

**NATIONAL STRATEGY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA
FOR EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION
OF THE ROMA (2021 - 2030)**

I. INTRODUCTION

The current National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation (2021-2030) is a framework document that sets out guidelines for the implementation of policies for socio-economic inclusion and participation of Roma. The strategy takes into account the lessons learned and builds on what has been achieved during the implementation of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration (2012-2020) (NSRBIR).

Exacerbating poverty and social exclusion are grounds for stepping up measures to address the challenges still facing a number of vulnerable citizens, including those in the Roma community.

In this document, the term "Roma" is used as a general term. It includes groups of people who have more or less similar but not the same cultural and social characteristics. Their self-determination can also be different. In Bulgaria, a lasting tendency is for some of the people who are perceived by the surrounding population as Roma to identify themselves as Bulgarians, Turks, Romanians, etc. Not all Roma are subject to social exclusion, but all of them can be discriminated against and disenfranchised. The strategy applies a common and targeted integrated approach to vulnerable citizens of Roma origin and does not exclude support for disadvantaged people from other ethnic groups.

The strategy fits into the context of the development of European integration and inclusive policies, taking into account the guidelines set out in the Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council of 7 October 2020 "A Union for Equality: A European Union (EU) equality, inclusion and participation ", as well as its annexes "Guidelines for planning and implementation of the Roma national strategic frameworks "and" Portfolio of indicators ". The strategy will contribute to the implementation of the EU Action Plan against Racism (2021-2025) and the European Pillar of Social Rights (ECHR). The ECtHR sets out twenty basic principles and rights in support of well-functioning labor markets. The ECtHR Action Plan sets out concrete actions to make these twenty principles of the pillar a reality. These actions require joint efforts with the active participation of the social partners and civil society. The ECtHR Action Plan proposes three objectives at EU level in the fields of employment, skills and social protection, to be achieved by the end of the decade. These goals are in line with the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and set the common ambition for a strong social Europe.

The analysis of the factors, challenges, as well as the adopted approaches and measures for their addressing for the period of implementation of the NSRBIR until 2020 shows that the ambition to end the exclusion of Roma has not been achieved, but at the same time positive results and initial change in trends.

The COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened the vulnerability of isolated and marginalized Roma communities and highlighted the urgent need for a more effective and comprehensive policy response at national and European level. The strategy reaffirms the state's long-term commitment to working with all stakeholders to address existing problems and challenges for Roma at risk of being exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The strategy contains a vision, goals and priorities for establishing an integrated approach in the implementation of Roma inclusion and participation policies; contributes to the coherence and complementarity of sectoral policies and strategies that help to promote equality, inclusion and participation.

In order to achieve the long-term goal of ensuring effective equality and reducing disparities between the Roma and the rest of the population, the Strategy sets three horizontal goals in the field of equality, inclusion and participation and four sectoral goals in the field of education, health, housing and employment.

The leading strategic document in the development of the Strategy is the National Development Program: Bulgaria 2030 ("NDP: Bulgaria 2030"), which defines the vision and general objectives of development policies in all sectors of government. The strategy contributes to the achievement of the objectives of the "NDP: Bulgaria 2030", with an emphasis on the implementation of Objective I. Accelerated economic development and Objective III. Reducing inequalities.

The focus of this strategic document on these goals is related to the findings that despite the progress made in improving the standard of living after Bulgaria's accession to the EU, the growth of the Bulgarian economy is not sufficiently inclusive to help reduce social inequalities and overcome of social exclusion. Inequality in income and living conditions continues to increase. Increasing demands on the competence of employees and the peculiarities of new professions may become an obstacle to the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable groups, if the current educational and other deficits are not addressed in early childhood. The deepening regional disparities in the development of all socio-economic spheres and districts are an essential circumstance for the development of negative trends.

Achieving equity and inclusion requires increased use and better targeting of resources, as well as the participation and partnership of all stakeholders at all levels of government in all sectors. Close cooperation between the European and national levels is particularly important.

Policies for Roma equality, inclusion and participation are on the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which places a special focus on vulnerable people / groups at risk of marginalization and social exclusion. The implementation of the priorities and objectives of the Strategy in the field of employment, education, health and housing policy will contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular: Objective 1 "Eradicate poverty everywhere and in all its forms", Objective 2 "Eliminating hunger, achieving food security and better nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture", Objective 3 "Ensuring a healthy lifestyle and promoting well-being for all at all ages", Objective 4 "Ensuring inclusive and equal quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities ", Objective 5" Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls ", Objective 7" Promoting sustainable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive

employment " and decent work for all "and Objective 10“ Reducing inequalities within and between countries ”.

The strategy is in line with the UN international instruments in the field of human rights and the rights of persons belonging to minority groups to which the Republic of Bulgaria has joined and has commitments for their implementation.

The strategy fits into the context of the development of European policies in the field of integration of the Roma community, taking into account the guidelines given in directives, recommendations, resolutions, communications, conclusions and other documents of the European Union.

The document takes into account the commitments in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), incl. under the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area, adopted in 2003.

The strategy is also in line with the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Corresponds to the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to adopt an approach to initiating positive actions towards the Roma community, and it is especially important to do so in conditions of transparency in their implementation, in the presence of public consent and strict adherence to democracy. principles in the country. Recognizes the guidelines in the Council of Europe's 2020-2025 Plan for the Inclusion of Roma and Travelers / Non-Resident Communities (Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveler Inclusion 2020-2025); Takes into account also the Interim Resolution CM / ResDH (2020) 357 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, as well as Resolution CM / ResCMN (2021) 1 of 13.01.2021 on the implementation by Bulgaria of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities .

The main principle in the development of the Strategy is the partnership and broad consultations with all stakeholders. Their participation in each stage of the document preparation process is aimed at reflecting the real needs and significant problems of the community, directly related to the socio-economic development of the country, as well as covering all possible solutions.

This document is adopted for the period up to 2030 inclusive.

The operational implementation of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of the Roma (2021-2030) is carried out through short-term national action plans (NAPs), the first of which is for the period until 2023.

After 2030, the Strategy will be able to be continued, supplemented or amended, depending on the results achieved, the existing political, social and economic realities and new challenges.

Consultative process DURING the development of the document

The following principles, which guarantee the success of the implementation and implementation of the strategy, were leading in the process of elaboration of the National Strategy:

Partnership and teamwork to reach consensus, to share and communicate information, knowledge and ideas.

Coherence and coordination between all stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, institutions, etc., involved in the consultation process. The principle also applies to linking with strategic documents and plans at different hierarchical levels.

Publicity, transparency and civic participation - The strategy has been developed on a broad public basis and has been discussed and consulted in numerous forums, working groups and others.

The process of developing the strategy is structured in the following stages.

The first stage of the consultation process (November 2019 - December 2020) includes:

- Preparation of a Report and Analysis of the Progress of the Republic of Bulgaria on the main priorities for social inclusion of Roma, according to available public documents 2012-2019 by a team of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS).

The second stage of the consultation process (June 2020 - March 2021) includes:

- Sending the report prepared by BAS to the horizontal ministries so that the analysis in it can be taken into account in the process of preparing the Strategy.

- Preparation by the Secretariat of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues at the Council of Ministers, which is the National Contact Point (NCP), a draft framework of the Strategy, which includes: the main elements of a strategic document; the recommendations of the Report prepared by BAS; the feedback from the ministries, as well as the guidelines given in working order during the regular NCT meetings in Brussels, presented by the Directorate-General (DG) "Justice and Consumers" of the EC. The draft Strategy was sent for proposals and discussion to the members of the Commission for Implementation of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration (2012 - 2020) (part of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues). The Commission was part of the whole consultation process.

