



Bulgaria

## Tackling child poverty and promoting the social inclusion of children

A Study of National Policies

**George Bogdanov, Boyan Zahariev**  
Hotline Ltd.

*Disclaimer: This report does not necessarily reflect the views of either the European Commission or the EU Member States.*

May 2007



On behalf of the  
**European Commission**  
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities





## Content

<b>1. The extent and nature of child poverty and wellbeing in Bulgaria.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. Definition of poverty and features of the child poverty .....	5
1.2. Overview of child poverty statistical data in Bulgaria .....	6
1.3. Reasons for child poverty in Bulgaria .....	8
1.4. Description of the target groups of children at high risk of poverty .....	10
<b>2. Policy framework.....</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1. Overall policy framework for preventing and alleviating child poverty .....	15
2.2. Analysis of key policies.....	15
2.2.1. Education .....	17
2.2.2. Child care.....	20
2.2.3. Housing.....	23
2.2.4. Health .....	25
2.2.5. Social services .....	27
2.2.6. Transportation.....	30
2.2.7 Sports and culture activities for the children in Bulgaria.....	31
<b>3. Monitoring and Reporting.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>ANNEX 1 .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>ANNEX 2 .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>ANNEX 3 .....</b>	<b>41</b>

## Introduction

The term 'child poverty' is rather new for Bulgaria — this concept was not widely known until recently. During the totalitarian regime, authorities found it hard to recognise the existence of poverty at all and it was even harder for the government to recognise the existence of child poverty. Today, this term is still not popular among professionals working in the social field and among some politicians and decision-makers. The symptoms of child poverty and their effect on children's physical development and emotional health are rarely and only superficially touched upon in the discussions among professional circles. Even politicians rarely put this issue forward to debate. Furthermore, it is also true that in the recent years of Bulgaria's transition towards market economy, the problem of child poverty has been surveyed and analysed by a number of international organisations. The active participation of media and NGOs played significant role in changing public attitudes and understanding of the child poverty issue. However, in the context of Bulgaria's accession to the EU, the government has initiated a more complex approach to meet the challenges in the field of social exclusion.

This report will make an attempt to systematise and present a general overview of the policies associated with child poverty in Bulgaria. Our analysis is based on an outline of the legal framework, existing practices, various analytical documents, assessments and statistical data regarding poverty and its impact on children's development. With their professional experience and expertise, independent experts working directly with children and families in the poor communities have also contributed to designing and compiling this report.

The first part of this report provides a generalised picture of child poverty, its nature and causes. The chapter outlines the demographic features and the basic children target groups. The second part of the report describes in detail the overall policy aimed at child poverty and analyses other key policies in the field of education, healthcare, social services, transportation services, housing, etc. The third part of the report presents the existing mechanisms for assessment, review and reporting of the policies pursued by the government to tackle child poverty issues.

Generally, the report provides an independent overview aimed at initiating discussions on child poverty issues in our country. We have tried to identify the major problematic areas and present an array of viewpoints for solving child poverty issues. Furthermore, the layout of this report aims to provide support to experts working in the area of child poverty. It should be noted that we do not consider to have exhausted the vast topic of child poverty, but have instead tried to provide just a few perspectives which, in our opinion, should stir up a variety of professional discussions on the topic in question.

## 1. The extent and nature of child poverty and wellbeing in Bulgaria

In the recent years of transition towards democracy and a market economy, the policies related to child wellbeing in Bulgaria have developed rather dynamically. Proof of that is the establishment of a child protection system and development of alternative services for children and families. The ratification of the UN Convention <sup>1</sup> on the Rights of the Child by the Bulgarian government was followed by an eight-year stagnation in the field of child policy development in Bulgaria. Almost all Bulgarian governments so far were preoccupied with reforming and restructuring the economic branches and other public spheres, while child policy remained neglected. During that period, Bulgaria was severely criticised by a number

---

<sup>1</sup> It was ratified during the mandate of the then President of the Republic of Bulgaria Dr Zhelju Zhelev, in 1991.

of NGOs for not observing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Bulgarian NGOs and other foreign organisations upholding the rights of children criticised vigorously and tried to exercise pressure on the Bulgarian governments. In 1998, Unicef, the World Bank and the 'UN development programme' (UNDP) Bulgaria initiated a mission to Bulgaria. As a result, the first representative survey<sup>2</sup> on childcare provision in Bulgaria was launched. The mission laid the foundations of one of the most successful projects aiming at the development of social services for children and families, e.g. the 'Bulgarian child welfare reform project'. The project was implemented jointly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) and the World Bank.

The beginning of the new millennium for Bulgaria was marked by the fact that over 30 000 children reside in specialised institutions. This figure represents approximately 2 % of the entire child population in the country. The *Social Assessment of Childcare Provision in Bulgaria* indicates that children living in extreme poverty have either been dependent on previous social assistance, or are of Roma origin, or are homeless (street children).

The Child Protection Law adopted by Parliament in June 2000 may be considered an onset of a series of efficient reforms of the Bulgarian child protection system. The law establishes some basic child protection structures such as the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP), functioning as an independent body/entity at the Council of Ministers, and the Child Protection Departments (CPDs) at the Social Assistance Directorates. At that time, the latter were established within each municipality. The law stipulates the key principles of work and responsibility delegated to each state institution involved in upholding children's rights and protecting their interests.

In the transition period, the development of child policies was erratic and difficult. At present, social policy and child protection still face three serious challenges: 1) building the professional capacity of the child protection institutions, in particular the CPDs; 2) improving the quality of social services provided to children and families; and 3) expanding the territorial scope for provision of more social services to children and families.

### **1.1. Definition of poverty and features of child poverty**

According to Bulgarian legislation<sup>3</sup>, a child is every physical person aged under 18 (in other words, a child may be considered to be every human being aged 0-17), this legal stipulation being in accordance with the Laeken definition. The spreading of child poverty in Bulgaria depends on families' wellbeing and the efficiency of systems supporting families with children. The government directed their efforts towards creating more proficient systems for child protection and family support. A number of documents have been adopted for the development of policies targeted at protecting children, but poverty as such has not been in focus. For example, poverty is not mentioned at all in documents such as the 'National strategy for the protection of the street children's rights', except for a statement that the street children phenomenon, which emerged at the end of the 1980s and the 1990s, was due to the overall impoverishment of the population, unemployment and lack of adequate mechanisms for social protection<sup>4</sup>. Viewed from a broader perspective, this document takes a social integration approach to child wellbeing and tries to address the complex and multi-aspect phenomenon of street children. The 'National child protection strategy 2004-2006' also does not mention poverty, but it does take a human approach to child wellbeing. The strategic objective of this document is 'to create conditions for the

---

<sup>2</sup> *Social Assessment of Child-Care Provision in Bulgaria*, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Child Protection Law: <http://www.paragraf22.com/pravo/zakoni/zakoni-d/31973.html>.

<sup>4</sup> 'National strategy for the protection of the street children's rights 2003-2005', Part 1 Justification.

protection of children's rights in Bulgaria in order to guarantee their wellbeing'. The children's rights are looked upon as a tool for improving wellbeing. Looking at the operational targets, one realises that the main factors for violating the children's rights are institutionalisation, poor quality of education and social services, homelessness and abandonment and violence and exploitation.

In Bulgaria, until the end of 2006, there was no official poverty line. The government, not having a monetary definition, applied a host of other definitions, including the cost of living and poverty line concepts used by the trade unions. From 1 January 2007, the first official poverty line came into force. For 2007, it was calculated at BGN 152. The calculations are based on a complex methodology agreed with the social partners, which corresponds to the Eurostat definition of poverty (60 % of the equalised median income).

The child poverty has many specific features:

- 1) Children are dependent on their parents or guardians, or on the institutions that take care of them. Children cannot influence their own situation and are not mature enough to be held responsible for it. Child poverty depends to a very high extent on the ability of parents to secure adequate resources necessary for raising a child.
- 2) Children's access to public services like education and health depends very much on the private costs for such services. These fields are very likely to generate inequitable access because there are many out-of-pocket payments that increase private costs.
- 3) Children are a group with specific rights, which needs protection secured by the state against violence, abuse, risky behaviour etc., including protection from abandonment and mistreatment on behalf of their own parents.
- 4) Children are much more threatened by poverty than adults. This is not a universal rule but is true for many transition economies, including Bulgaria.

No doubt child poverty is a direct consequence of adult poverty. It sometimes even appears as a subjective definition of adult poverty. According to more than half the respondents in a survey from 2002, poverty means 'Not to be able to provide our children with a decent childhood/wellbeing'. This is the second most important subjective definition of poverty after 'Not to be able to meet basic needs like food, clothes, housing' <sup>5</sup>.

## **1.2. Overview of child poverty statistical data in Bulgaria**

According to the 'National report on the strategies for social protection and social inclusion', the percentage of households where both parents are unemployed remains rather high, in spite of the general unemployment rate reduction. According to the report, this situation is valid for 14.5 % of the people aged between 0 and 17, while the percentage for people aged 18-59 is 13 %. A number of surveys demonstrate that poverty in Bulgaria is more evident in the rural areas and among minority communities. The Social Assistance Agency (SAA) report for 2006 shows that the number of people

---

<sup>5</sup> Dimova, L., *Bulgaria: Gender Aspects of Poverty and Inequality in the Family and the Labour Market (Research and Policy Recommendations)*, The World bank, ASA, GPBF, GAD, Sofia, November 2001-July 2002, p. 24. The survey with 1 160 respondents is representative of the whole adult population of Bulgaria (18+).

who received social assistance and family benefits in 2006 was 1 917 684, of whom 1 055 704 were children, which corresponds to 24.84 % of the whole population in the country <sup>6</sup>.

In the last 13 years, the number of children has been constantly decreasing and in 2003 it constituted only 15.5 % of the overall population. In comparison to the beginning of the transition period (1990), the number of children was 21.6 % of the overall population, whereas it accounted for 30 % of the overall population one hundred years ago. In 2006 the number of children born in Bulgaria was 74 495, of which 73 978 were born alive, which is 99.3 %. The crude birth rate (number of live births per 1 000 people of the average annual population number) was 9.6 ‰, compared to 8.6 ‰ in 2003. The demographic situation in Bulgaria at the beginning of 2006 provoked serious debates and the President of the Republic of Bulgaria shared his concern with the public about the negative growth rate of the population. Many analysts described the demographic situation as a crisis which may eventually result in demographic catastrophe, if the low birth rate of the population continues to be accompanied by a high mortality rate and increasing immigration. This leads to an overall decrease in the population growth rate. In relation to this, the government adopted the 'National strategy <sup>7</sup> for the demographic development of the Republic of Bulgaria 2006-2020'. The 2006 Unicef *Innocenti Research Centre Report* shows that children in Bulgaria represent 20 % of the population and that there is an 8 % child poverty rate <sup>8</sup>, compared to an overall poverty rate of 4 % <sup>9</sup>.

Bulgarian trade unions have much more extreme views on the state of child wellbeing. One of the two main trade unions, the Confederation of the Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria, stated in 2006 <sup>10</sup> that, according to its own estimates, in 2005 and 2006 about 65 % of the dependent children in Bulgaria lived in families with monthly disposable incomes below the poverty line.

Trade unions use two different concepts to describe the population's wellbeing: the cost of living and the poverty line. The method of calculating both in monetary terms is essentially the same. It is based on the pricing of a consumer basket with a varying number of commodities and services and varying quantities of each item, depending on whether the cost of living or the poverty line is calculated. According to the Institute for Social and Trade Union Research, in December 2006 the cost of living was BGN 207 for a child below 1 year old, BGN 209 for a 1-3 year old, BGN 222 for a 4-6 year old, BGN 327 for a 7-13 year old and BGN 364 for a 14-18 year old <sup>11</sup>. The cost of living for one working adult in a 4-member household (2 adults and 2 children) was BGN 422. The poverty line based on a consumer basket of 77 essential commodities and services was BGN 153.13 per person, which indicates a 5.9 % growth compared to December 2005.

Some very interesting subjective and gender perspectives on poverty have been introduced by NGOs. One report <sup>12</sup> specifies the following list of poverty-related indicators: most serious individual and household issues, subjective evaluation of material status (current, in comparison with previous year, expected for the next two years), personal understanding of poverty, self-identification on a 10-point

<sup>6</sup> This is the total number of persons supported during the year, including one-off or monthly benefits pursuant to the Social Assistance Law.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.un-bg.bg/documents/unfpa\\_population\\_strategy06-20\\_bg.pdf](http://www.un-bg.bg/documents/unfpa_population_strategy06-20_bg.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> *Innocenti Social Monitor 2006: Understanding Child Poverty in South-East Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Unicef Innocenti Research Centre, 2006, pp. 2-3.

<sup>9</sup> This is based on the USD 2.15 poverty line for reference years 2002-03, *Innocenti Social Monitor 2006*, p. 26.

<sup>10</sup> Statement of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria on the Policy of incomes, taxation, social security and health insurance as laid down this in the budgetary forecast of the Government for 2007-09, 13 July 2006. <http://www.knsb-bg.org>

<sup>11</sup> *The cost of living in December 2006: Main Findings from the Monitoring of the cost of living*, carried out by the Institute for Social and Trade Union Research, 24 January 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Dimova, L., *Bulgaria: Gender Aspects of Poverty and Inequality in the Family and the Labour Market (Research and Policy Recommendations)*, The World Bank, Sofia, 2001, p. 10.

