community representatives assembled to select new people who were then accommodated.

ADRA Bulgaria has established an effective working partnership with the Municipality of Kyustendil and is able to maintain it, regardless of the local or national political situation.

For the 31 houses built so far, ADRA has invested around 333,600 euro, but this sum does not reflect the actual costs, as there was also a great deal of volunteer work, and there were many in-kind donations from Bramac, Wienerberger and other private companies.

Considering the pre-requisites for desirable outcomes, it is clear that the issue of Roma housing is very sensitive. In this regard all stakeholders (institutions, NGOs, the majority – as far as possible) have to be convinced and aware that such an initiative is really necessary, in order to avoid any miscommunication and potential tension among institutions, the community and NGOs.

All relevant stakeholders should be responsive and receptive rather than resistant, as the process requires their concrete and particular long-term commitment. One of the recommendations of ADRA Bulgaria is that if the implementer is not blessed with patience, persistence, skills for mediation and the will to compromise, then he/she should not even think about working on the issue.

Moreover, building houses and accommodating people does not seem to be sufficient. There should also be a continuing engagement with the accommodated people in order to increase their level of interpersonal skills and awareness of living in an integrated environment, and to correct negative behaviour, if any (e.g. children who do not attend school or preschool, parents who do not actively seek employment, careless attitude to property, etc.).

The community should also be involved in the decision-making process, i.e. there should be a sense of communal ownership, and it should be real, as a large part of the success depends on it. Such an approach can guarantee the transparency and accountability of the involved stakeholders: NGOs, local government and the community itself.

To sum up, there are two main challenges that emerge from ADRA's experience: political will and lack of resources.

The political will of the local government is crucial. It is true that if the implementer is well backed up with resources (financial and human) it could start without the assistance of the local authorities, but the latter's participation is crucial for sustainability and for the technical provision of access to services such as water, electricity, medical assistance, etc.

The lack of resources however is most important, as experience so far shows that while in principle governments do not mind the idea of investing financial resources, the problem is that such resources are lacking. It is true that under some of the Structural Funds of the EU there are opportunities, but so far they have not been used efficiently and will probably soon be lost as the 2007-2013 programme period is nearly over.

There was no formal monitoring of the process as ADRA was constantly present on-site before, during and after the construction of the houses and the accommodation of the residents. ADRA hired a fieldworker with a Roma background, living in the community, who is very well known both by the Roma community at large and by the accommodated people and the local institutions. The fieldworker is permanently present, monitoring and observing the whole process and in constant touch with everyone. In urgent cases, the person contacts the headquarters of ADRA Bulgaria, the community's housing commission or

the relevant authorities. Further, the initiative has been closely monitored by the mass media and other NGOs, who have provided predominantly positive feedback. The provision of Roma housing by ADRA has also been nominated as an innovative practice of the year on the webpage of the Foundation for Local Government Reforms.

Despite not-quite-successful and discouraging experiences with housing initiatives in other localities, the case of ADRA proves that the provision of housing for Roma can be a successful process that contributes for the development of the whole population. The “magic trick” is that the process is not “money driven”. It can even be said that the houses are only one of the measures towards achieving the ultimate goal, which is the integration of the Roma population.

The provision of housing should not be perceived as a single act, but as a long term process with multiple elements of social development work. Housing is not a technical issue; it is a social practice that requires investments into the capacity in the community and not only in the building of infrastructure.

It is true that NGOs are more flexible and able to intervene constantly in the field, but it is the official authorities who are responsible for the provision of better living conditions. Thus, they should be the main carriers of the process; however, NGOs can be more efficient in field work, being a creation of the civil society, involving representatives of the community itself.

Political participation: the case of the Roma Academy for Culture and Education

The Roma Academy for Culture and Education (RACE) has worked on projects for the desegregation of the education of the Roma students in Sliven since 2001 – in partnership with the Municipality of Sliven and some of the mainstream schools in the town. Thanks to the good results that it achieved RACE was able to lobby for the adoption of a “Program for the Education of Minority Children”, which was adopted by the Municipal Council of Sliven in 2004. In January 2006, the Municipal council adopted a “Plan for Development of the Municipality of Sliven 2007-2013”. The plan includes measures to improve education and the school environment in the desegregation process. Representatives of RACE have actively participated in the elaboration of the “Action plan of the Municipality of Sliven for the integration of citizens of Roma origin and other socially vulnerable people who live in a situation similar to that of the Roma: 2013-2014”, adopted by the Municipal Council of Sliven. The plan envisages financially supported measures with particular activities, time-frame, responsibilities and expected results. Currently experts from RACE, together with the regional administration are working on the elaboration of a “Regional Strategy for Roma Integration 2012-2020”, which was discussed at a session of the Regional Council on Ethnic and Integration Issues and adopted in February 2013.