- Conducting 13 meetings within the project "T.E.A.M. 2– Together we Achieve More”, funded by the European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers, under the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Program (2014-2020) of the European Union, with the participation of: representatives of ministries, regional administrations, local authorities, mediators, regional experts on ethnic and integration issues, teachers, representatives of the academic community, Roma activists, representatives of civil society organizations from all over the country;

- Conducting 6 meetings organized by the NCT; Commission for Protection against Discrimination and Civil Society Organizations;

- Conducting public consultations (3 pieces) through the public portal for public consultations www.strategy.bg; conducted a consultative process on the website of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues at the Council of Ministers (NCEEIB) www.nccedi.government.bg;

- Establishment, by order № P-32 / 05.03.2021 of the Deputy Prime Minister, Chairman of the NCEEIB, of an interdepartmental expert working group with the participation of representatives of institutions and civil society organizations with the task to reflect the received proposals and comments within all meetings, consultations, discussions. The working group

actively exchanges information by e-mail and the proposed draft Strategy incorporates a significant part of the proposals of the civil society representatives, which are in line with European policies and national priorities.

The third stage of the consultation process (April 2021) includes:

- Discussion of the National Strategy in the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues.

At a later stage (July-August 2021), organizations working on Roma issues - the Roma Integration Network and the Integra Association and the Intelligence Coalition - provided suggestions and comments on the Strategy and NAP, which were discussed with the responsible institutions. At this stage of the consultation process, a section entitled “Empowerment and Equal Opportunities for Roma Women” has been added to the Strategy.

II. EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The European Commission (EC) published in 2018 a Report on the Mid-Term Evaluation of the 2011 EU Framework for National Roma Strategies (2011 EU Framework).

The assessment showed that the ambition of the 2011 EU Framework to "end the isolation of the Roma" had not been met. The Commission's evaluation report concluded, inter alia, that "the evaluation showed that the 2011 EU Framework is the beginning of a process which, despite many constraints and given the large-scale task, shows positive results and initial changes in trends". This clearly shows its added value for the EU, in particular by putting Roma inclusion high on the EU agenda and in national programs and by mobilizing EU policy, legal and financial instruments. Without the 2011 EU Framework, Roma inclusion would have enjoyed more modest political commitment, less financial support and attention at national level.

It is also emphasized that “while some tangible, albeit insufficient, results have been achieved in the initial phase, the assessment shows that the overall that the overall process needs to be strengthened and better focused, with a focus on improved political engagement, the introduction of specific measurable targets and rigorous monitoring and more effective implementation, backed by sufficient funding and participation management systems. ” .

According to a study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) EU-MIDIS II in 2016, 80% of the Roma population in the nine EU Member States with the largest Roma population, incl. Bulgaria lives below the poverty line in the country.

Poverty is both a result and a factor of anti-Roma attitudes, exclusion from education, employment, health care and housing.

The main goal of the EU's Europe 2020 strategy is to lift 20 million people, including the Roma population, out of poverty, given that the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion has decreased. with 3.1 million between 2008 and 2017, the EU is far from meeting its Europe 2020 target of reducing that number by 20 million by 2020.

According to the same survey, 61% of EU citizens believe that discrimination against the Roma population is widespread in their country. There are still deep-rooted, sustainable and structural, and often institutional and administrative anti-Roma attitudes at all levels of European society, and they are a daily obstacle to achieving the full potential of the Roma population as EU citizens, fully enjoying fundamental rights, social inclusion and equality in all spheres of life, including housing, education, health and employment.

The European Parliament resolution of 17 September 2020 on the implementation of national strategies for Roma integration: combating negative attitudes towards Roma people in Europe (2020/2011 (INI)) states that 43% of the Roma population is discriminated against when trying to buy or rent housing and is not sufficiently aware of its equality rights.

Limited access to housing and utilities such as clean water and sanitation has a negative impact on education, employment and health outcomes and adversely affects social inclusion in general.

Life expectancy and health status of the Roma population remain significantly lower than for other citizens in all European countries. Life expectancy at birth in the EU is 76 years for men and 82 for women, and for the Roma population these estimates are 10 years lower. The infant mortality rate in the EU is 4.3 per thousand live births and there is evidence that the percentage is much higher among Roma communities.

The share of Roma who do not complete primary and primary education is still high. The number of Roma who drop out of school early and do not complete secondary education is also significant. Only half of Roma children receive pre-school education or attend kindergarten, and very few of them continue school after completing compulsory education. Only 21% of Roma women and 25% of Roma men between the ages of 16 and 24 have completed secondary education (ISCED3) or higher education. In 2019, 68% of Roma children dropped out of school early, despite the 10% target of the previous 2011 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the EU 2020 Strategy.

18% of Roma children have completed higher education, and the percentage of absenteeism and early school leaving among Roma students was significantly higher than among other categories of students.

The Roma population faces discrimination in employment initiatives. In 2015, 43% of paid employment levels for the Roma population aged 20-64 were well below the EU average of 70%, given that the situation of young people is significantly worse, with 63% Roma aged 16 to 24 are not employed, working or studying, compared to the EU average of 12%.

72% of young women of Roma origin are not employed, studying or studying, compared to 55% of Roma youth. 43% of Roma men and 22% of Roma women have some form of paid employment. The European Pillar of Social Rights has highlighted the fundamental right of everyone to work, as well as the strengthening of social rights as a condition for a positive impact on the lives of people, including the Roma.

A large part of the Roma population living on the brink of extreme poverty is forced to accept low-paid jobs, while others are forced to survive in the informal economy, which greatly increases the likelihood of exploitation and abuse of their labor rights.

Roma culture is part of European culture and European values. The Roma have contributed to the EU's cultural wealth, diversity, economy and overall history. The active participation of Roma individual or group performers in the creation of products of European culture is proof of the potential for the implementation of inclusive and integration policies in other spheres of public, economic and political life.

With clear goals and a renewed commitment to real change over the next decade, the European Commission is proposing minimum targets for 2030 based on the progress made under the previous framework.

They include:

- at least halving the proportion of Roma who are discriminated against;
- doubling the proportion of Roma who report cases in which they have been discriminated against;
- at least halving the poverty gap between the Roma and the population as a whole;
- reducing at least half the gap in early childhood education;
- halving the share of Roma children attending segregated schools in Member States with significant Roma populations;
- at least halving the employment gap and the employment gap between women and men;
- at least halving the difference in life expectancy;
- reducing by at least one third the difference in extremely poor housing conditions;
- ensuring that at least 95% of Roma have access to tap water.

The series of common characteristics and minimum commitments proposed by the European Commission for all national strategic frameworks for Roma outline a common approach and aim to help Member States develop meaningful and effective national strategic frameworks for Roma. At the same time, the EC points out that the Member States have the main competences in the areas covered by the Framework and supports the application of a differentiated approach in policy development.

III. NATIONAL CONTEXT - ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS AND THE SITUATION

Many Roma suffer from extreme poverty, unemployment, low levels of education, inadequate housing, poor health and well-being. Social exclusion reinforces prejudice against Roma, making their marginalization socially acceptable. Categories of the Roma community, such as Roma women, young people and the elderly, remain particularly disadvantaged. Once they are discriminated against as Roma and a second time including by members of the Roma community. Roma women and young people continue to lag behind Roma men and women in the general population in key areas such as health, education and employment.

A study by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights - FRA (2016), part of which includes Bulgaria, shows that Roma women have much lower employment rates than Roma men - 16% compared to 34%. The percentage of young Roma aged 16-24 who do not work, study or receive additional training as a main activity in Bulgaria is (distributed by gender): 79% for young Roma women and 52% for young Roma men (65 % average coefficient for the Roma in Bulgaria, with an average coefficient for Bulgaria of 22% and for the EU of 11.5%) (FRA, EUROSTAT, 2016). Due to the medium-term socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a risk that inequalities will increase further in a strategic perspective. Distance and digital education, for example, is often inaccessible to Roma children from disadvantaged families, which exacerbates educational inequalities, which will inevitably lead to exclusion from all spheres of individual and group social activity.

According to World Bank forecasts, by 2050 Bulgaria will have the fastest shrinking working-age population in the world. According to the bank's report, Bulgaria is on track to become the country with the largest decline in people of working age. The bank's experts note that the aging population requires a change in the labor market, education and healthcare. More flexible working conditions need to be promoted, as well as the adaptation of workplaces to the needs of the older workforce. According to the same report, the share of Roma workers will also increase: Roma already represent between 9% and 19% of new entrants to the labor market.