'rich-poor' scale (current, before 1989, parents' and children's at the respondent's age)<sup>13</sup>, level of deprivation caused by financial reasons, opportunities for improvement in living standards, individual and household coping strategies with the crisis, support within the family and between neighbours, family farming, impact of poverty on family relationships, family property ownership, basic income needs for individual and household life out of deprivation<sup>14</sup>.

The same report also explores the definition of 'reproductive poverty', which includes: male/female contribution to child-bearing, attitudes toward childcare facilities, level of children's deprivation, single vs family for parent opportunities, time spending for child-bearing, children's poverty risk, children as a factor for feelings of poverty.

### 1.3. Reasons for child poverty in Bulgaria

There are indications that a multidimensional understanding of child wellbeing has emerged in Bulgaria over the last seven to eight years, i.e. gradually since the start of the child welfare reform and the establishment of the SACP.

According to the World Bank publication *Poverty and Inequality in Eastern Europe and the CIS Transition Economies*, Bulgaria is classified as a lower middle income country, in the company of countries like Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. From 1989 to 2001, Bulgarians lost 50 % of their real wages. In comparison, the 2001 real wages in Romania were at 71 % of the 1989 value.

Poverty is a grave problem in Bulgaria, especially among rural households and families with many children. The Roma community, which accounts for around 7 % of the population, is reported to be 10 times poorer than other groups (World Bank 2001)<sup>15</sup>. Unconditionally all assessments made over the last 10 years in Bulgaria show that there is high level of poverty among the Roma communities and the families living in rural areas.

In Bulgaria, like in many ex-socialist countries, children living in larger households run a higher risk of poverty. In countries where the average share of children in the population is low, children are concentrated at the bottom of the income distribution, rather than being spread evenly, i.e. children tend to live in poor households rather than in richer ones. The bottom income decile group contains 17 % of the children<sup>16</sup>. It is also typical for Bulgaria that children under six are more endangered by poverty than older ones. From an international perspective, this again correlates with the low share of children in the population<sup>17</sup>. Another explanation could be that with the new cohorts, the situation of child poverty is growing worse, probably due to the fact that low-income families persistently have higher birth rates but also that low-income families are becoming more deprived of equitable access to key public goods.

Deprivation of parental care is another tentative factor for child poverty<sup>18</sup>. Over-reliance on institutional care has been typical for the first 10 years of Bulgarian transition, leaving many children out of the family

---

<sup>13</sup> This is one of the most important indicators for subjective poverty measurement implemented in Bulgaria.

<sup>14</sup> The income needed for an individual or a household, which can secure a life without deprivation. The actual income is compared with the income necessary for life without deprivation.

<sup>15</sup> Dimova, L., *Bulgaria: Gender Aspects of Poverty and Inequality in the Family and the Labour Market (Research and Policy Recommendations)*, World Bank, Sofia, 2001.

<sup>16</sup> *Innocenti Social Monitor 2006*, p. 3, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> *Innocenti Social Monitor 2006*, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Innocenti Social Monitor 2006*, p. 4.

environment. Poverty in this case can be defined both in terms of institutions poorly supplied with resources and in terms of lack of basic life skills due to institutionalisation, which further reduces chances for earning a decent income. But deprivation of parental care does not necessarily result in a placement in an institution. It can result in abandonment, severe neglect and homelessness (e.g. in the case of street children). The social workers from the CPDs are facing this problem with children whose parents are working abroad. There is no official or unofficial data on the issue but the problem is quite visible in schools and in the committees dealing with children with behavioural problems.

The low level of parents' education seems to be in direct correlation with poor child wellbeing. First of all, poorly educated parents tend to be poor in monetary terms and in consumption terms, which is a prerequisite for the children suffering material deprivation. Secondly, poorly educated parents have less capacity to secure access to basic services necessary for the child wellbeing — education, healthcare, leisure, infrastructure, etc.

Lack of permanent, secure and well-paid jobs for adult members of the household is a strong factor for child poverty in Bulgaria. Unemployed parents tend to have lower education and to live under much more strained conditions. Unemployment is also likely to negatively affect the family environment.

#### *Children of lone parents*

Lone parent households are also generally much poorer than two-parent families. A report on the issue of gender disparities states: 'When we look at poverty on personal level women turn out in a higher poverty risk than men do, in particular when they are without family support. It is rather typical for single men and women, and especially for single mothers. Poverty risks for non-married mothers are much higher than for married ones'<sup>19</sup>. In the same report a divorced woman from a small town is quoted to say: 'I could not define who are the poor people as a whole. They are in many different groups. Those who are unemployed; those who have very low incomes, pensioners, single parents — especially them... They are different. How poor you are depends on whom are you living with.'<sup>20</sup>

There are probably also effects of lone parenthood, which cannot be monetarily evaluated but still have a negative impact on child wellbeing. Among these, lack of enough attention and support can be mentioned.

Household poverty is directly translated into child poverty due to the lack of means to sustain the child. On the other hand, reasonably good income and even affluence does not automatically guarantee that children are immune to poverty. This is only the case when we assume 'a well functioning family where the available resources are allocated reasonably fairly — with necessities taking priority over luxuries'<sup>21</sup>.

Another reason for child poverty in Bulgaria could be traced to the existence of too many specialised institutions for children and the fact that these institutions generate poverty due to the lack of sufficient provision of community-based services for children. In the process of restructuring the child policies in Bulgaria, some of the schools (the boarding schools) were taken off the list of specialised institutions, but nevertheless certain children remain institutionalised in special schools under the management of

---

<sup>19</sup> Dimova, L., *Bulgaria: Gender Aspects of Poverty and Inequality in the Family and the Labour Market (Research and Policy Recommendations)*, World Bank, ASA, GPBF, GAD, Sofia, November 2001-July 2002, p. 61.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid p. 61.

<sup>21</sup> 'Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Wellbeing in Rich Countries', *Report Card 7*, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, 2007, p. 7.

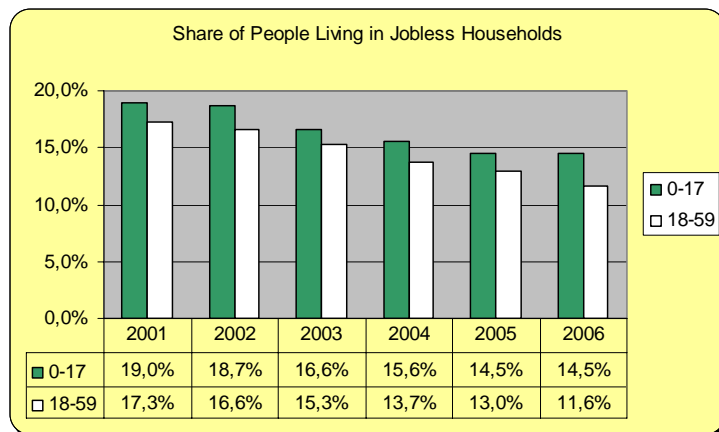
the Ministry of Education and Science (MES). According to the report of the State Agency of Child Protection (SACP), there are 144 specialised institutions for children in Bulgaria, and together with the special schools (129) under the management of the MES, the total number of institutions is 273. The specialised schools in Bulgaria are the auxiliary schools, logopaedic (speech therapy) schools, schools for children with impaired vision and hearing, social and pedagogical boarding schools, correctional boarding schools, medical and hospital schools. The total number of specialised schools across the country is 129.

**1.4. Description of the target groups of children at high risk of poverty**

For the decades to come Bulgaria will be facing the challenge of a progressively decreasing child population and an increasing elderly population. Recently, a new demographic strategy was developed urging for better incentives for young couples to have children. In order to combat poverty, the government’s efforts are focused on several main target groups. Those groups are children living in jobless households, Roma children, children residing in specialised institutions and children from poor families.

*Children Living in Jobless Households*

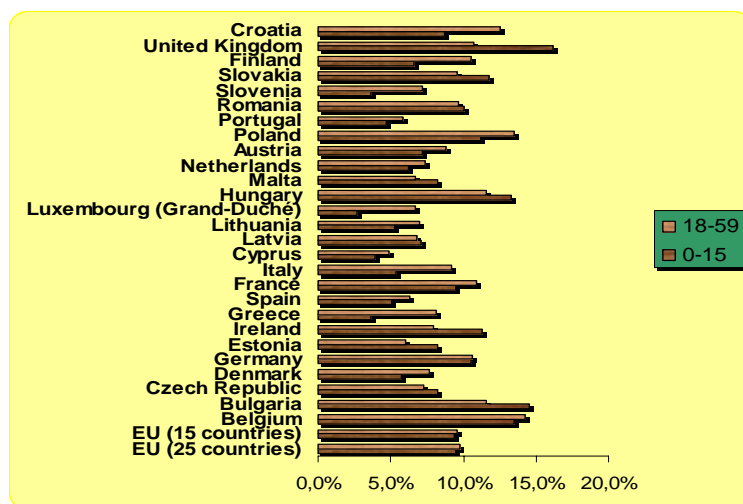
Children living in jobless households represent a group which may be considered at very high risk of poverty. As mentioned before, children in Bulgaria are disproportionately placed in poor households and the same is valid for jobless households. In 2006, 14.5 % of the people aged 0-17 years old lived in jobless households, compared to 11.6 % of adults. The percentage of children living in jobless households in Bulgaria is rather high, although it has been decreasing at approximately the same pace as for adults, i.e. the pace of unemployment reduction.



Source: Eurostat.

The fact that the share of those living in jobless households is higher among children than among adults makes Bulgaria similar to some of the other new EU Member States (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Romania and Slovakia) and some of the old EU Member States (Ireland and the United Kingdom).

## People living in jobless households 2006



Source: Eurostat.

In Bulgaria (irrespective of the international comparison) the fact of living in jobless households correlates with living in poorer households.

### Children of Roma origin

Roma children are among those most affected by poverty. This is due to factors such as low labour market participation of the Roma and primarily very low education attainment. The educational status of Roma in Bulgaria is very low and significantly worse compared to the country average. About 63 % of Roma have only basic or no education, 32.2 % complete primary school only, 4.6 % secondary school and less than 0.2 % have a university degree, compared to 16.3, 25.7, 41.8, and 16.1 % respectively among ethnic Bulgarians. The Roma illiteracy rate is 15 times higher than the rate for the non-Roma population. A recent study of Roma literacy<sup>22</sup> found that 64 % of the Roma aged 15-19 years old were functionally illiterate, while only 25 % of Turks and 9 % of ethnic Bulgarians cannot read. This disadvantaged educational situation contributes to the social exclusion, poverty and unemployment of the Roma community. According to the *2003 World Bank Report for Central and Eastern Europe*, the poverty level among the Roma community is 10 times higher than the poverty level of the non-Roma community<sup>23</sup>. For instance, the analysed data in the report demonstrates that 80 % of the Roma people in Bulgaria and Romania have extremely low incomes. The health status of the Roma population is much lower than the average health status of the majority of the population. The reasons for this are the poverty and the bad sanitary conditions, as well as the undeveloped infrastructure of the Roma neighbourhoods. Roma children are a special risk group and the mortality among this group is six times higher than the average figures for the country. Roma children have the highest percentage of school

<sup>22</sup> ASSA M Agency, Demographic Situation and Perspectives, 18 November 2005, conference proceedings, <http://www.assa-m.com/research/research1552.htm>

<sup>23</sup> The last World Bank's poverty assessment since 2003 (the so-called 'Multi-purpose household survey') shows that the Roma community is 6.7 times poorer than the Bulgarian ethnic group.

dropout and the education level among Roma people is extremely low. Many of the Roma people still live in segregated regions and their children are enrolled in segregated schools. Discrimination in education, employment, access to public and health services is still evident.

#### *Children living in rural and isolated areas*

Children living in rural areas also face a disproportionately high risk of poverty. This is also due to the fact that a large portion of the Bulgarian minority population lives in rural areas. Data from the 2001 census analysed in a UNDP report show that 46.2 % of Roma and 63 % of ethnic Turks live in rural areas. The same report also concludes that the trends of internal migration tend to concentrate a large share of ethnic minorities in villages <sup>24</sup>. (UNDP, 2004b).

#### *Children placed in specialised institutions and children with disabilities*

The Child Protection Law stipulates and defines the specialised institutions <sup>25</sup> for children. According to that definition and the available statistical data provided by the Save the Children Foundation (United Kingdom) in its 2006 Monitoring Report <sup>26</sup>, the total number of the children who were institutionalised was 11 700 in 2003, 10 892 in 2004, 10 579 in 2005 <sup>27</sup> and 8 653 in 2006 <sup>28</sup>. This 'narrow' definition of 'specialised institutions' does not include the large number of other children accommodated in other institutions, such as the social and educational vocational establishments, the weekly centres for children with mental disabilities and the correctional and auxiliary boarding schools. These children are temporarily, or in the worse cases, separated for a longer period from their parents. The total number of institutionalised children was 5 710 in 2005. More precisely, 5 710 children were accommodated in institutions and 4 328 children were accommodated in special schools <sup>29</sup>.