The team is developing – and is receiving funding for – the implementation of initiatives for the educational integration of the Roma students. The project for the educational desegregation of Roma children from the Nadezhda neighbourhood in Sliven has become a Municipal policy. Thanks to the efforts of the RACE team, since 2011/2012 the process has been led by the Municipality of Sliven in collaboration with RACE. In 2011/2012 the initiative was funded by the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities. It has covered 120 Roma students from Nadezhda neighbourhood who are enrolled in different classes in four mainstream schools. The project also provided transportation to and from school, school books and materials, school mediators who take care of the children and support their adaptation at school.

In January 2012, a working group of experts from the Municipality and RACE worked out a project proposal under the HRD OP for the educational integration of Roma children. It has been developed and the application has been submitted, but the results are still pending.

Under the terms of measure 4.3.3 “Educational integration and reintegration” of the adopted National Action Plan, and to implement the municipal policy for the educational integration of Roma students we have initiated a dialogue with the Municipality of Sliven and the mainstream schools to explore the options of allocating municipal funding to support educational integration. After a number of meetings and discussions with the stakeholders, in September 2012 an agreement was reached: the Municipality will allocate financial resources within the municipal budget for 2012 and 2013 for the transportation of children from the ghetto to the schools. The agreement also involves the partner schools, which have agreed to use their school allocated budgets to cover the costs related to the Roma mediators and the study materials for the students. The budget for the transportation of the children for 2012 and 2013 is approximately 1,200 BGN per month, and the mediators’ salaries correspond to the minimal salary as defined by the Government. Under the terms of the agreement, RACE is responsible for the logistics and the organization of the process. Thus, together with the Municipality of Sliven, the partner schools and the NGO, a successful model for an integration policy has been established.

Thanks to the effort invested by RACE in the desegregation project, the National Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, adopted by the National Assembly, became a popular, positive model. Currently there are 2 buses for the Roma children in Nadezhda, which take them to school every morning. The children are looked after by the mediators employed by the schools.

Owing to the successful experience of RACE its director, Mrs Stela Kostova, has been appointed Chair of the Municipal Commission on Education, Science, Culture and Religion with the support of all members of the Municipal Council. In the meantime, Mrs Kostova has also been appointed as a Deputy Chair of the National Council for Collaboration on Ethnic and Integration Issues at the Council of Ministers for 2012-2013.

This is a fine example of collaboration and of the implementation of official policy, corresponding to the requirements of the Programme for the Educational Integration of Roma Children.

Provision of public services in the Lozenets neighbourhood, Stara Zagora

The good practice is a complex multicultural expert approach in providing health-social services, that include all relevant stakeholders – Regional health inspectorate, Municipality, community based NGO – adapted to the expectations and capabilities of the Roma population.

In 2007 the Municipality of Stara Zagora renovated a building in the Roma neighbourhood of Lozenets with the aim of establishing of health-social centre. When the renovation was complete, the building was assigned to the “World without Borders” Association (WWB) so that it could start providing accessible health and social services within the community, in the field, in partnership with:

- The Municipality of Stara Zagora
- The Regional Health Inspectorate, Stara Zagora
- The Centre for Dermatological and Venereal Diseases, Stara Zagora
- The Specialized Hospital for Respiratory Diseases, Stara Zagora
- The Medical Faculty and Social Activities Department at the Thracian University, Stara Zagora
- The Department for In-service Training at the Thracian University, Stara Zagora
- Social Assistance Directorate, Child Protection Unit
- “Police” Regional Directorate, Stara Zagora
- Local Commission for Combating Anti-social Behaviour by Minors, Stara Zagora

The WWB initiated the opening of two general practitioners’ surgeries and two dental surgeries in the Health-social centre.