The level of educational characteristics of the population is a key prerequisite for the quality of human resources.

In recent years in Bulgaria there has been a steady trend of improving the educational structure of the population, with an increase in the share of higher education graduates and a decrease in the number of people with primary and lower education. The National Representative Survey "Educational Achievements of the Roma Communities in Bulgaria" commissioned by the Trust for Social Alternative (TSA) Foundation, conducted by Global Metrics in 2019 shows:

- A growing proportion of Roma believe that young people in the community should stay in the education system as long as possible. "This refers to the first completion of secondary and the second completion of higher education";
- The share of Roma children attending school has increased in all age groups compared to 2011;
- The share of Roma graduates is twice as high among those who have attended kindergarten;
- In 2019, the share of employed Roma is twice as high as in 2011.

Despite the improvement of the educational structure of the population, there are still some challenges, as well as alarming signals for the quality of education. The share of Roma students attending schools with mixed ethnicities has almost halved. The share of students in schools where there is a concentration of students of Roma origin is increasing - almost every second child of Roma ethnic origin is enrolled in a school where Roma predominate.

The processes for ensuring equal access to quality and inclusive education and for educational integration of children and students of Roma origin are closely linked and are accompanied by inherited negative factors and new ones, further complicating their implementation and effectiveness. The presence of the so-called "Primarily segregated" educational institutions, existing negative attitudes and stereotypes towards "difference", conservative traditions that

reduce the importance and value of education, the low educational status of parents. Additional aggravating these processes are: the increased dependence on socio-economic factors, the demographic development of settlements, the expanding process of the so-called secondary segregation of educational institutions. Their impact has different dimensions, degree and specificity of manifestation in different settlements, which proves the need for clear, differentiated measures, reproduced by local authorities and supported by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES).

The results of the 2014 FRA survey "Education: the situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States Roma Survey" show that children living in neighborhoods with a large proportion of Roma households are more likely to attend school / classes with a high share of Roma children. The concentration of Roma in certain residential areas may also be a cause of school segregation. Children usually attend schools near their home, and therefore the ethnic composition of school classes often reflects the ethnic composition of the neighborhood. Although it can be expected that housing segregation can be transformed into educational segregation, surprisingly, the results of the study show that the opposite is not always true: living in a non-segregated environment does not necessarily lead to integrated education.

Although the share of Roma living in mixed areas and attending segregated educational institutions is lower than that of Roma living in segregated housing, this share still remains high.

There are cases in which Roma children living in mixed or predominantly non-Roma neighborhoods find themselves in classes where most or all of the students are Roma.

Therefore, housing desegregation increases the chances of school desegregation, but it is not enough in itself to prevent de facto segregation.

Municipalities should take action to prevent potential secondary segregation. The municipality is the most important institution that can deal with this threat, the school alone cannot stop the outflow of non-Roma students, especially in an environment with strong tendencies towards segregation.

The performance of students of Roma and Turkish ethnicity shows a significant lag behind ethnic Bulgarian children, equal to 3 educational years in reading and 2 educational years in mathematics and science. Recent research increasingly shows that first-class, affordable and early childhood education and care (ECEC), early childhood health and social services are at the heart of good health, well-being, development and lifelong learning. to each person. In the short and long term, the provision of quality ECEC has a clear positive impact on success in education, the labor market, tackling poverty and social exclusion. In addition, investing in early childhood development reduces inequalities in achievement and improves health outcomes. Although programs of parental support, home visits and inclusive, quality education and early childhood care benefit all children, these and other early childhood investments are particularly beneficial for children who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged, including Roma children. whose families both belong to a minority and have low incomes. In order to maximize impact, early childhood care providers must actively engage and build trust with all parents as equal partners, united by the common goal of comprehensive care and early learning opportunities in both childcare facilities. services and in the everyday home environment of young children. Although the decline in early school leaving and the increasing participation of

Roma children in compulsory education have been positive trends in Bulgaria in recent years, a number of barriers continue to prevent Roma children from equal access to and participation in ECEC and others relevant to early childhood services. Children in smaller settlements grow up with an extreme lack of access to health, education and social services. They do not have access to a speech therapist, rehabilitator, treatment, etc. In general, there are no accessible kindergartens in rural and remote areas, close to Roma neighborhoods in cities. The quality of the ECEC provided is hampered by the lack of training of educators and other staff in areas such as inclusive education, early childhood development, ethnic diversity and others. Special attention should be paid to increasing parental competence in the implementation of policies for DDR (early childhood development), which occurs in a family environment and requires the development of knowledge, attitudes and skills of parents. Therefore, the services for increasing parental competence are of utmost importance, as well as the policies for creating various forms of quality services for the development and education of children close to the family environment and the opportunity to work with parents.

The implementation of the Mechanism for joint work of the institutions for coverage and retention in the educational system of children and students of compulsory preschool and school age shows approximately 10.6% gross efficiency and 23.5% respectively net efficiency (due to the huge number of children who went abroad) in 2018 and approximately 37.6% net efficiency in 2019. The activities of the Mechanism should continue until the set goals are achieved.

There is a need to further develop and improve the understanding of complex prevention, which should be a three-component process: primary (general), secondary (groups in a specific risk situation) and tertiary (re-prevention). The introduction of educational mediators has proved to be an effective practice with a good impact in this regard, but they are only an element of prevention and it cannot be relied on that they alone will solve the problems of coverage and dropout. The Information System for Implementation of the Mechanism (ISRM) is maintained and developed, which provides an integrated electronic environment and provides an information base for children and students aged 5 to 18 who are not covered by the education system, for whom there is a risk of dropping out. school or have left the education system prematurely, etc.

Providing "quality education in a multicultural environment" also encounters problems in its implementation. The support for the placement of children in mixed schools and kindergartens has been clearly and unambiguously increased and from 387 children in 2014, the supported children in 2018 are already 3468.

The established National Standard for Intercultural Education is in line with the relevant international standards and the training of educators and principals in this regard should be continued and further developed.

In the field of education, progress has been made with regard to the establishment and operation of central and sheltered kindergartens and schools, which are extremely necessary in terms of social integration and inclusive education of the Roma identity, the population perceived by others as such. and the population living in small and remote settlements. One of the most significant achievements in supporting equal access to quality education is the achieved high range of children included in trainings for learning Bulgarian, for which it is not their mother tongue. Language integration is the best possible way for successful subsequent socialization in the labor market and is the key to overcoming segregation and concentration of poverty based

on ethnic characteristics. The policy for all-day organization of the school day for students from I to VIII grade of secondary schools is sustainable and successful, which overcomes some shortcomings in families without educational capacity to support children in education, as well as problems related to the concentration of poverty in some parts of the country.

Measures for training illiterate people are extremely appropriate as a key to their labor and social integration in society, working with parents, teacher training, validation of knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal learning and self-study.

In order to assess the impact and long-term consequences of the implementation of certain measures (especially in the field of education), a certain period of time must pass, covering the entire school educational cycle. For example, for cohorts (generations) that started pre-school in 2016, it will be most relevant to make an assessment after 2030, when their entire school cycle will be over. This, in turn, sets the task of developing appropriate monitoring tools and methods to assess the effectiveness of policies and activities and to propose the necessary changes.

Further refinement of the procedures for identification of target groups is needed; the measures should be oriented towards solving specific complex problems, clearly defined through local communities and with a preliminary assessment of needs and cost planning; to specify prevention models and approaches to ensuring coverage; work to build an understanding of good practice; to focus on overcoming prejudice and discrimination based on aporophobia and xenophobia, which are key causes of segregation in education, employment and living conditions.

In recent years, the average life expectancy in Bulgaria follows the EU-wide upward trend and reached 74.8 years in 2017, compared to 72.7 years in 2007, but remains the lowest in the EU.

According to Eurostat data for 2018, life expectancy at birth in the EU is: 78.2 years for men and 83.7 for women. For the Roma population, these forecasts are 10 years lower.