Although the SACP claims that the number of children residing in specialised institutions is decreasing, most NGOs question these figures by comparing them to the overall percentage of the child population in the country.

There is research (*Economic and Social Assessment of Child Care in Specialised Institutions and Community-Based Services in Bulgaria* — MBMD <sup>30</sup>, 2005, Sofia) covering the December 2004 to

<sup>24</sup> UNDP, 'Rural Regions: Overcoming development disparities', *National Human Development Report*, Bulgaria, UNDP, Sofia, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> According to the definition in the Child Protection Law the specialised institutions are as follows: Homes for Children and Youths with Mental Disabilities, a.k.a. Institutions for Children with Disabilities (at present these institutions are governed by the municipalities and funded by the State Budget, Homes for Medical and Social Cares (previously known as 'Mother and Child' Homes, governed by the Ministry of Health) and Homes for Education of Children Lacking Parental Care (governed by the municipalities — these institutions were decentralized in 2006).  
[http://www.savethechildrenbg.org/SCBG/Docs/SCUK\\_AlternativeMonitoringReport2006\\_BG.doc#\\_Toc130117109](http://www.savethechildrenbg.org/SCBG/Docs/SCUK_AlternativeMonitoringReport2006_BG.doc#_Toc130117109)  
*Alternative Monitoring Report for 2006*.

<sup>27</sup> According to the public information provided by the SACP by Ordinance No RD 12-05/14.02.2006, the Social Assistance Agency by Ordinance 92-37/22.02.2006 and the MES by Ordinance No RD 09-118/20.02.2006. The Ministry of Health did not provide the requested information within the deadlines stipulated under the Law for Access to Public Information. Thus, the data, showing the number of children accommodated at the Homes for Medical and Social Cares, is based on the information provided by the SACP.

<sup>28</sup> According to the assessment reports implemented by the SACP on the specialised institutions for children.

<sup>29</sup> According to the public information provided by the Social Assistance Agency, Ordinance No 92-37/22.02.2006 and the MES, Ordinance No RD 09-1826/13.12.2005.

<sup>30</sup> The name of a sociological agency. The acronym appears as МБМД in Bulgarian texts.

September 2005 period indicating that the daily subsistence allowances for children in different institutions are insufficient. Subsistence allowances per child in Homes for Children Deprived of Parental Care are BGN 6.37, BGN 4.59 in Homes for Mentally Disabled Children, BGN 1.72 in Medical and Social Care Homes (for children up to 3 years of age), BGN 3.16 in Daytime Centres for Disabled Children and BGN 0.68 in Daytime Centres of Street Children. The same MBMD research found that such scarce allowances bring about food shortages. There is a serious shortage of food allocations, which the same survey claims are at the following levels: BGN 1.07 for Homes for Children Deprived of Parental Care and BGN 1.13 for Homes for Mentally Disabled Children. Annual clothes and shoes costs per child are estimated at BGN 54 in Homes for Children Deprived of Parental Care, which makes it impossible for children to be dressed according to the season and testifies to the poor appearance of the clothes and shoes in use. Bearing in mind the importance children ascribe to their clothing when assessing child poverty, one can conclude that child poverty in children's institutions is not only objectively proved but is also the reason why children feel deprived in relation to their peers and their perception of their own situation as that it is unfair.

Problems of non-institutionalised handicapped children<sup>31</sup> who live with their families have been specially highlighted by NGOs monitoring human (especially children's) rights. A group of such NGOs has been very critical in a report published in 2006 over the measures undertaken by the Government until then.

### *Children from poor families*

According to the social survey for childcare provision in 2000, the approximate extrapolated number of people who were social benefit recipients amounted to 360 000 and the children who were under social assistance subsidy were 764 000. Six years later, according to the Social Assistance Agency, the total number of people under social assistance was 317 699 and they were supported by the programme for guaranteed minimum income. In 2006 a total number of 328 189 persons and families were supported with one-off, targeted and monthly social benefits and the sum allocated for these recipients was BGN 90 339 264. In comparison to 2005, there is a 4.5 % decrease in the number of people under social assistance. In the period from January to December 2005, the regional departments of the Social Assistance Agency allocated BGN 101 866 735 to BGN 343 505 people under the regulations of the Social Assistance Law.

Preliminary data of the Unicef analytical report and, in particular, the conclusions and recommendations cited in this report in regard to child poverty in Bulgaria demonstrate that the poorest citizens are the unemployed people (37.8 %,) classified by the top level of the equivalent income. By the bottom level however, one may observe the greatest aggregation of poor people in the group of employed (42.5 %).

This phenomenon — employed poor people — appeared due to several reasons, among which of particular importance are the level of income earned from employment, the number of people living in a household, the number of working members, the educational level, etc. The analysis demonstrates that the share of economically inactive people who are poor is fairly high. This group comprises unemployed people, pensioners, students, housemaids and women on maternity leave. They constitute an average share of 45.9 % of all poor people, classified by the bottom level of the equivalent income. By the top level this share is even higher: 53.5 %.

---

<sup>31</sup> This is the term officially used in the report. See the civil sector report on the implementation of Bulgarian government measures in response to the European Commission in its report of 16 May 2006 in the field of human rights protection and the integration of vulnerable groups under the political criteria chapter, e.g. p.11.

## 2. Policy framework

Child poverty in Bulgaria is a relatively new item on the agenda for the State and society but it developed fast in the last seven to eight years. To this effect, a series of documents and government decisions have been approved in the past few years, seeking to protect the rights of children and improve child welfare. In 2001, with support from the World Bank, the 'Bulgarian child welfare reform project' was initiated. This project played a major role in restructuring the CPDs and developing social services. Furthermore, this national project provided an opportunity for developing partnership relations with various NGOs and involving their experts in designing the state financial standards for the provision of social services. According to opinions expressed by international and local experts, this is one of the most successful projects undertaken by the Bulgarian government in the social field. In the course of the project implementation there was a lot criticism and resistance on various levels, but eventually the project established a new approach to work and provided a new environment for developing services for children <sup>32</sup>.

An important document was prepared recently in the field of child protection: the '2006-2009 National integrated plan for applying the Convention on the Rights of the Child', approved by the Council of Ministers. The plan's main idea is to bring together all national policies, strategies and programmes targeting children, their rights and child-development conditions. The plan comprises 34 generic and more specific documents seeking a solution to the problems of child poverty and social exclusion.

Another important document in this respect is the 'National strategy for the demographic development of the Republic of Bulgaria 2006-2020'. This document points to the main problems related to poverty, for example, the poverty rates among lone mothers, which are three times higher than the average, and poverty among families with many children. The report states that every fifth child under 14 years old lives in a poor household, i.e. in a household with limited means to provide healthy food and education of good quality. The findings in this document are based on other surveys quoted in our report, like the *Multipurpose Household Survey* of the National Statistics Institute and the World Bank.

Presently, the hopes are for successful implementation of the objectives and indicators set in the integrated plan, in particular, decreasing child mortality, reducing the number of institutionalised children, increasing the number of children's and families' eligibility for social services, etc. (see Annex 2, National indicators envisaged in the strategic documents of the Republic of Bulgaria for combating child poverty).

Another key document which sets policies related to child poverty is the *National Report on the Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion of the Republic of Bulgaria 2006-2008*, and in particular the 'National action plan for social inclusion'. The NAP inclusion sets the key measures and mechanisms for combating child poverty in the country.

---

<sup>32</sup> The project was given as an example for good practice in the field of social inclusion in the *National Report on the Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion of the Republic of Bulgaria 2006-2008*.

## 2.1. Overall policy framework for preventing and alleviating child poverty

The overall policy framework for preventing and alleviating child poverty includes a multitude of laws and by-laws and many more strategic and operational documents of the Government. Territorial aspects of child poverty are very important because of the significant disparities in the distribution of wealth, access to and availability of services.

Bulgarian municipalities are relatively big compared to the municipalities in most EU Member States and they are responsible for assessing the children's needs at local level. Provision of a range of services, such as kindergartens, schools and, increasingly, the alternative social services, is also managed by the local governments. Therefore, child welfare is strongly affected by the differences in the capacity of municipalities to provide those services.

In spite of the newly adopted approach for assigning the design and development of alternative social services for children to the local level, as state-delegated activities under the Social Assistance Law, it is still difficult to implement the law in smaller and medium-sized municipalities across the country. The lack of expertise for the development and management of social services may be overcome by means of specialised training programmes aimed at strengthening the capacity of NGOs and local authorities.

The law allows NGOs to provide social services as state-delegated activities, but this places these organisations in an unequal position, bearing in mind that it is up to the municipality to take the decision whether or not to announce a tender for selection of an external service provider. Generally, certain municipalities are exposed to expectations and responsibilities higher than they are able to handle.

## 2.2. Analysis of key policies

The EU definition of poverty underlines its multidimensional aspects, but assumes the 'living on very low incomes' as the best correlate of what is commonly understood by 'poverty'. Moreover, the EU definition includes the key concept of being at risk of poverty, which relates to 'the capacity of the individual to participate fully in the society where he or she lives'. That is why the income-based dimensions of poverty are somewhat related to the overall income distribution nationally and are usually expressed as a percentage of the median income. Child poverty, however, is characterised by certain crucial non-monetary aspects that are much harder to describe and analyse. Apart from affordability and availability of appropriate means to raise a child, parents' awareness and understanding of the needs of their children are essential too. Subjective and perceived poverty are also important elements of the overall child wellbeing.

The interest in poverty issues for Bulgaria dates back to the end of the 1990s and is marked by a number of poverty-related studies. These include the World Bank surveys (in 1995, 1997, 2001, 2003 and 2007)<sup>33</sup>. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNDP<sup>34</sup> also produced an impressive overview which was published in 1998. All research papers conclude that, on the one hand, the poverty growth rate decreases slowly but progressively and on the other hand, that wealth increase does not spread in a way that benefits the most vulnerable groups, who remain at the bottom of society.

<sup>33</sup> Outcomes of these surveys were publications analysing poverty in Bulgaria, *Bulgaria: The changing profile of poverty*, World Bank, 2002 and *Bulgaria — poverty challenges*, World Bank and NSI, 2003.

<sup>34</sup> Poverty during the transition, ILO, UNDP, 1998.

A national survey based on the EU-SILC methodology and questionnaire was planned for the last quarter of 2006. This survey is expected to introduce new definitions of poverty and risk of poverty which will allow comparability of the Bulgarian situation in the EU context. The survey results will be published in 2007<sup>35</sup> and will provide useful data on child poverty and family-related poverty risks affecting children. Data on household income and consumption is available from the annual *Household Budgets Survey* (HBS), from September 2003 monthly data<sup>36</sup>. However this data is not completely comparable with data from the first 25 EU Member States because of the non-harmonised methodology. With this in mind, results from the 2004 HBS give a good idea of the household consumption in Bulgaria. There are no direct indicators of poverty in this set of data, neither is there any breakdown by household type published. The relative share of different expenditure groups in the household budgets gives a hint whether households face any hardships in meeting their essential needs.

A survey on school dropouts commissioned by Unicef and the MES was conducted in 2006 by Vitoshka Research.

The Admin system run by the MES contains data on the student enrolment rates — for each student there is a record including personal data and the school he is enrolled at during each school year. The main purpose of the system is to track students and ensure that no student in compulsory schooling age (up to 16 years old) stays out of school. It has been discussed that the system should also include data about students' performance and school attendance. In April-May 2007 the World Bank and the Open Society Institute conducted the *5<sup>th</sup> National Household Survey of Poverty*. The fieldwork was carried out by Gallup International. The results will be published by April 2008. Unicef produced in 2007 an analytical report from a national child poverty study carried out under the child poverty review and public expenditure study.

Since the beginning of the child welfare reform late in the 1990s the government adopted many laws, by-laws and strategic and planning documents related to children's rights. Child poverty and wellbeing issues were addressed within the framework of the general poverty reduction strategies. Leonardo Menchini and Gerry Redmond (2006) use absolute poverty threshold of USD 2.15 converted at purchasing power parity exchange rates to define an indicator of consumption poverty. They find this indicator to be 'reasonably robust to sensitivity testing' and 'to correlate well with non-income indicators of wellbeing among children'<sup>37</sup>. According to the Menchini and Redmond report, the risk of poverty in Bulgaria decreases with age and, therefore, children are among those most exposed to poverty, especially children aged 0-6 years old<sup>38</sup>.

In the 'National employment strategy', the Government also set some employment measures for lone jobless parents and adopters of children aged 0-3 years old<sup>39</sup>. Employers who hire persons from this

<sup>35</sup> Data from the EU-Silc 2006 are available on the Eurostat web-site.

<sup>36</sup> Data from the *Household Budget Surveys* can be accessed at [http://www.nsi.bg/BudgetHome\\_e/BudgetHome\\_e.htm](http://www.nsi.bg/BudgetHome_e/BudgetHome_e.htm)

<sup>37</sup> P. 1. This indicator defines child in poverty as a child living in a household with per capita income of less than USD 2.15 PPP.

<sup>38</sup> A risk-measuring score of 2.18, 1 being defined as the average risk, the corresponding scores for children aged 7-14 years old and 15-17 years old being 1.64 and 1.33, p. 30.