The centre provides low-threshold services, in the sense that:

- they are accessible for the Roma population: free of charge in recognition of the low economic status of the community;
- they are voluntary: the clients are not under any external pressure to use the services;
- in-the-field Roma assistants provide information about socially significant diseases such as AIDS and tuberculosis (about symptoms, prevention, nutrition) in the clients' own language;
- services are provided in the field: they can be accessed by clients who in other circumstances would not visit a health or a social institution;
- the clients are in a protected environment, and therefore more likely to speak, to share and to trust;
- the services are available on an individual basis but are grouped in such a way as to cater for people at risk in any way;
- they empower the Roma community, because the in-the-field assistants are representatives of the same community and the management of the services is entrusted to a Roma NGO;
- high-quality service is envisaged, achieved by increasing the capacity of the in-the-field assistants through training and by providing supervision to prevent professional burn-out.

Among the available services are:

- health-social consultations;
- free-of-charge medical examinations
- free tests for socially significant diseases (HIV, Tuberculosis, AIDS);
- free gynaecological examinations of non-insured women;
- health-education groups for young Roma;
- an information bank for school and university students of Roma origin;
- recruitment of volunteers and sustaining the network of volunteers;
- assistance and support for the implementation of the "Youth Civic Patrol" initiative;
- work with children who exhibit deviant behaviour;
- free internet access for the community for check on the health and the social status, filling in documents, job seeking, etc.
- prevention of drop-out from school and work with the families;
- assistance to the Child Protection Unit working with children who have dropped out of school;
- traineeships for students from the Medical Faculty of the Thracian University in Stara Zagora;

The Health-social centre is also a place where specialists from the Regional Health Inspectorate carry out health-information activities.

Stara Zagora is the first Bulgarian town where an agreement on a partnership to work for the improvement of the health of the Roma people has been signed between a Regional Health Inspectorate and a Roma NGO. The agreement is based on a 12-year partnership between the Health Inspectorate and the WWB. Their first collaborative initiative took place in 2001.

The Municipality of Stara Zagora is also very active. Besides the provision of the building and some of the furniture, the Municipality participates in the elaboration of strategic documents.

Introduction of community monitoring of healthcare services in the municipalities of Veliko Tarnovo, Gorna Oriahovitsa and Pavlikeni

This case study describes an initiative of the “Amalipe” Centre, whose main purpose is to introduce the method of community monitoring of the health services in minority communities in Bulgaria in order to enforce the kind of “bottom-up” advocacy that would enable local communities to participate in the policy and the processes of governance at local level, the improvement of health care services and the health status of Roma and the other ethnic minorities.

The model of community monitoring is based on the so called “community inquiry”, which happens twice a year and involves collecting the opinions of the local communities about the health services which they receive. The “Amalipe” Centre complements this approach with advocacy activities among the local and regional health institutions, as well as with campaigns within the community aimed at improving their health culture. Moreover, they have widened the scope of the model, establishing local groups for community development in each of the villages where community inquiry is being implemented.

The main goal of the initiative is to develop, test, evaluate and apply a mechanism of community mobilization in seven villages belonging to the municipalities of Veliko Tarnovo, Gorna Oriahovitsa and Pavlikeni.

The Amalipe team has been looking for active people who are ready to work for their community and who believe that they could contribute to its development. Amalipe’s first task was to support small initiatives of local significance that could lead to the mobilization of the community and to make the people believe in their own capacity.

For the purposes of this initiative, Amalipe has established local clubs for community development, and their activities are being coordinated by two Municipal Centres for Community Development, based in Veliko Tarnovo and Pavlikeni. Those centres work on the issues of community mobilization and support the process of identification of individual and communal problems, which is the first step towards the resolution of problematic issues.

Another main goal of the community monitoring of the health services is to encourage interaction between local people and the health authorities, including general practitioners and dentists, hospitals, the Regional Health Inspectorates and centres for emergency health intervention; because the citizens are those to whom the institutions are accountable for the quality and the accessibility of health services.

An example of the importance of civic activity and knowledge of rights as prerequisites for improvement of access to services for the Roma community is the particular case presented below.