At the same time, the country remains with the highest mortality rate within the EU, with a further increase in the indicator over the last ten years, as in 2017 the mortality rate reached 15.5 ‰ (compared to 10.3 ‰ on average for the EU).

Infant mortality has shown a steady downward trend in recent years, reaching 6.4 ‰ in 2017, but remains almost twice the EU average (3.6 ‰), remaining particularly high in regions with compact ethnic minorities and marginalized communities. The districts with the highest infant mortality are Dobrich (12.9 ‰) and Sliven (12.6 ‰), while in Sofia the indicator amounts to 2.6 ‰.

Raising the health culture and awareness of the population is an important step in realizing the need to use health care and services. Measures for conducting interviews, information campaigns for feeding and raising children, ways to prevent unwanted and early pregnancies, family planning and campaigns on the benefits of immunizations and their motivation for their regular use, according to the National Immunization Calendar, etc. are appropriate. ., but there is no information on the procedures for identification of the target groups.

The relatively low participation of Roma in the labor market leads to low incomes, which is associated with limited access to health services. The conduct of preventive examinations and

tests of the uninsured persons of Roma origin and those with difficult access to medical establishments with the available 21 mobile offices is assessed as having a positive impact.

The efforts of the Ministry of Health (MoH) are focused on expanding the network of health mediators appointed on a delegated budget. The appointment of health mediators in the target municipalities is a process coordinated by the respective municipal administrations. This creates risks for some neighborhoods without health mediators. In order to overcome the existing risks for the uneven distribution, Ordinance № 1 / 19.07.2020 on the requirements for the activity of the health mediators of the Minister of Health was adopted.

The long-term unemployed are estimated to be a quarter of the total uninsured population. People who can afford social security and health insurance contributions, but choose not to pay them, represent another quarter of the entire uninsured population.

Citizens without a valid ID card are also not insured. This problem affects the Roma population in particular. It is estimated that nearly a third of the Roma population does not have a valid ID card (Institute for Market Economics 2018). Together, these groups represent about 16% of the total population in the Burgas, Varna and Dobrich regions. That such persons are more likely to miss primary care or seek help only after their health has deteriorated. The shortage of medical professionals, especially nurses and general practitioners, hinders the development of primary care and the provision of services. The uneven distribution of health facilities, medical professionals and services across the country also hampers access, with rural areas often affected and overcrowded services in larger cities. This again leads to inaccessible health care for members of various social groups.

In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the situation of marginalized groups of the Roma population in overcrowded areas and settlements is deteriorating.

Support and medical care are needed to limit the spread of the virus, given that the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 crisis threaten to hit most seriously and exacerbate existing inequalities in all priority areas. of the inclusion of the Roma population.

In terms of employment, according to the National Statistical Institute, the level of economic activity in the country is growing steadily and reached a historic high in 2019, reaching 73.2% for people aged 15-64 still lagging behind the average level. in the EU - 74.0%. In the different age groups, the biggest lag is behind the EU among young people (15-24 years), reaching 17.8 percentage points (41.7% - average for the EU and 23.9% - in Bulgaria). The difference in the main contingent in the labor force (persons aged 25-54) is significantly lower - 85.8% of the population in the country is economically active, compared to 86.1% in the EU. One in four with secondary education and one in nine with higher education are economically inactive. This means that there are significantly fewer people excluded from the labor market among the highly educated.

In 2019, the unemployment rate in Bulgaria decreased to 4.2%, compared to the EU average of 6.3%. Despite the positive trend, however, the majority of the unemployed in the country (56.7% in 2019) remain out of employment for more than a year, and every third unemployed person fails to find a job for more than 2 years. Long absences from work are associated with the loss of work skills and habits and significantly reduce the chances of individuals to reintegrate into employment. The persons without qualification and specialty form the largest group (59%) in the structure of the unemployed, as a little over two thirds of the persons in the

group have primary and lower education. Territorially, the unemployment rate also varies widely, such as: 2.3% in the South-West to 10.8% in the North-West.

Bulgaria is one of the EU Member States with the highest share of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 who are neither in education, nor in training, nor in employment (NEETs). At an average level of 10.1% for the EU in 2019, the value of the indicator for the country amounts to 13.7%. According to a study by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the majority of NEETs in the country have secondary or lower education, live mainly in small towns and more than half belong to minority ethnic groups.

Four risk factors have been identified that help to form the group of NEETs - family environment, education, insufficiently well oriented to the needs of students, lack of appropriate qualifications and lack of motivation for development.

Most regions in the country achieve good results by activating their policies. The mediators help a lot for this and there should be more of them in the regional centers with a large concentration of the population. The serious development of services for professional orientation and the realization of a sufficient number of people have successfully developed individual cases, which could have helped us to do so.

Youth policy-making successfully identifies groups with the most significant problems - wash and young people with basic and lower-level education, but they do.

For the observed period in the country there is a decrease in the number of registered Roma in the Directorates of Labor Office (LBD), which is explained by the effectiveness of the implemented programs and measures, as well as the overall economic development of the country. In addition, many local communities still refuse to identify themselves as Roma in the DBT.

There is seasonality in employment related to cross-border labor migration.

The tendency of urbanization is preserved - increasing the relative share of the urban population and decreasing the population in the villages. At the end of 2017, 5,181,755 people lived in the cities, or 73.5% of the total population (compared to 70.7% in 2007), and 1,868,279 people lived in the villages, or 26.5% of the country's population.

After 2007, the population in the cities decreased significantly slower (by 4.1%) than in the villages (by 16.5%), which led to an increase in its relative share.

The concentration of the population in the 7 big cities of the country and the depopulation of large territories in the country is a trend that leads to deepening regional and territorial disparities in the demographic - and hence in socio-economic - development of Bulgarian regions. Dynamic urban processes confront cities with many economic, environmental, climatic and social challenges and problems.

According to the National Statistical Institute, from the 2011 census and housing stock, Roma are territorially distributed in all districts. The largest share is in the district of Montana - 12.7%, and Sliven - 11.8%, followed by Dobrich - 8.8%, Yambol - 8.5%, with a total of 4.9%.

Ethnic poverty

According to the Indicators for Poverty and Social Inclusion published by the National Statistical Institute, in 2019 the highest relative share of the poor is among the self-identified Roma - 64.8%, and the lowest - among the self-identified by the Roma. the Bulgarian ethnic group - 16.7%.

Poverty by ethnicity (BG-SILC 2019)

Distribution of persons in households by ethnicity and risk of poverty

	poor	Not poor
GENERALLY FOR bULGARIA	22.6	77.4
Bulgarian	16.7	83.3
Turk	31.6	68.4
Roma	64.8	35.2
Other	21.5	78.5

There are significant differences in the distribution of the poor from different ethnic groups according to their economic activity. Pensioners predominate among the poor of the Bulgarian ethnic group (55.2%), while the relative share of the unemployed is the highest among the Roma ethnic group (36.6%). Regarding the employed, the relative share of the working poor is the highest among the Roma ethnic group - 27.5%, compared to 24.0% of the working poor of the Turkish ethnic group and 22.0% among the Bulgarian ethnic group.

The level of education has a strong influence on the risk of poverty regardless of ethnicity - in all three main ethnic groups, as the level of education increases, the risk of poverty for workers decreases. The risk of poverty for people with primary and no education is 24 times higher than the risk of poverty for people with higher education for the Bulgarian ethnic group and 11 times higher for the Turkish ethnic group. Among the persons who identified themselves as Roma - 57.3% with primary and no education are poor, while among persons with higher education there is not a single poor person.

The spatial separation of the Roma community continues, both in urban and rural regions, leading to social isolation of their inhabitants, to deteriorating housing conditions, to problems with the construction and maintenance of infrastructure and hygiene, to transport problems and difficulties in providing services.

The problem of illegal construction, inconsistent with building regulations, high population density and overcrowding remains unresolved. This puts a high percentage of Roma households at constant risk of losing their only homes and turning them into homeless people. The problem with the lack of legal measures to provide alternative housing in cases of removal of a single home continues.