<sup>39</sup> The 'groups of unequal standing' on the labour market are enumerated in the additional provisions of the Employment Promotion Act. These are 'the groups of unemployed persons, whose competitiveness in the labour market is lower, and which group consists of the following: unemployed young people; unemployed young people whose work ability is in permanent deterioration; unemployed young people from social-care facilities, who have accomplished their education; permanently unemployed persons; unemployed persons whose work ability is in permanent deterioration; unemployed persons — deserted parents (adoptive parents) and/or mothers (adoptive mothers) of children until the age of 3; unemployed persons, who have served their penalty of imprisonment; unemployed women above the age of 50 and unemployed men above the age of 55; other groups of unemployed persons'. Lone parents of children aged 0-3

target group receive a subsidy to supplement the workers wage for up to 12 months, as well as subsidy for social and health insurance.

### 2.2.1. Education

In the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Bulgaria there was a very sharp decrease in public expenditure for education, which dropped from 5.2 % of GDP in 1990 to 4.8 % in 2000 and further to 4.2 % in 2006. This had an impact on the quality of education, both in terms of input/allocation equity and the equitable outcomes<sup>40</sup>. There are no officially published systematic school-level data on the resources put into education. The Ministry of Finance, together with the World Bank, has unofficially collected and summarised such data in the context of the plans for the implementation of a per capita funding formula for school education.

Since 1999 Bulgarian governments have made some steps towards the educational integration of disadvantaged groups. The main efforts are dedicated to the integration of ethnic minorities and children with disabilities into the mainstream school education.

The MES has outlined two different target groups subject to 'educational integration': children with special educational needs (physically and mentally disabled children and institutionalised children) and children from minority origins. There are differences in the level of commitment for integration, the tools used for this purpose and the progress of integration for both groups. The MES has declared a strong commitment to the gradual deinstitutionalisation and integration of children with special educational needs into the so-called 'mainstream schools'. Nine relief schools (special schools for children with disabilities) were closed down by an order of the MES issued on 30 June, 2006<sup>41</sup>. Ordinance No RD 14-180/13.09.2006 of the MES<sup>42</sup> made provision for the establishment of resource centres<sup>43</sup> for educational integration in the district cities but it will take some time before these centres become fully operational. The insufficient number of 'resource teachers' in the mainstream schools, on the one hand, and the efforts of teachers from the still existing relief schools, on the other, keep many of these children still there. No information has been provided so far by the Regional Inspectorates of Education as to how many children from the schools closed down have not been enrolled at all or have already dropped out of school.

The Save the Children Foundation (United Kingdom) has adapted an index for inclusion already applied in other countries to the Bulgarian conditions. The index helps tracing inclusive education practices and methodology at schools. The index was tested on a pilot basis at schools in several municipalities but so far it has not gained wider support from the Government.

Another aspect of the problem is that most of the children in relief schools are of Roma origin and have no problems in their development, although the process of closing down such schools has already started. According to a study carried out in 2001 by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC), minority

---

years old are the only category of adults with dependent children targeted by employment promotion policy with only one special measure — subsidies to the employer.

<sup>40</sup> *UNDP Human Development Report*, 2001.

<sup>41</sup> *State Gazette*, issue 44 of 30 May 2006.

<sup>42</sup> *State Gazette*, issue 77 of 19 September 2006.

<sup>43</sup> Ресурсни центрове - Centers based in schools, with a staff of 1-2 people who organize training and provide methodological materials to the so-called resource teachers (ресурсни учители) who work with children with special educational needs.

(mainly Roma) children represent between 60 and 70 % of the overall number of pupils in such relief schools, and in some cases this figure even reaches 95 % <sup>44</sup>.

Indicative of the situation of Roma children in these schools is the case of the relief school in the village of Mindia (Veliko Turnovo District). At the end of the last school year all children were assessed by a panel for complex pedagogical assessments. In the school year 2005-06, the school had 86 pupils. The panel estimated that 74 of the children were suitable for integration into the mainstream schools and only 12 had serious mental disabilities and needed to be referred to other relief schools within the municipality's territory. Almost all the children in the school were Roma.

Some key strategic documents have been adopted but the results are still modest. The number of resource teachers for children with special needs is less than sufficient and much more training will be needed. The integration of children with special education needs requires involvement of all teachers in the school and the creation of a suitable environment. Resource teachers alone cannot cope with this huge task. Skills and awareness among mainstream teachers about children with special needs should also be improved. This can be part of the teachers' continuous training. This process has already started. Teaching assistant programmes have seen little progress since the completion of PHARE-funded projects in this area. It seems that such projects lack sustainability plans and use a one-size-fits-all approach, as shown also in reports prepared by NGOs.

The Centre for Educational Integration of Children and School children from Ethnic Minorities was delayed several times and finally began to operate in July 2006. The Centre should develop, finance and support projects targeted at promoting equal access to education and improving the educational achievement of children and school children from ethnic minorities. Its main function, therefore, is to attract international or supra-national donors and channel these budgets towards concrete projects. The centre will operate on the basis of three-year programmes which will be adopted by an eleven-member management body. Eight of the members are from the Council of Ministers and the respective ministries. The other three members are nominated by the Minister of Education from among different NGOs experienced in the educational integration of the minorities. The Centre's main task is to support the implementation of projects for integration of children whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian. These children face serious difficulties at school and special attention is required when working with them. The Centre will finance two types of projects: integration of children in multi-ethnic schools and additional classes for students with low grades <sup>45</sup>.

The MES continues to postpone the reform of the social-pedagogical boarding schools and the correctional boarding schools. The total number of placed children in 2005 was 1 036. In the majority of these institutions, e.g. places like the social-pedagogical boarding school in the village of Straldja and the correctional boarding school in the village of Gabrovtsi, the living conditions and the quality of education remain poor. Cases of mistreatment, abuse and systematic violations of children's rights in institutions continue to be reported by the NGOs and the media <sup>46</sup>. The same is true for non-justified institutionalisation based on misdiagnoses and also for referrals in violation of the existing regulations. A public discussion on the efficiency of these institutions and their impact on the psycho-physiological development of the institutionalised children, with the participation of relevant ministries and NGOs, is more than anticipated and should be initiated by the MES as soon as possible.

---

<sup>44</sup> *Social-Pedagogical Boarding Schools and Correctional Boarding Schools*, BHC, Sofia, 2001, pp. 391-392 (in Bulgarian).

<sup>45</sup> From *Sega* newspaper, 17 May 2006. See also the centre's web page <http://coiduem.mon.bg>

<sup>46</sup> A dead child was found in the 2005 winter holidays in the logopaedic boarding school in the village of Viden, Pavel Bania Municipality. The child was placed in the institution without any documents.

Some young people attend specialised institutions only for the purpose of using them as boarding houses (i.e. for accommodation and meals). Some of these specialised institutions should be restructured into real boarding houses allowing the children to attend mainstream schools. This would also give a clearer picture of the number of children needing institutional care. The BHC, in its report *In the name of the institution: Correction schools in Bulgaria*, published in July 2005, has established that the system of social-pedagogical boarding schools and correctional boarding schools and the procedures for accommodating children in these schools is an infringement of human rights. In many cases children are institutionalised in such schools because of their low social status, lack of awareness by their parents or ethnic origin. In some cases, the institutionalisation of the children is illegal — without the proper court decision and required legal documentation. Besides, one may observe an alarming substitution of child-supporting measures with child-correctional measures. Furthermore, the BHC has reported poor domestic and hygiene conditions at the boarding schools, along with mistreatment by teaching personnel. Low quality education and the large number of illiterate children is of great concern, as well as the fact that only 10 to 15 % of the children who have completed their primary education at the social-pedagogical and the correctional schools continue their education further. The educational ineffectiveness of these institutions puts their correctional role in dispute and raises suspicion that these institutions stigmatise children as criminals, and do not provide any social and educational instruments for their full-fledged reintegration into society.

As a whole, the situation has not changed much since 2005. The work of government institutions such as the SACP, the MES and the Central Commission for Combating Juvenile Delinquency continues to be of poor efficiency as a result of using obsolete penal and correctional measures. In spite of a number of critical reports prepared by Save the Children Foundation (United Kingdom) and the BHC, the situation in this field still remains unchanged in terms of introducing new and modern methods for handling youth and child crime.

The Bulgarian Government has also joined the international Decade of Roma Inclusion initiative<sup>47</sup>, which, among other targets, aims at reducing educational disadvantage of Roma children.

Lately, the main efforts of the MES were aimed at modernising the Bulgarian educational system. Roma educational integration was not perceived as a means to foster this process. As a result, the political commitment to the active measures for educational integration of Roma was low. The MLSP also participates in this process through several programmes targeting Roma educational integration: a programme for the training of Roma teaching assistants, a programme for literacy classes for illiterate adult Roma and so on. Also, the MLSP was managing the component for free breakfast for all pupils from first to fourth grade within the national programme for better inclusion of pupils of compulsory schooling age. This component had a significant effect on Roma pupils.

Until September 2005, when the current Bulgarian government took office, the main direction promoted by the MES and most of the Roma NGOs was desegregation of the so-called 'Roma ghetto schools'. After September 2005 there have been indications that this direction will not be followed so consistently as before, also because there are Roma schools that serve concentrated Roma populations in rural areas and cannot be closed without forcing the children to travel very long distances. An illustration of the change in the approach is the 'Programme for development of school education (2006-2015)' prepared by the MES and approved by the Parliament on 7 June 2006. The programme tackles minority issues partially as primarily social issues presented under the heading of 'Socialisation of children for whom Bulgarian language is not a mother tongue'. Some Roma NGOs criticised this expression for being discriminative in its essence, as it depicts minority children as 'non-socialised'. The measures

---

<sup>47</sup> Decade of Roma Inclusion's official website is <http://www.romadecade.org/en/index.php>. The eight countries include Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro and Slovakia.

envisaged are mainly in the field of providing opportunities for better learning of the Bulgarian language, social measures (such as free textbooks and breakfast) and binding the social benefits for parents with pupils' school attendance. These are the major differences compared to the 'Strategy for educational integration', where all measures for school integration are purely educational ones and aim at intercultural education.

Demographic changes, internal and external migration pose a constant pressure on the Bulgarian school education system to restructure. This restructuring includes administrative closing down of many schools in rural areas and the reallocation of classes where the number of pupils is below the required minimum or the so-called merged classes (classes where children from different grades study in the same classroom) exist. The low number of students in a class is a major source of financial inefficiency, although the Minister of Education has also argued that it is a source of poorer quality. The closing down of schools posed difficulties for some parents. As their children have to go to school in another settlement, parents face additional costs. This poses the question of the criteria of closing down schools (except financial efficiency criteria) such as the number of students in a class, the student/teacher ratio and the costs per student. It may be reasonable to have some indicators on accessibility taking into account the time spent by students travelling to and from schools and the public/private costs related to this travelling.

Some recent sociological research put forward the idea that income might be among the main perceived problems of young people who are not well-socialised. According to MBMD research on school drop-out from September to November 2006, the majority of school dropouts and their parents point to financial problems as the main issue facing young people (53 and 57 %, respectively). Education, family environment and insecurity come next with a much lower score, between 12 and 16 %, for both groups. The same research also indicates that there is a strong correlation between education-related values and school drop-out. Those who drop out of school do not value education.

About 59 % of school dropouts had only half the necessary textbooks or less, and 56 % of the same group say their parents experienced difficulties with buying the necessary items for school. Absenteeism is a good early warning signal for the potential risk of school drop-out. In Bulgaria, almost half the school dropouts did not attend school every day before dropping out completely <sup>48</sup>.

### 2.2.2. *Childcare*

In order to support Bulgarian education, the Government provided a special targeted subsidy of BGN 130 million (approx. EUR 65 million) in 2005. The subsidy was allocated to several programmes as follows:

1. 'Programme for free breakfast and a cup of hot milk';
2. 'Programme for textbooks free of charge';
3. 'Free transport';
4. 'Energy efficiency'.

Each of the programmes has its own effect on child poverty. According to the preliminary data from the survey conducted among parents and children, the programmes for free transport, energy efficiency and free textbooks enjoy support and are believed to increase school attendance. The 'Programme for free

---

<sup>48</sup> *Reasons for Dropping-out of the School Education: An Assessment of the Programmes for Improving the Motivation for School Attendance*, MBMD, September-November 2006.

breakfast and a cup of milk' targeted at students from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade is more ambivalent and opinions are polarized. On the one hand this is the most criticised programme by the various stakeholders. At the same time, it is the most largely supported programme, which does not necessarily mean that it is the most efficient one in terms of combating poverty and decreasing school dropout rates. There are two opinions in the public circles regarding this programme:

- A) the first opinion is related to the centralised selection of service providers;
- B) the second opinion is focused on the quality of the food (breakfast and milk) provided to the children <sup>49</sup>.

Our opinion on this issue is that it is necessary to invest more resources in development programmes and not so much in humanitarian programmes (they invest not only in satisfying the basic needs of poor children but also in educational improvement), since the latter have only a short and unsustainable effect. In all circumstances where it is necessary to provide food to children at school, it is also important to pursue complementary activities to develop the skills of the children and their families, so as to enable them to exit the crisis and poverty situation. This cannot be achieved only by implementing centralised programmes. It is also necessary to involve more stakeholders at local level.