The citizens of Byala Cherkva contacted Mr. V. Iliev, the community moderator in the local club for community development, established by the “Amalipe” Centre, with information about deficiencies in the practice of the local dentist. The people stated that the Doctor was not maintaining a basic level of hygiene in his work, even if his patients were children; he also held on to many of the children’s health record books, without explaining why he was doing so.

After receiving this information, the community moderator contacted the dentist a number of times and managed to explain to him that he should improve the quality of his work, improve the hygiene in his surgery and do his best to prevent any further misunderstandings with the local community. At the beginning, communication with the dentist was difficult and he responded in a very stubborn and negative way, but the community moderator also informed the Mayor of Byala Cherkva and the Head Teacher of the local school about the case, and they too helped to improve the situation. Thanks to their common efforts, the dentist began to change his approach and started participating in discussions on “how to maintain oral hygiene”; he also organized and implemented free preventive check-ups for the entire population; the hygiene in his office improved significantly, he even started to wear a white doctor’s tunic – something he had never done before – and his general attitude towards the people improved.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adventist Relief and Development Agency, <http://adra-bg.org/web/Aboutus/tabid/405/Default.aspx>.
- Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *Hate/Speech Crimes*, n.d., available at <http://www.bghelsinki.org/en/rights/hate-speechcrimes/> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *The image of Roma in central and regional printed media*, n.d., available at: <http://www.bghelsinki.org/media/uploads/books/etnicheskite-maltsinstva-v-pechata-1.pdf>.
- Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2007, available at <http://www.parliament.bg/en/const> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Council of Ministers of Republic of Bulgaria, *National plan for integration of children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases in the system of the people's education*, 2003.
- DARIK NEWS, *КЗД откри дискриминация в училище*, 7 August 2012, available at http://dariknews.bg/view_article.php?article_id=944172&audio_id=115600, (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Draft of New Law on public education.
- EKIPNEWS, *Намалява процентът на отпадналите преждевременно от системата ученици*, 31 October 2012, available at http://www.ekipnews.com/news/bulgaria/obrazovanie_i_kultura/namalqva_procentyt_na_otpadnalite_prezhdevremenno_ot_sistemata_uchenici_141860/ (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Strategies up to 2020*, 5 April 2011.
- European Commission, *Integration Strategies up to 2020*, 5 April 2011 available at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).
- European Commission, *National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria*, 2010, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_bulgaria_strategy_en.pdf (Accessed 12 May 2013), p.4.
- European Court of Human Rights, *D.H. v. Czech Republic, judgment of 13.11.2007*, full text available at <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/02/D1/m000002D1.pdf>, (accessed 12 May 2013).
- European Court of Human Rights, *Jordanova and others vs Bulgaria, Judgment of 24.4.2012*, full text available at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-110449#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-110449%22%5D%7D> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- European Court of Human Rights, *Orsus v. Croatia, judgment of 16.03.2010 (GC)*, full text available at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx#%7B%22dmdocnumber%22:%5B%222864619%22%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-97689%22%5D%7D>, (accessed 12 May 2013).
- European Court of Human Rights, *Sampanis v. Greece, judgment of 05.06.2008* full text available at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx#%7B%22dmdocnumber%22:%5B%222836273%22%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-86797%22%5D%7D> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- European Parliament, *Measures to promote the situation of Roma EU citizens in the European Union*, 2011, 17., available at <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/businessAndConsultancy/LSEConsulting/pdf/Roma.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights Data in focus, 2009, available at: http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/413-EU-MIDIS_ROMA_BG.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers in the European Union*, available at <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2011/housing-conditions-roma-and-travellers-european-union-comparative-report> (Accessed 12 May 2011), p. 45.

European Union, *Beyond myths and prejudices: Roma in Bulgaria*, EU Inclusive project, available at: <http://www.eu-inclusive.eubg/%D0%B8%D0%B7%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B5> (accessed 12 May 2012).

European Union, *Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020)*, available at: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/general_framework/ef0016_en.htm (accessed 12 May 2013).

European Union, *Position of the Commission Services on the development of Partnership Agreement and programmes in BULGARIA for the period 2014-2020*, available at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/pdf/partnership/bg_position_paper.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).