Reported projects and activities such as "Roma" are not directly related to improving living conditions in compact neighborhoods, nor to improving the social environment and street infrastructure in them, but affect general administrative activities at the municipal level and improving the urban environment and educational institutions outside neighborhoods with a concentration of poverty. Special attention should also be paid to spatial segregation, which is a multidimensional phenomenon of housing and social differentiation that occurs for various

reasons. Special attention should be paid to mapping and tracking changes in the territorial scope of Roma neighborhoods / neighborhoods; to study the characteristics of the models of spatial segregation, their structure and spatial organization.

The Recommendation of the Council of the European Union adopted on 12.03.2021 on equality, inclusion and participation of the Roma after 2020 states that special attention should be paid to the fight against discrimination and its prevention, including by combating anti-Roma attitudes - specific a form of racism against the Roma that is rooted in the way society as a whole perceives and treats them, based on stereotypes and negative attitudes, which can sometimes be unintentional or unconscious.

For the period of implementation of the NSRBIR 2012-2020 the public institutions - The administration, the prosecutor's office, the judiciary, the police, and the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) conducted a series of trainings to increase their institutional capacity to recognize anti-Roma discrimination and stigma.

A number of manifestations of hate speech against the Roma in the public sphere continue to be observed, in most cases combined with false news. Particularly dangerous for social cohesion is the hostile speech delivered by politicians and public figures who shape and influence public discourse from the position of power and public prestige they possess. Hate speech online is not fundamentally different from similar expressions found offline. However, the flexibility of the online space, the anonymity it allows, its potential to reach a large audience quickly and the relatively low barriers to entry pose particular challenges, unique to its content and how to regulate it. Both online and offline hate speech against the Roma requires future analysis and further decisive action to find new ways to combat such rhetoric, such as alternative messages and fact-checking technologies.

According to the FRA EU-MIDIS II study, on average, every second Roma participant in the study considers that they have been discriminated against on the basis of their ethnic origin in the last 12 months. The survey is for discrimination they have been subjected to in the last 12 months, or in the last 5 years in 9 areas (job search; workplace; entering a store; school staff, etc.); The level of discrimination in the Czech Republic - 64%, Hungary - 62%, Bulgaria - 26%. In comparison, the Roma interviewed in Bulgaria and Romania showed the lowest levels of discrimination.

On average, in the 7 Member States surveyed, 79% of Roma did not report discrimination against them. One in five interviewees did not report discrimination for fear of being threatened by the perpetrators. 39% of respondents fear negative consequences if they report an incident.

According to a 2014 World Bank study, Roma women and men are affected differently by poverty, social norms and the ability to make their own choices.

In Roma communities, there have been changes in several norms regarding the social roles of men and women. The scope of change varies from community to community, including: equality between women and men and the understanding that men are superior to women; the association of masculinity with the role of man, ensuring the well-being of the family. Although equality between women and men is not a widely accepted value, as is the case in any patriarchal community, there is a process of reassessment in some communities. Educated women openly oppose the traditional division of labor in Roma families and the role imposed on them by this, which is limited to household chores and childcare.

Some of the most impressive changes in gender norms in Roma communities are: equality between women and men and the notion that men are superior to women; the role of the man as providing for the family; Women's higher education creates new values related to their work and changes the perspective of their role in the family life.

Roma women seeking higher education see their work not only as a means of additional income, but also as a form of self-expression. Many Roma women are increasingly active to fill the economic vacuum in the family created by male unemployment. Very few younger women are willing to migrate and increasingly seek to complete higher education.

Education is creating an increasing proportion of young women with the ability to increase their life choices, and this expands the characteristics of the traditional norm of 'good girl' and 'good wife'. Women's education and the adoption of a new way of life (ie the challenge of young women's traditional social norms) can strengthen their ability to make strategic choices for their future.

In order to strengthen the adoption and impact of measures for equality, inclusion and participation of Roma, policies and programs should take into account the diversity of Roma communities in Bulgaria, applying specific approaches at the local level. Any policy or program in this direction must study or take into account the socio-economic dynamics of Roma communities, as well as the high level of diversity between communities, shown by their clear self-determination, location (including urban or rural), culture, traditions .

Roma communities change under the influence of the dominant society around them, but only if active, systematic, consistent and financially secure policies for inclusion and integration are implemented with the active participation of the community in them.

The approach to social integration that is currently applicable to all communities is not yet known, but there are still some common challenges that need to be addressed urgently, such as discrimination, unemployment, education, health, and early childhood development. Investing in intermediary activities, labor, health, educational mediators is also a positive step in this direction. These representatives of the community, working in the Roma communities, are guarantors for the effective and sustainable implementation of policies and programs for inclusion and social inclusion among the Roma communities.

Public institutions should step up their efforts to combat discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes. For the past period of operation of the NSRBD 2012-2020 are identified: the need for greater involvement of the community in the fight against discrimination; the need to introduce consistent, systematic and build-up measures aimed at enriching the knowledge of the values of the rule of law by the involved institutions and the community; the need to plan activities related to raising the awareness of the institutions involved regarding the problem of hate speech used against the Roma community; the need to work with the media, especially with regard to the use of hate speech and fake news.

Ensuring equality, social inclusion and participation of the Roma will increase the well-being of Bulgarian society, will reduce poverty in the country, will improve human and social capital, as well as the human development index.

Causes of unresolved issues:

In general, the difficulties faced by the Roma can be summarized in three main groups as follows:

1. Difficulties regarding rights

- Continuing inequality and discrimination (including stereotypes, hate speech, including online, creation of ransom victims by Roma, lack of recognition by the majority of such cases of discrimination); cross-sectoral discrimination - a combination of gender-based violence and racism; anti-Roma attitudes;
- Traditional attitudes in the Roma community regarding the (in) equality of men and women.

2. Difficulties regarding fair (redistribution)

- Insufficient participation of Roma in quality general education (including distance learning in an electronic environment);
- Insufficient participation of Roma in paid, quality and sustainable employment (including as self-employed), with a high percentage of Roma working in the "gray" sector;
- Insufficient access of Roma to adequate housing and basic services;
- Poor Roma health care and insufficient Roma access to quality health and prevention services;
- Intergenerational transmission of poverty and material deprivation among the Roma;
- Insufficient access to financial services.

3. Difficulties regarding representation

- Lack of Roma participation in policy formulation and decision-making (including political representation) and lack of civic engagement;
- Empowering the Roma woman, strengthening her ability to make strategic choices for her future;

Taking into account the current implementation of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration (2012-2020), the main strategic intentions could be:

- Better coordination and integrated approach in the implementation of policies and measures;
- Shared responsibility, which includes recognition by all stakeholders of their own responsibilities in the implemented policies;
- Effectiveness and efficiency of the implemented policies;
- Implementing innovative and flexible approaches, multiplying good practices and approaches in Roma inclusion and participation policies;
- Improving the information provision, greater publicity of the positive examples.

4. Risks for policy implementation:

- Insufficient resource (including financial) security for policy implementation;
- Fake news, manipulation of public attitudes and reactions against policies;

- The role of digital technologies in all professional fields, which in turn creates a new work environment and new requirements for digital skills (the level of digital skills of the population of Bulgaria remains very low).

ANALYSIS OF INTERNAL (STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES) AND EXTERNAL (OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS)

ON THE ENVIRONMENT FACTORS, AS WELL AS THE REASONS DETERMINING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

SWOT

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available strategic documents and well-developed / improving legislation at the national level for the implementation of individual sectoral policies; • Clear connection and coherence of the national policy with the European priorities, principles and indicators; • Accumulated capacity and experience in mobilizing and using European funds to support the implementation of policies; • Established long-term partnerships with NGOs and research institutions; • Established National Roma Platform, covering Roma and pro-Roma organizations and activists from a large number of settlements; • Established and functioning Mechanism for inter-institutional coordination in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration (2012-2020) and the policy on ethnic and integration issues • Established good cooperation with regional and municipal experts on ethnic and integration issues. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient or partial recognition of policy commitments by the responsible institutions; • Insufficient staffing and financial security of policies; • High levels of economic inequalities, including strong regional disparities and imbalances; • High share of people at risk of poverty in the so-called pockets of poverty; • Low level of digital skills of the population, incl. and the Roma community.
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the process of coordination and interaction in the planning, implementation and monitoring of implemented policies; • Application of innovative and flexible 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepening socio-economic inequalities; • Negative demographic processes; • Increasing the share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion;

<p>approaches in effective absorption of European Structural Funds for the purposes of implemented policies;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the qualification and skills of the workforce; • Establishing the principles of a democratic state, with an emphasis on the rule of law and anti-discrimination, among vulnerable communities and in society's attitude towards them; • Improving the interaction with representatives of the civil sector; • Introduction of digital technologies in almost all professional fields, which creates a new work environment that requires digital skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing trend of regional disparities; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient resources for policy implementation; • Manipulation of public attitudes and reactions against the implemented policies; • High vulnerability of young people up to 29 years of age, who are an unequal group on the labor market; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpredictable social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.
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IV. VISION

Achieving equality, inclusion and participation of vulnerable ethnic groups and communities such as the Roma in all spheres of society for successful and sustainable development of Bulgarian society.

V. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Creating conditions for equality, inclusion and participation of the Roma, by ensuring access to rights, goods and services, participation in all spheres of public life in compliance with the principles of the rule of law and non-discrimination.

VI. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND HORIZONTAL OBJECTIVES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION

The seriousness of the individual challenges in each policy area and the interdependence of the problems require a multidimensional integrated approach combining investment in employment, education, health and housing.

Measures related to the implementation of general and sectoral policies are based on prior identification of needs at local, regional and national level, prepared by state institutions at all levels in partnership with local Roma communities, NGOs and other stakeholders responsible for these policies, in applying the bottom-up approach and included in the territorial strategies and plans at regional and municipal level (Integrated Territorial Strategies for Regional Development for Level 2 Planning and Integrated Municipal Development Plans).

In order to make progress within the period 2021-2030, the Strategy relies on the following guiding principles:

- Preventive measures - taking action to eliminate and reduce the causes of the risk of inequality and social exclusion;
- Efficiency, coherence and efficiency - coherence between the EU framework and other policies, funding instruments and EU legal instruments (Europe 2020, European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), anti-discrimination legislation, enlargement). Implementation of goals and measures for achieving progress towards the goals of equality, inclusion and participation of the Roma;
- Complementarity - complementarity with other strategic documents and national programs
- Partnership - setting common goals, adopting coordinated approaches to work, sharing information and experience between all stakeholders;
- Non-discrimination - full and active participation of all in public life;
- Involvement of persons from marginalized groups in the activities to change the conditions and way of life with a gradual increase in their involvement to the full coverage of all residents in the respective settlement.
- Innovation in implementing new approaches in equality and inclusion policies.

Leading in the implementation of the Strategy are also the Ten Common Core

the principle of inclusion of the Roma, adopted by the Council of the European Union on 8 June 2009:

- 1) Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies;
- 2) Explicit, clearly defined but not exclusive focus;
- 3) Intercultural approach;
- 4) Joining the majority;
- 5) Awareness of the dimension of gender equality;
- 6) Transfer of evidence-based policies;
- 7) Use of EU instruments;
- 8) Involvement of regional and local authorities;
- 9) Participation of civil society;
- 10) Active participation of the Roma.

These principles are the basis for the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of inclusive Roma policies. They encourage the implementation of constructive, constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies, the affirmative action, the intercultural approach,

not excluding their application to other vulnerable citizens. They take into account the needs and situation of Roma women.

The principles address key success factors such as the transfer of proven good practice, the use of Community instruments (legislative, financial and coordination), the involvement of regional and local authorities, the involvement of civil society and the active participation of Roma.

Achieving justice and inclusion requires increased use and better targeting of resources, as well as the participation and partnership of Roma communities, all levels of government, sectors and stakeholders.

Horizontal goals:

Policies for Roma inclusion are an integral part of national policies to increase the welfare of the Bulgarian people. Mutually reinforcing horizontal objectives - equality, inclusion and participation will contribute to their achievement:

1. Effective equality: Combating the prevention of anti-Roma attitudes and discrimination against Roma in general;
2. Socio-economic inclusion: Poverty and social poverty reduction exclusion and elimination of socio-economic differences between the Roma and the rest of Bulgarian society;
3. Significant participation: Promoting participation through empowerment, cooperation and trust.

Sectoral objectives:

Four sectoral objectives underline the continuing importance of the four policy areas set out in the Strategy. With regard to education, employment, health, housing, and basic services, as well as the three horizontal objectives (ensuring real equality, socio-economic inclusion and Roma participation), the following are important:

- Increasing effective access to quality inclusive education;
- Increasing effective access to quality and sustainable employment;
- Improving the health status of Roma and increasing effective access to quality health and social services;
- Increasing effective access to adequate desegregated housing and basic services.

Approaches:

Inclusive policies require a combination of focused and basic approaches. The strategy follows an approach based on the development of common policies (mainstream) with the implementation of targeted measures by sector, especially at the local level. The targeted approach is designed to compensate for inequalities.

The activities in the different priority areas will be implemented through complementarity of the following approaches:

- Encourage positive action to overcome various forms of inequality in all public sectors; affirmation of positive public attitudes towards the Roma community;
- Encourage positive action to overcome traditional practices in the Roma community, which violates the rights of women and children;
- Encouraging the participation and partnership of all stakeholders;
- An integrated approach to territorial development, in which measures are simultaneously taken on a territorial basis and pool resources on different priorities, based on local specifics and needs and the involvement of all stakeholders in meeting specific local challenges;
- Differentiation of the approaches, methods and means for the implementation of the inclusion policies, according to the peculiarities of the social and demographic subgroups among the Roma community.

VII. PRIORITIES

1. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) is the leading institution responsible for implementing the objectives of the Strategy in the priority "Education and Training". The Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (COIDUEM), which is a secondary budget manager at the Ministry of Education and Science, supports the implementation of the policy for educational integration, intercultural education, work with parents and community representatives, including educational mediators.

The Ministry of Education and Science implements the state policy for equal integration of Roma in Bulgarian society through two global processes: inclusive education and educational integration as fundamental components for effective social inclusion of Bulgarian Roma citizens, these processes are guaranteed by the Law on Preschool and School Education (ZPUO), the Ordinance on Inclusive Education and the Program for the activities of COIDUEM (2019 - 2021).

With the adoption of the WUA and the inclusion of inclusive education as a priority policy, the MES actively and consistently implements measures to ensure conditions for inclusive education, which is expressed in the application of differentiated and individualized

approach to children and students, including vulnerable groups, including Roma, by compensating for the difficulties in mastering the curriculum, the lack of motivation and the difficulties in completing a class, stage or level of education. Measures are also applied to develop the potential of those for whom the mother tongue is different from Bulgarian and who do not speak Bulgarian well. Along with the work on the Mechanism for joint work of the institutions for coverage and inclusion in the educational system of children and students of compulsory preschool and school age, priority is given to work with parents from vulnerable groups, including Roma.

The educational disparity between rural and urban areas remains a challenge. Given this, targeted support is needed for the school-age population in rural areas as a condition for achieving a balance in education. That is why investments in educational infrastructure in rural areas are essential.

The implementation in 2018 of measures for educational institutions with a concentration of children and students from vulnerable groups allows directing resources to the so-called "segregated" or "secondary segregated" kindergartens and schools, and leads to improved conditions for educational process in them.

The situation with the spread of COVID-19 posed a serious challenge to the Bulgarian educational system - to modernize in such a way as not to deepen the distance in education, incl. raising the level of digital skills and the introduction of digital technologies as a key element of the modern school. In this regard, e-learning through the use of information and communication technology (ICT) tools has been introduced in the education system.

The introduced normative changes provide an opportunity for the students to master the educational content for the respective class for the academic year 2019-2020 and to prevent the occurrence of learning difficulties. The changes ensure the application of the principles of equal access to quality education and inclusion of every child and every student, as well as equality and non-discrimination in the conduct of pre-school and school education.