In the year preceding Bulgaria's accession to the EU, measures were undertaken by the Government to improve childcare. A special focus was on the provision of childcare within the risk groups, especially the Roma community. For a short period of time, a series of pilot projects and programmes were launched, and some of them, that proved successful, were included in the legislation from 1 January 2007. In relation to this, various initiatives were organised for the Roma community and the vulnerable groups, such as job fairs, the 'Social investments in children' programme, the integrated social assistance supplements, measures for literacy campaigns, employment promotion for the Roma people, the 'Programme for free breakfast and a cup of hot milk' implemented at schools, etc.

The 'Social investments in children' model was introduced on 1 January 2007 through the Law on Family Benefits for Children. It is targeted at the poorest families where children are most in need. Generally, these are families of Roma origin with low income who have been dependent on social subsidies for a long time. However, social workers consider that child benefits are not granted in the best possible way. In practice, the 'Social investments in children' programme deprives the families of part of the social benefits, which are now reallocated by the social services for covering school and kindergarten fees, purchasing of food, paying the canteen food for the children, etc.

At the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007 the Amalipe Centre and Hotline Ltd. conducted a joint survey on the implementation of the 'Social investments in children' pilot programme. The draft report entitled 'Roma integration in Bulgaria' demonstrates clearly that, in practice, 'social investment' in children is done without any new direct and special social investments in the children of poor families. This programme is executed solely on the basis of internal reallocation of the social benefits, as the creation of an additional department at the Social Assistance Directorates (whose job is to assess and reallocate the benefits) demonstrates. The survey also shows the lack of human and material resources. Social workers express the opinion that implementation of such a programme requires much more comprehensive social work and greater financial resources.

The survey data show that, at the project phase of the programme, there are no considerable improvements on the quality of life. Moreover, some aspects of the programme make the Roma families

---

<sup>49</sup> An open letter by Mr Konstantin Piskov, Deputy-Mayor on social issues in the Plovdiv municipality <http://www.plovdiv24.com/news/19249.html>

dependent on decisions of social services and motivate comments such as: 'The state is knows better what are my needs and the needs of my child than I do'.

Social workers make an assessment of the needs of each family and it serves as basis for the allocation of social benefits. This is, however, done only for the management of monetary subsidies provided to families. There is no detailed approach for the launch of efficient programmes supporting families in overcoming the crisis and coping with the difficulties on their own. The lack of care planning by the social services and the shortage of well-trained professionals who could work and support the most disadvantaged families within the Roma community is the real challenge faced by the Social Assistance Directorates.

The integrated efforts to combat poverty in the Roma community should not be limited to efforts by the Government. These efforts should be targeted at the professional development and the capacity building of the NGOs for supporting their work in the Roma neighbourhoods and providing extra educational and mediatory activities. More appropriate approaches might be identified through broader dialogue and targeted work by various stakeholders. A new mechanism for delegating more resources, rights and responsibilities to the Roma community should be introduced to build the community's social capital and raise the living standards of the most vulnerable families.

In Bulgaria, there is a well developed network of kindergartens which in most cases are managed by the municipalities. In the last few years, in the bigger cities, some private kindergartens were opened as well. However, this is a very rare practice. The aggregate data on the number of the state-run kindergartens published by the National Statistic Institute dates back to the end of the 1990s. The *Education in the Republic of Bulgaria* report<sup>50</sup> issued in 2001 defines the period 1996-2000 as showing a clear-cut downward trend in the number of kindergartens. In 2000 the number of kindergartens functioning in the country was 3 249 which, in comparison to 1996, shows a reduction of 465 (12.5 %). In comparison to 1999 the reduction is of 185 kindergartens (5.4 %). This downward trend is also applicable to the number of children enrolled in kindergartens. In 2000 the number of the children in the kindergartens was 200 400 approximately, indicating a 18.9 % decrease in comparison to 1996. In Sofia, approximately 3 000 children (8.8 %) do not attend kindergarten classes due to the lack of kindergartens<sup>51</sup>.

There is also another problem: the insufficient capability of the kindergartens to accommodate more children, mostly evident in the residential districts of Krasno Selo, Vazrazhdane, Oborishte, Triaditza and Ljulin. It should also be mentioned that some of the kindergartens are accommodated in wooden dwellings. These are only some of the conclusions in the 2007-15 'Strategy Project for Development of Education in Sofia'. As a whole, provision of services to children aged from six months to three years accommodated in the crèches is not sufficiently developed either. The availability of crèche groups in the kindergartens is insufficient, and in the smaller settlements there are no such groups at all.

According to the National Institute of Statistics, in 2005 there were 71 075 born-alive children. In comparison to the previous year, the number of children increased by 1 189. The birth rate coefficient (number of children born alive per 1 000 people) is 9.2 ‰. The demographic process requires more activities for developing the social infrastructure because the number of kindergartens and crèches is insufficient across the country. Besides, many families consider kindergarten fees too high, especially low-income families and those from poor communities. There are almost no specialised programmes to support such families.

<sup>50</sup> [http://www.see-educoop.net/education\\_in/pdf/edu\\_in-bul-blg-t01.pdf](http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/edu_in-bul-blg-t01.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.segabg.com/online/article.asp?issueid=2617&sectionid=2&id=0000603>

The MLSP plays a significant role in this respect, especially in developing and applying various initiatives through its local structures. One such initiative is the 'Support to maternity' programme. In order to improve the economic activity of women, certain amendments were introduced to the Social Security Code in August 2006. The amendments envisage that the maternity cash benefits will be paid not to the mothers returning to work, but to unemployed women who are willing to be involved in the 'Support to maternity' Programme. It is expected that 2 000 babies will be raised under the conditions of this programme by the end of 2007. The advantages of the programme are that many unemployed women will be included in the labour market, whereas the disadvantages may be that less attention will be paid to the quality of childcare. For this purpose it is necessary to delegate more resources to the specific commercial organisations which would develop further the childcare provision and encourage employment of women. At the same time, the quality of childcare should be raised in line with the market requirements.

### 2.2.3. Housing

Unlike many ex-socialist countries, Bulgaria inherited from the socialist times a legacy of huge public housing stock. The housing stock compared to the number of the population seems to be very satisfactory, at the level of the most developed EU Member States. However, the housing stock could not keep pace with the quick economic restructuring, demographic changes and mobility, so today it is unevenly distributed over the country and more than 14 % of the stock is actually not in use <sup>52</sup>.

Affordability of housing is very poor: only in about 10 % of the demand for own houses can people actually pay for it. The same holds true for rented housing.

In Bulgaria very little attention has been given to housing subsidies and housing allowances to support rentals. There are no any systematic policy efforts to support young families and families with dependent children in obtaining affordable accommodation of acceptable standards. The Roma group, which undoubtedly suffers the most from poor housing, is the only exception, but even in this case declared policies and strategic documents adopted by the Government are put into practice at a very slow pace. Unlike other new EU Member States, Bulgaria introduced an energy allowance <sup>53</sup> and targeted benefit for rent of a municipal housing. In 2002 an average household had to pay more than 50 % of its income to rent a two-room apartment in an average city <sup>54</sup>. The classical housing affordability index has deteriorated significantly since 1995 (the last year before the collapse of the national currency and the hyperinflation crisis in Bulgaria). At that time an average household would have needed 6 years of its income to buy an apartment of approximately 70 m<sup>2</sup>. In 1998, this indicator doubled to 12 years and in 2007 it is approximately 27 years <sup>55</sup>.

In 2006, 979 persons received targeted benefits for renting municipal housing for the total amount of BGN 299 284. The monthly average number of beneficiaries was 609 persons . There is a 15.6 % decrease in the number of persons and an increase in the funds allocated by 71.2 % compared to 2005

<sup>52</sup> *National housing strategy*, Chapter II. State and Problems of the Bulgarian Housing System, Section 1. Housing Stock and Housing Consumption.

<sup>53</sup> Lux, M., *Efficiency and Effectiveness of Housing Policies in the Central and Eastern Europe Countries*, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> *8 National housing strategy*, Chapter II. State and Problems of the Bulgarian Housing System, Section 2. Accessibility. In some OECD countries it is considered that affordable rent means a rent whose amount does not exceed 25-30 % of the monthly income. See Struyk, R.J., 'Home Purchase Affordability and Mortgage Finance', in: *Housing Finance: New and Old Models in Central Europe, Russia and Kazakhstan*, OSI/LGI 2005, p. 68.

<sup>55</sup> Iliev, P., 'The Bulgarian is Alive because he is Grey', *Money*, Issue 17 January 2007.

when 1 121 persons received such benefits (a monthly average of 722 persons) to the total amount of BGN 174 816 <sup>56</sup>.

The tendencies for the increased share of expenditure for housing <sup>57</sup>, water and electricity consumption and heating are open to interpretation — from 11.9 % in 1999 to 14 % in 2005 — but these increases also indicate that part of the households experience difficulties in covering those costs.

One of the biggest items of expenditure in this group, though a seasonal one is heating. Problems with heating exist especially in large cities where sometimes heating supply is still dominated by state-owned monopolists and prices are high. It is very probable that with the current system of charging for heating it is exactly the poorer households, living in blocks of flats with poor energy saving performance (high heat loss), who pay the most expensive heating.

These constraints have a significant impact on child policies through several routes:

- 1) Many households, especially those living in medium-sized and big cities cannot afford to buy or rent adequate housing and are forced to live in overcrowded conditions.
- 2) Young couples do not get any special support for their housing, so they practically do not have a chance to buy, or even rent, a house in the private housing sector. The public housing sector, which started at 6.6 % of the housing stock at the beginning of transition, has now come down to less than 3 % <sup>58</sup>, playing only a symbolic role as a policy instrument. This is a strong disincentive to have children, especially a second child.
- 3) This situation has a grave impact on some vulnerable groups like the Roma who, due to rising land prices and emerging commercial interest, are gradually evicted from the city surroundings where they usually reside without permission.

The 'National housing strategy' envisages the creation of housing associations which may sustain a social housing stock and condominium associations to cater for the management of the existing housing stock in condominium buildings. The adoption of a Condominium Law, which will open the route for part of these changes, has constantly been postponed.

The 'Roma housing strategy' has been criticised for not taking into account the vast experience accumulated by many developed and developing countries, the UN Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) and the World Bank in providing housing for the poor and dealing with squatter settlements. Ignoring this experience is a serious omission, which has resulted in a typically inefficient, top-down 'slum eradication' policy. New large-scale projects funded under the EU programmes also follow this flawed approach. The research identifies several important factors which may inform the development of better policies. For example, it stresses the existing extremely high rate of uncontrolled construction of robust housing made with reinforced concrete in the Roma neighbourhoods. The paper concludes that this is a critical factor which has become a major threat to living conditions and leaves no other alternative but to regularise the settlements and develop streets and other infrastructures. Yet, these high rates of construction serve as evidence that Roma households are capable of contributing to the

---

<sup>56</sup> Data provided by the Ministry of Labour.

<sup>57</sup> See the *Household budget survey* of the National Statistic Institute.  
[http://www.nsi.bg/BudgetHome\\_e/BudgetHome\\_e.htm](http://www.nsi.bg/BudgetHome_e/BudgetHome_e.htm)

<sup>58</sup> Hegedüs, J. and Struyk, R.J., 'Divergences and Convergences in Restructuring Housing Finance in Transition Countries' in: *Housing Finance: New and Old Models in Central Europe, Russia and Kazakhstan*, OSI/LGI 2005, p. 9.

solution of their own housing problems only if their development initiative is encouraged in the appropriate direction<sup>59</sup>.

#### 2.2.4. Health

Health inequalities are one of the key issues faced by the Bulgarian healthcare system. They have clearly pronounced social and economic aspects, but also an ethnic aspect, in particular the health of the Roma population. One of the aspects of this is that Roma children are not covered by the immunisation calendar.

Some infectious diseases continue to persist within poor communities. The TB outbursts among Roma children in city slum areas are a persistent problem for Bulgaria. To address this issue, the Ministry of Health developed a 'National Programme for Control of TB in the Republic of Bulgaria' for the period 2004-06, where continuous training of GPs on TB-related issues is envisaged, as well as regular checks of staff employed in children institutions. A report on the results of the programme has not been published yet.

Some of the constraints related to high costs of private access to healthcare have been removed. In 2001, the fee to be paid per GP visit amounting to 1 % of the minimum wage was cancelled for some groups of patients. Initially, the idea of the legislator was that this fee would be almost a symbolic contribution, but after the increase of administratively defined minimum wages it became evident that this contribution per visit constituted an important item of the GP's income and a burden on the budgets of lower-income groups. It was therefore decided that some groups would be exempt from it, including children (aged 0-17 years old), pregnant women and mothers up to 45 days after child birth<sup>60</sup>.

The interrelations between poverty and the children's health status were examined in more detail in a 2001 report by Unicef<sup>61</sup>. The report used the following set of indicators to measure the children's health status:

- infant mortality rate;
- percentage of low-weight births;
- mortality rate of 5-19 year olds;
- incidence of neoplasm diseases (cancer) among children;
- incidence of diseases of blood and blood forming organs (anaemia) among children;
- incidence of diseases of the digestive system (gastritis, ulcer) among children.