Fundacion Secretariado Gitano, *Health and the Roma community, analysis of the situation in Europe*, 2009, available at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_health_en.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013)

http://www.nccedi.government.bg/upload/docs/Zap_NSSEIV_2012_2.03.2012.pdf.

Margarita Ilieva, *Report on measures to combat discrimination: Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC, Country report for Bulgaria 2011*, available at http://migpolgroup.org/public/docs/196.2010_BULGARIA_Countryreportonmeasuresstocombatdiscrimination_EN.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).

MEYS, *Call for proposals*, 2 February 2012, available at <http://sf.mon.bg/index.php?w=archive> (accessed 12 May 2013).

MEYS, *НАЦИОНАЛНА ПРОГРАМА „НА УЧИЛИЩЕ БЕЗ ОТСЪСТВИЯ*, n.d., available at http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/projects/national_programs/2012-9-na-uchilishte-bez-otsystvia.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).

MEYS, *ОПЕРАТИВНА ПРОГРАМА „РАЗВИТИЕ НА ЧОВЕШКИТЕ РЕСУРСИ*”, n.d., available at http://www.minedu.government.bg/left_menu/projects/OP-HR/ (accessed 12 May 2013).

MEYS, Програма „Деца и младежи в риск” Компонент 1 – Грижа за младежи в риск, n.d., available at http://www.minedu.government.bg/left_menu/projects/ (accessed 12 May 2013).

National Statistical institute (www.nsi.bg).

Novinite.com, *Roma Deriding Bulgarian Heroes Expelled from School*, 22 November 2012, available at http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=144377 (accessed 12 May 2013).

Open Society Institute – Sofia *Beyond programming – measuring progress on the road to Roma inclusion in Bulgaria within the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and the National Roma Integration Strategy 2012-2020*, December 2012.

Open Society Institute – Sofia, *Beyond programming – measuring progress on the road to Roma inclusion in Bulgaria within the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and the National Roma Integration Strategy 2012-2020*: December 2012.

Open Society Institute – Sofia, *Roma Health Status*, 2007.

Open Society Institute – Sofia, *Tailoring the immunization programme: Research on vaccination and immunization seeking behavior among vulnerable groups in Bulgaria*, 2013.

Open Society Institute – Sofia, *Tailoring the immunization programme: Research on vaccination and immunization seeking behavior among vulnerable groups in Bulgaria*, 2013.

Alexei Pamporov, *Demographic processes labor force in Bulgaria*, Chapter V of “Characteristics of the Roma employment” – (prepared by Najdenova P., G. Mihova), 2008, Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Centre for Population Studies, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of Bulgaria.

Alexey Pamporov, “Dějà vu: Disappearing Minorities”, “*Objective*” Magazine Number 195, 25 July 2011.