The objectives proposed in this Strategy are in line with the Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030), which was prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with stakeholders. The framework has a clear and widely shared vision for education by 2030, outlining key priority areas for development, as well as coherence of policies and measures in the various strategic documents. In accordance with the Strategic Framework, the Education Program 2021-2027 has been developed, which provides support on a horizontal basis for all children and students, including vulnerable groups, including Roma, through systematic operations throughout the country and and targeted support for marginalized groups such as the Roma, including through the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) approach and the Community-led Local Development (CLLD) approach.

The set goals require the implementation of policies in the field of education, training and learning over the next ten years, which allow rapid adaptation to external influences and the maximum use of internal factors.

Operational objective: Creating conditions for the implementation of quality and inclusive education, for the educational integration of children and students from vulnerable groups, including Roma, and for the promotion of intercultural education

General objectives:

1. Involvement of children in forms of education and care in early childhood and in preschool education for the development of cognitive and socio-emotional skills in order to further educational inclusion.
2. Increasing the number of children and students covered in compulsory pre-school and school education and reducing the share of dropouts and early school leavers.
3. Creating an inclusive environment for children and students from vulnerable groups, including Roma, according to their individual needs, abilities and interests, with emphasis on mastering the Bulgarian language to prevent learning difficulties or to overcome gaps in learning content until completion of secondary education, including through the application of various educational methodologies and tools.
4. Improving the quality of education, upbringing and socialization in educational institutions with concentration of children and students from vulnerable groups, including Roma, as well as overcoming the processes of segregation in kindergartens and schools located near Roma neighborhoods, prevention of secondary segregation.
5. Strengthening intercultural education for preserving cultural identity, respecting the importance of each human person in the diversity of identities, expanding knowledge of the culture and traditions of different communities, focusing on the Roma community, and forming an active civic consciousness and sense of belonging to the Bulgarian and European community.
6. Systematic interaction with parents to realize and fulfill their responsibilities for the upbringing, development, education and upbringing of children, as well as for cooperation with the kindergarten / school. Collaboration with educational mediators and other specialists with attitude and influence on the educational achievements of children and students.
7. Increasing and upgrading the knowledge, skills and competencies of pedagogical specialists and non-pedagogical staff to work in an environment of diversity and to overcome stereotypes and prevent discriminatory attitudes.
8. Encouraging the participation of students from vulnerable groups, including Roma in continuing education and / or vocational training (vocational colleges) and / or higher education for successful personal and professional realization.
9. Implementing innovative approaches and methods for the inclusion of children and / or students from vulnerable groups, including Roma, including activities to improve digital skills.
10. Expanding opportunities for lifelong learning, including through non-formal and informal education; inclusion in forms of education and training of persons who have not

completed secondary education; promoting learning among all sections of the population to participate in forms of lifelong learning.

A necessary condition for the realization of these goals is the active cooperation between kindergartens and schools with state and local authorities in the social and health sphere, with educational mediators and local communities. In pursuance of this priority, activities for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minority groups in vulnerable situations will be implemented, with a focus on the Roma, through the provision of educational and social support.

The measures for achieving the goals are set out in the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy.

The implementation of the measures under the priority "Education and Training" will contribute to the implementation of the indicators under the priority "Education and Skills" from "NDP: Bulgaria 2030" and the implementation of certain aspects of Objective 4 "Ensuring inclusive and fair quality education" for lifelong learning for all "of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Responsible institutions: MES, the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (COIDUEM), the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP), municipalities.

Partners: Regional Departments of Education (RDU), State Agency for Child Protection (SACP), Social Assistance Agency (SAA) / Social Assistance Directorates (SSA), district administrations, educational institutions, educational mediators, NGOs.

Source of funding: state budget, municipal budgets, EU Structural Funds, European Economic Area Financial Mechanism (EEA FM) 2014-2021, Norwegian Financial Mechanism (NFM) 2014-2021 and other donor programs.

2. HEALTHCARE

The Ministry of Health (MoH) is the leading responsible institution for the implementation of the objectives in the Strategy in the priority "Health".

Improving the health of all citizens is at the heart of public health policies. The objectives related to this priority are aimed at active health promotion and prevention of chronic non-communicable diseases and socially significant diseases, and active support of vulnerable groups to gain effective access to health care and health care.

The implementation of policies in the field of health prevention among people at risk, where there is also high mobility and difficult access to medical care, will ensure the sustainability of preventive activities not only among vulnerable communities, but also among society as a whole; support and medical care, to limit the spread of COVID-19, vaccination programs, etc.

Access to health services is guaranteed through the mediation of health mediators, who are the link between vulnerable groups and the health care system.

Operational objective: Equality in access to quality public health and improving the health of the population in the vulnerable ethnic communities, with a concentration of poverty.

General objectives:

1. Improving maternal and child health in isolated vulnerable ethnic communities with poverty concentration. Systematic implementation of activities ensuring the health aspects of early childhood development.
2. Improving access to quality public health care for people in poverty and social vulnerability.
3. Reducing stigma and discrimination against vulnerable people and raising public health awareness.
4. Development of the concept of health mediation.
5. Ensuring sustainable implementation of the vaccination prophylaxis policy and expanding the scope of vaccinated persons with a view to implementing the immunization calendar, national vaccination programs and maintaining a high immunization coverage.

The measures for achieving the goals are set out in the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy.

The implementation of the measures under the priority "Health" will contribute to the implementation of the indicators under the priority "Health and Sport" from "NDP: Bulgaria 2030" and has a key role in the implementation of Objective 3 "Ensuring a healthy life and promoting well-being" of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Responsible institutions: MH, NHIF, municipalities.

Partners: Regional Health Inspectorates (RHI), NGOs, district administrations, municipalities, the National Network of Health Mediators.

Source of funding: state budget, municipal budgets, EU Structural Funds, EEA FM 2014-2021, NFM 2014-2021 and other donor programs.

3. EMPLOYMENT

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) is the leading institution responsible for implementing the objectives in the Employment Priority Strategy.

Successful integration into the labor market and increasing the employability of disadvantaged groups in the labor market is one of the main priorities of active employment policy. The

implementation of a set of measures to support fast and quality transitions from inactivity and unemployment to employment or from education to employment aims at the successful integration of these persons, both in the labor market and in the socio-economic life of the country.

The preventive effect against social exclusion and marginalization occupies a particularly important place in employment policy. Economically inactive people, incl. Roma are a potential labor force in the labor market. Their integration into the labor market and active involvement in employment will continue with the implementation of appropriate targeted actions.

While a little more than one in ten ethnic Bulgarians belong to the group of inactive youth, this is true for almost one of the three ethnic groups. A survey by the Institute for Market Economics tova ima golyamo znachenie charter politikite because kato policies and practices pokazva, flashover required ongoing effort, so that obpazovatelna cictema and tydoviyat pazap to caymyavat more golyama ctepen ea integpipat representatives etnicheckite maltsinctva, nezavicimo from the obpazovatelnoto nivo , gender or region, as is the case with the representatives of the Bulgarian ethnic group.

Unemployed young people under the age of 29 are one of the priority target groups of active labor market policy. Timely support for young people will be provided through the implementation of the new EU Council Recommendation "A Bridge to Jobs - Strengthening the Youth Guarantee".

Targeted measures to promote the active behavior of young people, increase their employability, support their initiative and entrepreneurship, increase their motivation for work and their successful integration into employment, combating discrimination in the labor market are important elements for achieving the objectives of the priority.

The strategy focuses on young people who have difficulty finding work due to lower competitiveness in the labor market, such as the unemployed under 29; unemployed young people not covered by the employment, education and training systems (NEETs); young people who dropped out of the education system early.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the need to develop the capacity of labor market institutions in order to better manage emergency measures by activating employment programs.

Integrated employment and social assistance services will be implemented to facilitate access to employment and training for unemployed persons and people receiving social benefits and to reduce the period of social assistance.

Operational goal: Equal access and improvement of the realization of the Roma on the labor market and increase of the share of the employed among them; reduction of social inequalities and their active social inclusion.