The report finds an alarming rise in the infant mortality rate (IMR) during the first decade of the transition in Bulgaria<sup>62</sup>, which is not typical for the rest of the EU Member States. Another recently published report analysing healthcare reform in Bulgaria mentions the disintegration of the mother and child healthcare in Bulgaria<sup>63</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> Slaev, A. D., 'Bulgarian Policies towards the Roma Housing Problem and Roma Squatter Settlements', *European Journal of Housing Policy*, March 2007, Vol. 7 Issue 1, pp. 63-84.

<sup>60</sup> Article 37 of the Health Insurance Act.

<sup>61</sup> Gantcheva, R. and Kolev, A., 'Children in Bulgaria: Growing Impoverishment and Unequal Opportunities', *Innocenti Working Papers No 84*, 2001.

<sup>62</sup> From 13.6 ‰ in 1988 to 14.6 ‰ live births in 1999, p. 13. The general conclusion for the developments during the same decade was that it brought increased health risks for children.

<sup>63</sup> Dimova, A., Popov, M. and Rohova, M., *Healthcare Reform in Bulgaria: an Analysis*, The Open Society Institute, Sofia, 2007.

The situation of the healthcare system is such that substantial out-of-pocket payments<sup>64</sup> on behalf of patients are required to receive good quality services. This limits the access to healthcare by children of poor background, especially in rural areas.

Another measure intended to facilitate the access to healthcare, primarily for mothers and babies, was the authorisation to visit a gynaecologist and a paediatrician directly without a referral from a GP<sup>65</sup>. However, it turned out that the system was not prepared to handle such by-passing of the GPs in their gate-keeping role. It was not possible to account for the number of visits to gynaecologists and to reimburse the costs for these services. Another issue related to the access of children to hospital treatment is the permission for a person accompanying the hospitalised child to stay at the hospital. During the socialist times, this practice was allowed for free. Today, accompanying people are not allowed to stay, unless they pay the usual daily fee for stay in a hospital. Children (aged 0-17 years old), pregnant women etc. are exempt from this fee<sup>66</sup>.

The 'National framework contract' for 2006 introduced some measures to improve children's access to healthcare, such as giving GPs an unlimited right to refer children aged up to 14 years old in critical health condition to paediatricians (in the previous National Framework Contracts, this was only allowed for children aged up to 6 years old). Children aged 0-17 years old are allowed to visit a GP or a paediatrician in the primary healthcare<sup>67</sup> (previously, this was an option available only to children aged 0-2 years old). Another improvement in rights of access, which concerns the whole population, was as the consequence of a judgement by the Supreme Administrative Court, after the matter was referred to it by the Bulgarian Medical Association. The court revoked the regulative limitation to the number of referrals to specialists that a GP was allowed to make for a quarter. Before that limitation, this number was only indicative. The change to the National Framework Contract was forced by the National Health Insurance Fund in an effort to control expenses. The court found that this change violated the right of access to healthcare.

There may be problems with the poor nutritional status of some children from low-income families. From pilot projects targeted primarily at the education of the Roma there were also indications that the lack of means to feed children while at school was one of the (stated) reasons for Roma children not attending school. The government initiated a programme for the provision of free school meals (breakfasts). The programme enjoys high public support despite doubts over its efficiency.

The two ministries, the MLSP and the Ministry of Health, as well as the SACP, are pursuing non-coherent policies in relation to the restructuring of the residential care institutions for children aged up to three. The envisaged strategic priority, which aims to broaden the scope of services provided in these institutions, is actually a substitute, with the sole purpose to prolong the status quo of institutionalisation and preserve the interests of the personnel at the institutions, rather than the interests of the families

<sup>64</sup> By out-of-pocket payments we also mean illegal payments. The most recent study in this respect will be available soon from the Open Society Institute. The most recently published report on corruption issued by the Centre for the Study of Democracy found that: 'the corruption pressure on citizens by certain occupational groups (e.g. doctors, police officers, magistrates) remained unchanged or even increased'.

<sup>65</sup> This was specified in the National Framework Contract for 2006. Details on the rules for access to healthcare are given also in the Ordinance on Exercising the Right of Access to Healthcare, *State Gazette* No 45 from 2 June 2006. The content of these documents is not popularised sufficiently so many patients are only partially aware or fully unaware of their rights.

<sup>66</sup> This fee according to the Health Insurance Act represents 2 % of the minimum wage for the first 10 days of the hospitalisation. Should hospitalisation continue after 10 days, the patient does not have to pay any fees.

<sup>67</sup> Paediatrician working with patients in the community, not in a hospital. Delivering pre-hospital care. Delivering medical care to those who don't need to be hospitalized.

and children. Generally, the lack of a clearly defined policy on the decentralisation and restructuring of these institutions is evident by the fact that there is no vision regarding the future of the staff employed at the Medical and Social Care Homes and the other specialised institutions managed by the Ministry of Health.

### 2.2.5. Social services

According to the Bulgarian legislation, there are two types of social services for children and families: community-based services and services provided at specialised institutions for children. These are set forth in the Social Assistance Act. Series of changes to the legislation have been initiated since the beginning of 2000, so nowadays there are a number of legislative and regulatory documents governing child protection in the country (see Annex 3).

#### 2.2.5.1 Policies related to deinstitutionalising children placed in institutions

A critical issue is still on the agenda: the large number of children placed in specialised institutions. In regional terms, Bulgaria has the highest rate of placement for both categories (children aged 0-17 years old and infants aged 0-3 years old), with Russia being second, yet with a lower rate of infant placement. Moldova is ranked third by its rates of institutionalisation of 0-17 year olds, although its rate of infant placement is one of the lowest among this group of countries<sup>68</sup>. The high rate of youth institutionalisation is often due to over-reliance on institutional care as a response to young law offenders<sup>69</sup>.

As already mentioned above, Bulgaria started its democratic development after inheriting a burdensome system of non-coordinated management and large number of child welfare institutions. Most of these institutions were scattered around in the small settlements for two key reasons: 1) to 'hide' the social problems from the eyes of public opinion; 2) to create employment in small and under-developed regions. The UNDP (2000) estimates for Bulgaria indicate that approximately 15 % of all children in institutional care have a recognisable disability<sup>70</sup>. Statistical data show an insignificant reduction of the number of children, compared to the whole population for the period 2001-05. The relative ratio between children in specialised institutions and the entire child population in 2001 dropped by 0.78 %, and in 2005 it was 0.67 %. Thus, the overall reduction accounts for only 0.11 %. In comparison to the preceding year (2004), the percentage of children in specialised institutions was reduced by only 0.017 %.

The relative ratio for 2004 between infants accommodated in Medical and Social Care Homes and the entire child population of the same age remained constant and, even more, increased slightly by 0.018 %. The situation is almost the same regarding the Residential Care Homes for Children Deprived of Parental Care (RCHCDPC), where there is an increase of the relative ratio by 0.01 % in comparison to the child population of the same age. There is a decrease of the ratio by 0.039 % only at the Homes for Children and Young People with Mental Disabilities<sup>71</sup>. The report of the SACP shows that in 2003 there was a considerable decrease in adoption rates for children from specialised institutions. In the Medical and Social Care Homes the number of adopted children decreased by nearly 620, and accounted for a 46.4 % decrease in 2005 compared to 2003. The number of adopted children from the

<sup>68</sup> Unicef, *Innocenti Social Monitor*, Unicef-Innocenti Research Center, Florence, 2003.

<sup>69</sup> P. 14, *Promising Practices in Community-based Social Services: A Framework for Analysis*, Aguirre International for USAID/DGST/E&E, October 2005.

<sup>70</sup> UNDP, *Social assessment of child care in Bulgaria*, UNDP, Undesa, The World Bank, Sofia, 2000.

<sup>71</sup> *2005 Annual Report on Specialized Institutions* issued by the SACP.

RCHCDPC has decreased by nearly 121, accounting for 6.6 %. The smallest number of adopted children were in residential care homes for disabled children. In 2005 there was only one case of adoption of a disabled child.

The report also showed a general downward tendency in adoption, birth family reintegration and institution leaving figures. The report outlines the rising tendency of moving children from one institution to another. This means that the CDPs do not fulfil their mission to work at the institutions and that there is a lack of alternatives for children in the specialised residential care homes.

The data presented above show that the reforms aimed at deinstitutionalisation are progressing at an extremely slow pace, hesitantly and without clear political will and support. The majority of political circles and society in general are still not fully aware of why the institutions should be closed and what is the harm done to the development of a child living outside the family environment. Regarding the process of deinstitutionalisation and development of alternative services for children and families, one may say that Bulgaria is lagging quite a way behind Romania which, as early as in the 1990s, implemented rapid reforms for improving child welfare by developing paid foster care and other alternative services for children and which deinstitutionalised a large number of children.

The efforts of the government – MLSP, SACP, MES, MH - to restructure and close specialized institutions continue to be inefficient. So far, foster care<sup>72</sup> has not developed completely, and small family homes hardly exist. Still there is resistance and lack of understanding about the essence of foster care.

Another critical issue related to deinstitutionalisation is the human and material capacity of the CPDs. On many occasions in our previous reports we have underlined this point, which is supported by a number of studies. The CPDs deal with too many cases, are understaffed, have high staff turnover rates, poor remuneration levels and an enormous responsibility which is not backed-up by monthly supervision. On top of that, there are exceptionally high and unrealistic expectations towards the CPDs. If their capacity is not strengthened, fast deinstitutionalisation of children can hardly be expected, even if alternative services for children and families are developed.

In January 2007 the specialised institutions under the MES were transferred to municipal management with methodological guidance by the Agency for Social Assistance. This decentralisation was preceded by strong pressure from NGOs and international organisations. The change was a major challenge for municipalities from the point of view of financing and staff training. In fact, staff lost their status as pedagogical personnel and became social service personnel, thus being deprived of a number of bonuses available to pedagogues, such as longer leave, higher salaries, less working time, etc. In mid-April rules governing the internal order and management of these institutions were issued. Presently, there is ongoing research commissioned by Unicef which aims to study the needs and views of the local authorities regarding these specialised institutions. The establishment of a specialised unit within the Social Assistance Agency is envisaged and will support the transformation and restructuring of these institutions, which number 86 in total for the whole country. In addition, the SACP currently delivers regional training for municipal officials and institution directors for the purposes of restructuring.

---

<sup>72</sup> Bulgaria has 69 foster families and 9 776 institutionalised children, not including the children placed at specialised schools under the MES, as the latter were excluded from the list of specialised institutions.  
<http://www.sapibg.org/index.php?lang=en&page=136>

### 2.2.5.2. Developing social services for children and families

A key focus of child-related policies in the country is the development of alternative social services for children. These efforts by the Government are supported to a great extent by many NGOs. For the purpose of developing such services, the regulatory framework was amended thoroughly and many new legal acts were created to govern the involvement of private licensed service providers. As a step in the right direction, the efforts of the MLSP for establishing links between the municipalities and NGOs in respect to the provision of services delivered at the Social Service Complexes for Children and Families (SSCCF) can be pointed out. The complexes were set up in 10 large municipalities through the above mentioned 'Bulgarian child welfare reform' Project. The SSCCF are currently operating in the towns of Sofia, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Sliven, Bourgas, Varna, Rousse, Shoumen, Pazardjik and Targovishte. Plovdiv was the only municipality who decided to manage the complex with its own resources and not to launch a tender for service provision. The SSCCF are a newly established structure for the provision of alternative social services. They incorporate three autonomous units: a Community Support Centre, a Mother and Baby Unit and a Street Children Centre.

In January 2006 the National Assembly passed a draft law on amendments and supplements to the Child Protection Law. Another three amendments were passed in April, May and October 2006<sup>73</sup>. The amendments provided an opportunity for physical persons pursuing trade activities and legal entities established pursuant to the legislation of another EU Member State or of another state — counterpart to the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) — to apply to the chairperson of the SACP for a license for provision of social services for children. Therefore, the circle of possible providers of social services for children expands and Bulgarian and foreign persons and entities are put under equal conditions.

The financial resources for social service delivery remain in the hands of local authorities who are also allowed to be social service providers. Regardless of the powers granted to external providers, the services market will remain under-developed because the entire power is still concentrated in of local authorities. The Child Protection Law remains focused on the social service provision because the whole philosophy of the law is built around the concept of 'a child at risk', understood as social risk in the curative more than in the preventive sense.<sup>74</sup> In this sense it provides little ground for cooperation between state institutions in the early prevention stage, although educational, health and law enforcement authorities are mentioned as responsible bodies under the law along with the MLSP and municipalities.

In Bulgaria, a model for daycare centres for children with disabilities was established in 37 municipalities, partly through the joint efforts of local governments, parent action groups and international NGOs. Although the services were initiated by NGOs established by parents of disabled children, the majority of the services in question were left in the hands of the local authorities, without delegating these services to the founders.<sup>75</sup> Such examples are to be found in Pleven, Gabrovo, Razgrad, etc. One very positive example in this context is the municipality of Pazardjik.