- Republic of Bulgaria, *Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma*, 1999, available at <http://www.ncedi.government.bg/en/RPRIRBGO-English.htm> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *Strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities*, 11 June 2004, available at http://www.ncedi.government.bg/en/1_EDUCSTRAT.htm (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *Act on Protection against Discrimination* (APAD), 2003, Art. 4 (2)), available at: http://www.google.hu/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CDoQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.mlsp.government.bg%2Fequal%2Fequalen%2Fanti-discrimination%2520law%2520en.doc&ei=nGSPubzvI_Lb4QTP5ICgDQ&usg=AFQjCNGCE3P2fXAtw6e4QFgkIaq4f68_g&sig2=aTWsYsHIFj1tgZC56d-MrA&bvm=bv.46340616,d.bGE, (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *Action Plan for the Implementation of the NRIS of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015)*, available at http://www.ncedi.government.bg/upload/docs/1_12RH001_pr1_EN_2.doc (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *Health Act*, 30 December 2008, available at <http://www.mh.government.bg/Articles.aspx?lang=bg-BG&pageid=380¤tPage=3&categoryid=1058> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *Joint memorandum for social inclusion of the Republic of Bulgaria*, February 2005, available at <http://www.ncedi.government.bg/en/JIM.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *National action plan for implementation of the Decade for Roma inclusion (2005-2015)*, n.d., available at http://www.ncedi.government.bg/en/NAP_REPUBLIC%20OF%20BULGARIA.htm (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *National programme for improvement of the living conditions of Roma (2005-2015)*, 14 May 2004, available at <http://www.ncedi.government.bg/en/NRP-071%2003%202006%20Final%20en%20%282%29.htm> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *National programme for school education and preschool preparation*.
- Republic of Bulgaria, *National Reform Programme (2011-2015)*, 13 April 2011, available at http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nrp/nrp_bulgaria_en.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *National report for the strategies on social inclusion and social protection of the Republic of Bulgaria*, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/keyDocuments.jsp?pager.offset=20&langId=en&mode=advancedSubmit&policyArea=0&subCategory=0&year=0&country=0&type=3&advSearchKey=nsr%20psi> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) (2012-2020)*, n.d., available at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_bulgaria_strategy_en.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013) NRIS of Bulgaria, p. 24.
- Republic of Bulgaria, *National Strategy "Vision for Deinstitutionalization of Children in the Republic of Bulgaria"* Republic of Bulgaria, *National strategy for the child 2008-2018*, n.d., available for download at http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID_ITEMS=26593 (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *National strategy on migration and integration (2008-2015)*, 5 June 2008, available at <http://www.esc.bg/en/documents/category/11?download=91%3Anational-strategy-of-the-republic-of-bulgaria-on-migration-and-integration-2008-2015> (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *Operational Programme "Human resources development"*, 3 October 2007, available at http://ophrd.government.bg/view_file.php/14405 (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *Public Education Act*, promulgated in SG 86/18.10.1991, last amended with SG 99/16.12.2011, available at http://www.erisee.org/downloads/2013/2/b/Public_Education_Act%20ENG.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *Rules for Procedures of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination*, available at http://kzd-nondiscrimination.com/images/stories/pdf/dokumenti/pravilnik_KZD.pdf (accessed 12 May 2013).
- Republic of Bulgaria, *Strategy for youth 2010-2020*, n.d., available at http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/strategies/documents/National_Youth_Strategy.doc, (accessed 12 May 2013).

Republic of Bulgaria, *Strategy on demographic development of Bulgaria (2006-2020)*, 30 November 2005, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=1446&langId=en> (accessed 12 May 2013).

Republic of Bulgaria, *СТРАТЕГИЯ ЗА ОСИГУРЯВАНЕ НА РАВНИ ВЪЗМОЖНОСТИ НА ХОРАТА С УВРЕЖДАНИЯ 2008-2015 Г.*, available at http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/law/regulation/disable_strategy.doc (accessed 12 May 2013)

Roma Education Fund, *Advancing education of Roma in Bulgaria*, 2007, available at <http://www.erisee.org/downloads/2013/2/b/Advancing%20Roma%20Education%20ENG%202007.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2013).

Soros Foundation Romania, *Project EU INCLUSIVE – Data transfer and exchange of good practices regarding the inclusion of Roma population between Romania, Bulgaria, Italy and Spain.*, n.d., available at <http://www.soros.ro/en/program.php?program=48>, (accessed 12 May 2013).

Tamas Evetovits et al, *Report of a Diagnostic Mission on the Health Insurance System in Bulgaria*. World Health Organization, 1. (May, 2010).

Tarnev, I., Kamenov, O., Popov, M., Makaveeva, L. and Vasilka Alexandrova, *Health Problems of the Roma. Essence, Consequences and Ways to Go*, OSI, 2002, 3.

United Nations Development Programme, *Roma housing: separate and unequal*, 25 February 2013, available at <http://europeandcis.undp.org/ourwork/roma/show/20878C34-F203-1EE9-B29075D0AFDC41BB> (Accessed 12 May 2013).

Бият “Свидетели на Йехова” в Бургас, available at <http://www.trud.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=861102> (accessed 12 May 2013) Глава първа ОБЩИ ПОЛОЖЕНИЯ, n.d., available at <http://www.erisee.org/downloads/2013/2/b/Education%20Law%202012%20BL.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2013).

Гражданите могат да се оплакват в НЗОК при недоволство от оказаната им помощ, 17 March 2010, available at <http://www.mediapool.bg/%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B6%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5-%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%B0%D1%82-%D0%B4%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%B5-%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%82-%D0%B2-%D0%BD%D0%B7%D0%BE%D0%BA-%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B8-%D0%BD%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%BE-%D0%BE%D1%82-%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%B8%D0%BC-%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%89-news163092.html> (accessed 12 May 2013).

ЗДРАВНА СТРАТЕГИЯ ЗА ЛИЦА В НЕРАВНОСТОЙНО ПОЛОЖЕНИЕ, ПРИНАДЛЕЖАЩИ КЪМ ЕТНИЧЕСКИ МАЛЦИНСТВА, n.d., available at http://www.ncedi.government.bg/zdravna%20strategia_prieta.htm (accessed 12 May 2013).

Информационна система на образованието – 2012/2013 учебна година, n.d., available at <http://www.adminpro-bg.com/ws/index.html> (accessed 12 May 2013).

Кабакчиева, П., Ние и „другите“ – степени на толерантност и възможни конфликти, Политики, бр.5/12.

НАЦИОНАЛНА ПРОГРАМА ЗА ПОДОБРЯВАНЕ ЖИЛИЩНИТЕ УСЛОВИЯ НА РОМИТЕ В РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ ЗА ПЕРИОДА 2005-2015 годин, available at https://www.google.bg/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CC0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.strategy.bg%2FfileHandler.ashx%3FfileId%3D581&ei=bAJ6UYDhKofuswb774GwBA&usq=AFQjCNHS5jDSmY-Qvh2e_HYmSI7BywHhew&sig2=z4ek9PVRDPJN38XGlhewlw&bvm=bv.45645796,d.Yms (accessed 12 May 2013).

Неонацисти и ВМРО – Бургас 17.04.2011, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIEXsYCpwgk> (accessed 12 May 2013).

Решенията на Европейския съд по правата на човека срещу България през 2012 г., *Правен свят* 2 January 2013, available at http://www.legalworld.bg/show.php?storyid=29261#_fn12 (accessed 12 May 2013).

This report was prepared by a civil society coalition comprising the following organizations: the Open Society Institute – Sofia, the Indi-Roma 97 Social Foundation, the Health of the Roma People Foundation, the Roma Academy for Culture and Education Association, the Roma Solidarity Foundation, the Integro Association, the Nov Pat Association, the Amalipe Centre for Intercultural Education and the Understanding and the World without Borders Association. The lead researcher of the coalition is Alexey Pamporov Phd, Head Assistant Professor at the Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and CSO at the Open Society Institute – Sofia and the project manager is Dimitar Dimitrov, Director of the ROMA programme at the Open Society Institute – Sofia.

The authors of the report are: Dimitar Dimitrov, Director of the “ROMA” programme at the Open Society Institute Sofia, Vania Grigorova, “Governance and public policies” programme consultant, Open Society Institute Sofia and Joana Decheva, Roma policy research fellow at the Open Society Institute. The following researchers have been involved in the project: Dragomira Belcheva, Petya Brainova, Alben Kostadinova, Dr Stefan Panayotov, Stela Kostova, Demir Yanev, Lilia Makaveeva, Kadrin Hasanov, Spaska Mihailova, Deyan Kolev, Maria Ivanova, Gancho Iliev.

The following organizations have been involved in the advising on the report: the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, the Central European University’s Department of Public Policy, the European Roma Rights Centre, Habitat for Humanity, the Roma Education Fund, and from the Open Society Foundation: Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma program, the Roma Initiatives Office, and the Roma Health Project.

In the pilot year of 2012, the Decade Secretariat decided to support reports from civil society coalitions in seven countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) and the Roma Initiatives Office commissioned an additional report from the Czech Republic. In addition, the Decade Secretariat made a template public in order to encourage additional civil society actors to monitor the implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) and Decade Action Plans (AP).

In the reports, civil society coalitions supplement or present alternative information to Decade Progress Reports submitted by Participating Governments in the Decade of Roma Inclusion and to any reports submitted by State parties to the European Commission on implementation of their NRIS. These reports are not meant to substitute for quantitative monitoring and evaluation by State authorities but to channel local knowledge into national and European policy processes and reflect on the real social impact of government measures. The civil society reports provide additional data to official ones, proxy data where there is no official data, or alternative interpretation of published data.

The project is coordinated by the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation in cooperation with Open Society Foundation’s Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma program and the Roma Initiatives Office.



Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation

Teréz körút 46.

1066 Budapest, Hungary

www.romadecade.org