<sup>73</sup> The three amendments in the law are as follows: *State Gazette*, issue 30, 11 April 2006; *State Gazette*, issue 38, 9 May 2006; *State Gazette*, issue 82, 10 October 2006.

<sup>74</sup> The law does not focus enough on prevention. At the stage of prevention the risk profile is different. When prevention is missed we need to look for remedies, but the risks have already grown stronger and chances for success have become smaller.

<sup>75</sup> The founders are NGOs established by parents of disabled children. The services have been established under pressure from the parents but the municipality has the right to delegate some or all of those services together with the relevant budgets or keep them as a municipal responsibility.

In the past two years many new services such as day centres for disabled children were developed, rather than services for children with problems in the family environment. Still poor is the efficiency of work within the Roma community where the poverty is most common and the number of children who have dropped out of the education system at the greatest. There are no specific services ensuring the involvement of the family and building its capacity to handle poverty and exclusion. The Community Support Centres (CSC)<sup>76</sup> are far from sufficient and even missing in some district centres. It is necessary to accelerate the elaboration of financial standards. The financial means available for 'sheltered home' and 'crisis centre' services are extremely low, bringing serious challenges for the service providers and staff employed at the CSC.

In general, the municipal authorities' capacity for developing social services remains poor. This applies also to a great extent to the NGOs. The latter however, have a major advantage compared to the municipal administrations: NGOs would compete and improve their professional performance levels in order to provide better and higher-quality social services for children and families. The Government's efforts should concentrate on professionalising the NGOs and building the capacity of local authorities for monitoring and controlling the quality of social services.

Generally, social services are still under-developed, in spite of the Government's efforts and legislative amendments introduced. The human and material capacity of the CPDs remains an open issue, particularly in the field of reintegration, deinstitutionalisation, adoption, foster care, etc. It is necessary to provide more training opportunities, methodological support to the local authorities and NGOs, if the aim is to develop the social services market in Bulgaria.

#### *2.2.6. Transportation*

In Bulgaria, the provision of city transport, and often also the provision of intercity transport, is a responsibility of municipalities<sup>77</sup>. In many Bulgarian cities children up to 6 years old travel free of charge and pupils/university students travel with subsidised fares. Pupils aged up to 20 years old studying at schools within the municipality's territory can usually obtain a public transport pass at a subsidised price. For example, a one-month travel pass in the capital city of Sofia costs BGN 17<sup>78</sup> (less than EUR 9) and, in comparison, the public transport ticket costs BGN 0.7. Children with severe physical and mental disabilities and the carer accompanying them have the right to obtain a fully-subsidised travel pass. Children from specialised institutions can obtain the monthly pass at the price of BGN 5 (approx. EUR 2.5).

Children up to 6 years of age travel for free on the Bulgarian railways. Children aged 7-10 years old and pupils/university students up to 26 years old have the right to a 50 % discount, after presenting a special document issued by the Bulgarian State Railways.

In relation to the school network optimisation, preconditioned by demographic reasons and restructuring, there was a risk that some children would have difficult access to school education due to the increased distances to the nearest school and poor transport infrastructure. The Government has tried to address this issue and reduce the risk of school drop-out and absenteeism through the 'National programme for better inclusion of pupils of compulsory schooling age'. The programme was proposed

---

<sup>76</sup> Type of social service developed at the SSSCF under the 'Bulgarian child welfare reform' project.

<sup>77</sup> Each municipality issues a special ordinance, setting the rules and conditions for the use of public transport within the municipality's territory.

<sup>78</sup> EUR 1 equals BGN 1.9558 according to the pegged exchange rate.

by the Council of Ministers, approved by the National Assembly and is currently being implemented. In the framework of this programme, during the school year 2004/05 some 219 buses have been provided by the MES to the municipalities for free transport of children from small settlements and scattered hamlets to the schools in the nearby centres. Another 153 buses were provided in 2006. This measure was absolutely necessary, although the effect of the programme has still not been assessed.

### *2.2.7. Sports and cultural activities for children in Bulgaria*

The basic law regulating physical education and provision of access to sports activities for children in Bulgaria is the Law on Physical Education and Sports. This law stipulates the regular practice of physical exercise and sport activities by placing this direction as a priority in the social policy of the Government and the municipalities in Bulgaria. Chapter four of the law especially regulates the role of schools with regard to the provision of physical education and sport activities for children at school.

The analysis of the needs assessment for implementing the 2007 national programmes of the MES demonstrates that there are no gyms available in 650 municipal and 20 State schools. Additionally, in 500 other schools, the gyms cannot meet the requirements for conducting regular classes in physical education and sports. There were 854 sports halls (gyms and sports centres), which were in such bad condition, they were closed down, whereas some new 2 445 open-air sports sites such as playgrounds were opened. This was the reason why the MES announced calls for project proposals relating to the implementation of the national programmes.

The MES announced competitions for projects prepared by schools in the whole country and destined to develop school activities in the context of out-of-class activities for the children. The national programme entitled 'The school — a territory of the students' envisages covering some 4 000 schools in Bulgaria with a total budget of BGN 12 million for developing out-of-class activities for children at school during 2007/08. The other large programme called 'Modernisation of the material facilities at schools', with a total budget of BGN 22.5 million, is destined to modernise sports facilities at schools, renovate educational and technical equipment, and develop accessible and safe architectural environments for children with disabilities.

It is the first time that such a large investment is allocated for modernising the school network, as well as allocating financial sources targeted at developing cultural and sports activities for children at school. Furthermore, it is the first time that Bulgarian schools are active participants in the process of designing relevant projects and submitting them for approval. The project approach was rather new for school authorities and they needed more time to prepare the design of the project proposals.

### 3. Monitoring and reporting

The Government is becoming more and more aware of the importance of monitoring and reporting issues. However, we are still far from an overall system for monitoring the efficiency of different programmes and projects in the field of social inclusion and child wellbeing in particular <sup>79</sup>.

One of the aspects of monitoring and reporting is the production of national reports. These are reports focusing on certain topics, outlining the main issues, trends and policy measures implemented. The 'National report on youth employment' from 2004 is a good example of this practice. In general, employment programmes improve the process of monitoring and reporting and the collection and use of key indicators for managerial purposes is gaining ground. But other aspects of social inclusion including poverty get less attention and the use of indicators in the process is limited.

The procedures for monitoring, assessment and the various reports related to child poverty are being included to a greater extent in the management of policies addressing child issues. The requirement for making independent overviews of the various programmes and projects, demonstrating the problematic areas and outlining the impact areas, is more frequently taken into account. However, there are certain attitudes that although monitoring and assessment are obligatory and therefore must be carried out, they are useless instruments, which additionally complicate the already complex programme schemes. Working more professionally in the field of child policies, governmental and non-governmental experts started to recognise monitoring as an essential and integrative part of the process. Conclusions in survey reports should be more clearly expressed and utilised for initiating real changes.

The state administration and the non-governmental sector are still in a process of learning how to carry out independent assessments and how to use the output data. A special focus should be placed on one of the components related to learning how to respond <sup>80</sup> to the facts, criticism, conclusions and different viewpoints which are presented in these reports. However, there are reports and research studies, for which special resources are being allocated for their preparation, but consequently their monitoring and output data are simply neglected. In the field of child policies, many examples may be pointed out especially related to CPDs and their work capacity <sup>81</sup>.

One of the major tasks of all the Bulgarian governments in the last few years was outlining the key policies, as well as designing a variety of plans, programs and strategic documents targeted at implementing concrete activities in relation to improving child wellbeing. Almost all documents envisage objectives and indicators for measuring the progress of child wellbeing. Unfortunately, the quality of these indicators in most cases is unsatisfactory.

<sup>79</sup> This conclusion is also drawn for Bulgarian policy towards disadvantaged youth in a study commissioned by the European Community (EC) in the framework of the 'Community action programme to combat poverty and social exclusion 2002-2006'. The study report says that the 'lack of a system of assessment and monitoring according to established and socially approved indicators of the programs and measures in the educational, labour, housing and family policies that target young people'. See Kovacherva, S., Section on Bulgaria in *Thematic Study on Policy Measures Concerning Disadvantaged Youth*, Tübingen, October 2005, p. 36.

<sup>80</sup> The state administration sometimes does not know how to react to the findings and recommendations in assessment reports. Learning how to prepare assessments and how to use them go in parallel.

<sup>81</sup> [http://www.samaritansbg.com/samaritans\\_new/docs/RESEARCH\\_SOCIAL\\_SERVICES\\_WB.doc](http://www.samaritansbg.com/samaritans_new/docs/RESEARCH_SOCIAL_SERVICES_WB.doc)

Some of the indicators envisaged in these documents cannot be measured because of incorrect and imprecise formulation. This is especially relevant to the 'National report on the strategies for social protection and social inclusion of Bulgaria 2006-2008', in which there are no special indicators envisaged to show what number of deinstitutionalised children could be considered as a successful achievement, under the different measures, and what is the expected percentage of poverty level reduction among households with children. In the report there is an objective related to the 'reduction of poverty among children and elderly people'<sup>82</sup>. The merging of the two target groups is unacceptable, because these two groups of people have different needs and should be differentiated. When monitoring and assessing policies in this field, this merging of the target groups makes the indicators and the envisaged measures ambiguous and unfocused. In the same section of the report, there are 14 measures envisaged and seven of those are targeted at combating child poverty, four address the issue of elderly people and the last three measures envisage policies in the field of poverty in general. Furthermore, in the section describing the indicators, there is only one indicator concerning child issues<sup>83</sup>, whereas the indicators regarding the elderly people predominate. However, 'the basic results' are described more clearly, where the three outlined results are as follows:

- The number of school drop-outs (students at compulsory school age) should be reduced by 10 % in comparison to 2005;
- The number of children with special educational needs, integrated in the mainstream and vocational schools, should be increased by 15 %;
- The number of students of Roma origin leaving the segregated schools should be increased by 10 %;

The 'National integrated plan for implementation of the UN convention on the rights of the child 2006–2009' could be pointed out as one of the most successful examples in designing and presenting strategic documents related to child poverty. The integrated plan was adopted by the Council of Ministers following the preliminary design and the active efforts, exercised by the SACP jointly with the participation of the MLSP, SAA, MES, MH and Unicef. Representatives of the NGO sector were also involved in the preparation of the plan. The plan was circulated several times among NGOs for comments, recommendations and viewpoints. The concrete indicators, included in the annexes of the present report, describe the key policies related to overcoming child poverty. It could be pointed out that it was the first time in Bulgaria that considerable efforts were made to prepare a well-structured implementation of child policies involving all stakeholders. However, there are certain skeptical attitudes with regard to the plan implementation. Some experts consider it too ambitious, even unrealistic. Other experts from the professional community point out that the envisaged goals and activities are rather weak and more resolute activities should be included in the plan. At present, certain working groups of representatives from the different institutions have been established in order to work for the plan's implementation. However, a deeper analysis of the policies related to child issues is needed and external experts on child protection should be involved in the process. Furthermore, a regular monitoring of the envisaged indicators should be exercised.

One of the major problems regarding the assessment and the monitoring of the state policies concerns contracting external evaluation experts. The funding for external and independent evaluation of programmes relating to child issues and social exclusion is insufficient. In almost all documents the key role for monitoring and control is delegated to the labour bureaus, the Social Assistance Directorates, the schools and kindergartens, which at the same time play the role of actors. Undoubtedly, internal monitoring and control is of fundamental importance. But in regards to large programmes with

<sup>82</sup> The *National report on the strategies for social protection and social inclusion of Bulgaria 2006-2008*.

<sup>83</sup> Poverty level of the households with children.

substantial investment, it is highly recommendable that external (independent) experts should be contracted to do the job, because usually external experts are more impartial and provide a more objective assessment. At present, it seems that state institutions design, execute and evaluate the programmes themselves. This approach has its own risks, e.g. some of the programmes might be evaluated as successful, whereas some negative facts might be disregarded and no lessons learned would be put into practice. In the last few years there have been some attempts in the right direction, but there is still no established mechanism determining which reports should be evaluated by external experts and which of the programmes should be assessed by internal monitoring.

NGOs and the international organisations are rather active regarding the evaluation of the programmes on child issues. These are Unicef, Save the Children Foundation (United Kingdom), Open Society Institute, ARK Foundation, the family social policies, the Social Activities and Practices Institute, the BHC, the Centre for Development of Democracy, etc. Some of the surveys are commissioned by the Government, but generally they are funded by external donors. Taking into account the more profound measures in the field of child poverty, which are already being applied in the country, it is necessary to allocate the necessary resources for external monitoring.

On the whole, it is necessary to work for a clearer specification of the indicators for the programmes, as well as introducing more specific indicators in the field of lifelong learning provided to the specialists working with children, supervision and development of services.

## ANNEX 1

## LIST OF REFERENCES

1. *Bulgaria: The changing profile of poverty*, World Bank, 2002.
2. 'Bulgaria: The Challenges of Poverty' (Analysis Based on Data from the Multi-Purpose Household Survey)', NSI, Sofia, 2003.
3. 'Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Wellbeing in Rich Countries', Unicef Innocenti Research Centre, *Report Card 7*, Florence, 2007.
4. *Economic and Social Assessment of the Care for Children in Specialised Institutions and the Community-Based Services in Bulgaria*, MBMD, 2005.
5. 'European integration, economic growth and social responsibility government programme'.
6. *Innocenti Social Monitor 2003*, Unicef Innocenti Research Center, Florence, 2003.
7. *Innocenti Social Monitor 2006: Understanding Child Poverty in South-East Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States*, Unicef Innocenti Research Centre, 2006.
8. *Integrated Household Survey*, National Statistics Institute (NSI), 2001.
9. Hegedüs, J. and Struyk, R. J., 'Divergences and Convergences in Restructuring Housing Finance in Transition Countries', in: *Housing Finance: New and Old Models in Central Europe, Russia and Kazakhstan*, OSI/LGI, 2005.
10. Menchini, L. and Redmond, G., 'Child Consumption Poverty in South Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States', paper prepared for the 29<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the International Association for Research in Income and Wealth, Joensuu, April 2006.
11. Lux, M., 'Efficiency and Effectiveness of Housing Policies in the Central and Eastern Europe Countries', in: *European Journal of Housing Policy*, Vol. 3, December 2003, pp. 243-265.
12. 'National housing strategy'.
13. 'National strategy for the demographic development of the Republic of Bulgaria 2006-2020', Sofia, 2007.
14. 'National strategy for the protection of the street children's rights 2003-2005'.
15. *Poverty during the transition*, ILO, UNDP, 1998.
16. *Promising practices in community-based social services: A framework for analysis*, Aguirre International for USAID/DGST/E&E, October 2005.
17. *Public Expenditure Review: Education — State of Play, Problems, Opportunities*, Ministry of Finance, Budget Directorate, Micro-Economic Analysis Department.  
<http://www.minfin.government.bg>
18. Gantcheva, R. and Kolev, A., *Children in Bulgaria: Growing Impoverishment and Unequal Opportunities*, Unicef, Florence, 2001.
19. 'Rural Regions: Overcoming development disparities', *National Human Development Report, Bulgaria*, UNDP, Bulgaria, Sofia, 2004.
20. Slaev, A. D., 'Bulgarian Policies towards the Roma Housing Problem and Roma Squatter Settlements', *European Journal of Housing Policy*, March 2007, Vol. 7, Issue 1, pp. 63-84.
21. *Social assessment of child care in Bulgaria*, UNDP, UNDESA, World Bank, Sofia.
22. *Social-Pedagogical Boarding Schools and Correctional Boarding Schools*, BHC, Sofia, 2001.
23. Vassil T., 'Methodology and Methods for Determining the Poverty Line and Methods for Updating it'; a report prepared at the request of the MLSP entitled *Bulgaria — the Challenge of Poverty*, NSI, 2003.
24. World Bank, *Growth, Poverty, And Inequality: Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, World Bank, Washington DC, 2005.

## ANNEX 2

### NATIONAL INDICATORS

#### ENVISAGED IN THE STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA FOR COMBATING CHILD POVERTY

<b>Name of indicator(s)</b>	<b>DECREASE OF THE SCHOOL DROP-OUT RATE</b>
Type of Indicator (qualitative/quantitative)	Quantitative benchmark
Definition of indicator(s)*	By 2010, the number of students (at compulsory school age) dropping out of school should be decreased by 10 % in comparison to 2005
Source (quote name)	State Agency for Child Protection (SACP)
Type of source	The 'National integrated plan for implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 2006-2009'
Name and main characteristics of data producer	ADMIN Statistics Reports by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and National Statistics Institute (NSI)
Periodicity and time series available (time series in the case of quantitative indicators only)	The net coefficient of enrolment at school of the population Share of the school drop-outs at the basic level of education (1-4 grade) Share of the school drop-outs at the primary level of education (5-8 grade)
Unit(s) of observation (child, household, school, etc.)	Schools
Territorial unit/level	National and regional level
Main use (analysis, establishing policy priorities, monitoring progress achieved, setting targets)	Statistical data of the enrolled students and the drop-out students by level of education; Survey on the school drop-outs Reports by MES and NSI

BULGARIA

Name of indicator(s)	INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
Type of Indicator (qualitative/quantitative)	Quantitative benchmark
Definition of indicator(s)*	<p>By 2009, 30 % of children with special educational needs should be integrated (enrolled) in the educational system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of children with special educational needs;</li> <li>• Percentage of children with special educational needs integrated in the educational system;</li> <li>• Percentage of children with special educational needs, who left specialised schools and integrated into the mainstream educational system; number of schools providing education to children with special educational needs.</li> </ul>
Source (quote name)	SACP
Type of source	The 'National integrated plan for implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 2006-2009'
Name and main characteristics of data producer	MES NSI NGO
Periodicity and time series available (time series in the case of quantitative indicators only)	
Unit(s) of observation (child, household, school, etc.)	Schools, NGOs, day care centres for children with disabilities
Territorial unit/level	National and regional level
Main use (analysis, establishing policy priorities, monitoring progress achieved, setting targets)	National statistics data ADMIN statistics Papers on the implementation of the national strategic documents on the issue

BULGARIA

Name of indicator(s)	<b>DECREASE OF THE NUMBER OF THE INSTITUTIONALISED CHILDREN AND INCREASE OF THE NUMBER OF THE RECIPIENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES</b>
Type of Indicator (qualitative/quantitative)	Quantitative benchmark
Definition of indicator(s)*	By 2009, the number of the institutionalised children should be decreased by 30 %, whereas the number of families and children who are recipients of alternative services should be increased by 30 % compared to 2002
Source (quote name)	SACP
Type of source	The 'National integrated plan for implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 2006-2009'
Name and main characteristics of data producer	MLSP NSI SACP, Social Assistance Agency, Ministry of Health and the municipalities
Periodicity and time series available (time series in the case of quantitative indicators only)	Specification of certain deadlines and data according to the activities for the implementation of the plan
Unit(s) of observation (child, household, school, etc.)	Complex for social services, CPD, schools, NGOs, specialised institutions for children, service providers
Territorial unit/level	National, regional and local level
Main use (analysis, establishing policy priorities, monitoring progress achieved, setting targets)	National statistics; ADMIN statistics; Papers on the implementation of the national strategic documents on the issue

**BULGARIA**

<b>Name of indicator(s)</b>	<b>DECREASE OF CHILD DEATH RATE</b>
Type of Indicator (qualitative/quantitative)	Quantitative benchmark
Definition of indicator(s)*	By 2010, the child death rate (per 1 000 born alive) should be decreased by 9.5 %. The coefficient child death rate is measured per 1 000 children born alive Number of deaths of children aged up to one years old due to basic causes (disease) per 1 000 000 Number of deaths among children accommodated in the specialised institutions as a percentage of the total number of institutionalised children
Source (quote name)	SACP
Type of source	The 'National integrated plan for implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 2006-2009'
Name and main characteristics of data producer	Ministry of Health, NSI, MLSP
Periodicity and time series available (time series in the case of quantitative indicators only)	Specification of deadlines and data according to the activities for implementing the plan
Unit(s) of observation (child, household, school, etc.)	Hospitals, specialised institutions for children
Territorial unit/level	National, regional and local level
Main use (analysis, establishing policy priorities, monitoring progress achieved, setting targets)	National health statistics Papers on the implementation of the national strategic documents on the issue Annual reports on the number of children immunised

BULGARIA

<b>Name of indicator(s)</b>	<b>ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND RESOURCES</b>
Type of Indicator (qualitative/quantitative)	Quantitative benchmark
Definition of indicator(s)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease the unemployment rate to 11.5 % in comparison to the present rate of 13 %</li> <li>• Decrease the number of social assistance recipients by 100 000 people</li> </ul>
Source (quote name)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative data from the Employment Agency</li> <li>• Administrative data from the Social Assistance Agency</li> </ul>
Type of source	Registered in the labour offices for unemployed persons
Name and main characteristics of data producer	Employment Agency — executive agency under the MLSP
Periodicity and time series available (time series in the case of quantitative indicators only)	Monthly data collection
Unit(s) of observation (child, household, school, etc.)	Unemployed registered with the labour offices
Territorial unit/level	National, regional and local level
Main use (analysis, establishing policy priorities, monitoring progress achieved, setting targets)	<p>Annual elaboration and implementation of 'National employment action plans'</p> <p>Implementation of 'Bulgarian employment strategy 2004-2010'</p>

## ANNEX 3

## LEGISLATIVE DOCUMENTS RELATED TO CHILD PROTECTION

№	NORMATIVE AND STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS	WEBSITE
1	The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	<a href="http://www.unicef.org/voy/media/CRC_bulgarian_language_version.pdf">http://www.unicef.org/voy/media/CRC_bulgarian_language_version.pdf</a>
2	The Child Protection Act	<a href="http://www.sacp.government.bg/index_bg.htm">http://www.sacp.government.bg/index_bg.htm</a>
3	Regulation for implementation of the Child Protection Act	<a href="http://www.bcnl.org/doc.php?DID=366">http://www.bcnl.org/doc.php?DID=366</a>
4	Ordinance on the conditions and procedure for implementation of measures to prevent abandonment of children and their placement in institutions, and their re-integration	<a href="http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/naredba1.doc">http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/naredba1.doc</a>
5	Ordinance on the terms and conditions for the applications, selection and approval of foster families	<a href="http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/naredba2.doc">http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/naredba2.doc</a>
6	Ordinance on specialised protection of children in public areas	<a href="http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/naredba3.doc">http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/naredba3.doc</a>
7	Law on combating antisocial activities of juvenile delinquents	<a href="http://www.paragraf22.com/pravo/zakoni/zakoni-d/12.htm">http://www.paragraf22.com/pravo/zakoni/zakoni-d/12.htm</a>
8	Ordinance on the conditions and procedure for provision of police protection to children	<a href="http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/naredba.doc">http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/naredba.doc</a>
9	Ordinance on the criteria and the standards for provision of social services to children	<a href="http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/nks.rtf">http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/nks.rtf</a>
10	Ordinance on the conditions and procedure for implementation of protection of children with expressed talents	
11	Plan for reduction of the number of children raised in specialised institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria	<a href="http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/priloj1.rtf">http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/priloj1.rtf</a> <a href="http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/priloj2.rtf">http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/priloj2.rtf</a>
12	'National action plan against commercial sexual exploitation of children'	<a href="http://www.stopech.sacp.government.bg/file.php?fid=85&amp;PHPSESSID=72925866ea5e1dbbdf8187d0b1bf7de">http://www.stopech.sacp.government.bg/file.php?fid=85&amp;PHPSESSID=72925866ea5e1dbbdf8187d0b1bf7de</a>
13	Programme for training foster parent applicants	<a href="http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/Programma_sa_priemni_roditeli.doc">http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/6/3/Programma_sa_priemni_roditeli.doc</a>
14	'National strategy for child protection 2004-2006', approved by the Council of Ministers by Ordinance No 896, 22 December 2003	<a href="http://www.stopech.sacp.government.bg/file.php?fid=168&amp;PHPSESSID=2e89f34a7838e5eb3f0191386e3eefa9">http://www.stopech.sacp.government.bg/file.php?fid=168&amp;PHPSESSID=2e89f34a7838e5eb3f0191386e3eefa9</a>

**BULGARIA**

<b>15</b>	'National strategy for counteracting crime', approved by the Council of Ministers by Ordinance No 726, 7 November 2002	<a href="http://www.mvr.bg/NR/rdonlyres/8940A009-0013-4CDD-94FE-8F5FC5F75E19/0/03_NationalStrategyforCounteractingCrime_Bg.pdf">http://www.mvr.bg/NR/rdonlyres/8940A009-0013-4CDD-94FE-8F5FC5F75E19/0/03_NationalStrategyforCounteractingCrime_Bg.pdf</a>
<b>16</b>	'National strategy for prevention and counteracting antisocial conduct and juvenile delinquency', adopted by Ordinance No 17, 13 January 2003	<a href="http://www.mjeli.government.bg/preventstrategy.aspx">http://www.mjeli.government.bg/preventstrategy.aspx</a>
<b>17</b>	'Action plan for the implementation of the frame programme for equal integration of Roma people in Bulgarian society 2003-2004', approved by the Council of Ministers by Ordinance No 693, 6 October 2003	<a href="http://ethnos.bg/index.php?TPL=2&amp;MID=89&amp;SID=276">http://ethnos.bg/index.php?TPL=2&amp;MID=89&amp;SID=276</a>
<b>18</b>	'National action plan against commercial sexual exploitation of children 2003-2005', approved by the Council of Ministers, 5 September 2003	<a href="http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/4/2/IP_24_08.doc">http://www.sacp.government.bg/downloads/bg/4/2/IP_24_08.doc</a>
<b>19</b>	'National strategy for the protection of street children 2003-2005'	<a href="http://www.stopech.sacp.government.bg/file.php?fid=170&amp;PHPSESSID=1427be566accf207bac4ebcaf93075de">http://www.stopech.sacp.government.bg/file.php?fid=170&amp;PHPSESSID=1427be566accf207bac4ebcaf93075de</a>
<b>20</b>	'The national integrated plan for implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 2006-2009'	<a href="http://www.crc.sacp.government.bg/file.php?fid=58">http://www.crc.sacp.government.bg/file.php?fid=58</a>