General objectives:

1. Equal access to the labor market through:

- Encourage employers to create jobs for disadvantaged groups
labor market situation;
 - Promoting entrepreneurship and own business for disadvantaged groups
labor market situation;
 - Promoting dual training, traineeships and apprenticeships, as well as
validation of acquired skills;
 - Improving the qualification incl. retraining for sought-after professions;
 - Support for the acquisition and improvement of digital skills and competencies
among jobseekers, with a focus on young people and the long-term unemployed;
 - Improving employment mediation services;
 - Improving access to employment and training through integrated service delivery
in employment and social assistance;
 - Increase the participation of women from vulnerable communities in the labor market, with
a focus
on vulnerable age groups 18-29 and 55+;
 - Support for acquiring green skills;
 - Promoting social and civil dialogue in support of employment
of the Roma;
 - Activation of the long - term unemployed and economically inactive, through
promoting labor mediation.
2. Social economy:
- Promotion of social entrepreneurship among people from the Roma community
by conducting information campaigns / events / webinars.

The measures for achieving the goals are set out in the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy.

The implementation of the measures under the priority "Employment" will contribute to the implementation of the indicators under the priority "Social Inclusion" of the "NDP: Bulgaria 2030" and has a key role in the implementation of Objective 1 "Eradication of poverty in all its forms and everywhere" and some aspects from Objective 2 "End hunger - achieve food security and better nutrition, stimulate of Sustainable Agriculture ", Objective 5" Achieving Gender Equality and Empowerment of All Women and Girls ", Objective 8" Promoting Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All "and

Objective 10" Reducing inequalities between and within countries "of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Responsible institutions: MLSP, EA, municipalities.

Partners: ASA, district administrations, NGOs.

Source of funding: state budget, municipal budgets, EU Structural Funds, EEA FM 2014-2021, NFM 2014-2021 and other donor programs.

4. HOUSING CONDITIONS

The Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW) is the leading responsible institution for the implementation of the objectives in the Strategy in the priority "Housing conditions".

Most of the Roma live in the so-called "separate Roma neighborhoods", where housing conditions are extremely unacceptable. Separated neighborhoods continue to be one of the main obstacles to the full integration of Roma into society, as living conditions in them lead to a deepening of their exclusion, to lower opportunities to improve educational, socio-economic and health status and to marginalize a significant part of the community.

Possible solutions regarding the housing conditions of the Roma population should be integrated into broader national activities and legislative initiatives. They should focus mainly on regulating and beautifying Roma neighborhoods, expanding opportunities for families to build their own homes, and to a lesser extent on social housing programs or supporting families with intergenerational poverty, especially with young children and children. -students, sick family members, **single-parent families and others.**

In social housing programs, Roma should be included together with families from the majority. In order to ensure the success of such programs, it is necessary to provide long-term social and psychological support. Municipalities have a leading role in these programs, which is also related to the increase of municipal housing.

The inclusion of Roma families in social housing programs is linked to the provision of integrated cross-sectoral support, including social, health, educational, as well as employment services.

Activities related to the implementation of projects providing support for the social integration of marginalized groups are encouraged, incl. and Roma by improving housing conditions, provided cadastral and urban planning, construction of technical infrastructure for neighborhoods with compact Roma population and new land intended for low-rise housing, construction of social housing and social infrastructure.

Operational objective: Improving housing conditions, including the adjacent technical and public service infrastructure.

General objectives:

1. Construction of an integrated geographic information system and introduction of orthorectified images taken with a drone.
2. Creation of a cadastral map and cadastral registers of territories, including areas with a compact Roma population.
3. Provision of municipal housing for accommodation of vulnerable groups of the population
4. Construction / renovation of infrastructure for the provision of integrated health and social services in the community for vulnerable groups.
5. Reconstruction of social infrastructure sites for the purposes of education, culture, etc.
6. Search for tools to improve the legal and economic conditions for the elimination of non-compliant with the Spatial Planning Act (SPA) / legislation housing and neighborhoods. Adoption of an Act amending and supplementing the Spatial Planning Act to introduce the principle of proportionality in issuing an order for the removal of illegal construction, representing only housing for its occupants.
7. Expanding legal access to quality water, electricity and sewerage in isolated neighborhoods with a concentration of poverty.
8. Support and implementation of innovative and effective solutions to overcome energy poverty among Roma communities in the country, and the inclusion of neighborhoods with a predominant Roma population in energy renewal programs.

The measures for achieving the goals are set out in the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy.

The implementation of the measures under the priority "Housing conditions" will contribute to the implementation of the indicators under the priorities "Social Inclusion" and "Local Development" of the NDP and has a key role in the implementation of Objective 11 "Transformation of cities and settlements sustainable habitats" and Objective 6 "Ensuring accessibility and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, Agency for Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre, MLSP, municipalities.

Partners: Ministry of Interior (Ministry of Interior), Ministry of Health, SAA, regional administrations, NGOs.

Source of funding: state budget, municipal budgets, EU Structural Funds, EEA FM 2014-2021, NFM 2014-2021 and other donor programs.

5. RULE OF LAW AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

Rule of law, guarantee of life, dignity and rights of the individual in conditions of equality and non-discrimination based on race, nationality, ethnicity, sex, origin, religion, education, beliefs,

political affiliation, personal and social status or property status are basic principles in a democratic and legal state. As high values, they have found their constitutional regulation in the country (Article 4, paragraph 2 and Article 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria).

Bulgaria has also adopted the basic legal framework for combating discrimination. Fundamental is the Law on Protection against Discrimination, which established and designated an independent state body - the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, which will consider and rule on complaints related to direct and indirect discrimination both on constitutional grounds and on the grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation and any other signs established by law or in an international agreement to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party. The Ombudsman Act mandates the Ombudsman to protect the rights and legitimate interests of citizens against illegal actions and omissions by the administration. The Civil Servant Act, the Labor Code and its implementing regulations, and the codes of ethics in the administrations regulate the issues of the conduct of employees in the performance of their official duties, including the protection of the rights, legitimate interests and freedoms of citizens. With special laws - the Law on Equality of Women and Men, the Law on Child Protection, the Law on People with Disabilities, the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, etc. special protection measures are provided for persons and groups in vulnerable situations. The Criminal Code of the Republic of Bulgaria defines as crimes preaching or incitement to discrimination, violence or hatred based on race, nationality or ethnicity (through speech, press or other media, through electronic information systems or otherwise); genocide and apartheid; insult and slander; human trafficking; coercion to marry; prostitution and other acts that often fall victim to persons belonging to ethnic minorities.

The Law on Advocacy, and in particular the Law on Legal Aid, establishes a mechanism for providing legal assistance to victims of offenses or victims of crime, including on the basis of their ethnicity and in cases where these persons do not have the necessary financial resources. means to secure one.

As a Member State, the Republic of Bulgaria is responsible for the implementation of European law (EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Racial Directive 2000/43).

Despite the existence of this legal framework, discrimination and anti-Roma attitudes continue to create barriers for the Roma community, despite evidence of a reduction in discrimination among Roma.

Extreme poverty, unemployment, low levels of education in segregated schools and classrooms, inadequate housing, poor health and well-being among the Roma population continue to disadvantage members of these communities.

Social isolation reinforces prejudice against Roma, making their marginalization socially acceptable and reinforcing anti-Roma attitudes. Roma continue to face deep-rooted negative public attitudes and prejudices.

Roma women throughout the European Union still face inequalities in many respects, which exacerbate extreme poverty, exclusion and discrimination.

Roma children and women face various forms of discrimination, including multiple discrimination, trafficking in human beings, marriages of minors and forced marriages.

Therefore, for the forthcoming period the main emphasis is on effective implementation of the existing legislation to combat anti-Roma attitudes and discrimination by increasing the institutional culture and expert capacity of public institutions, increasing confidence in their activities with emphasis on human rights and justice, raising the awareness of the representatives of the Roma communities about their rights and the mechanisms for their protection to overcome obstacles and barriers to access to justice, raising the public culture on human rights and the history of the Roma to understand the causes of social exclusion and poverty, raising public awareness of cases of racism, discrimination and their negative consequences for society and changing public attitudes and stereotypes.

The priority objectives will strengthen the fight against discrimination by broadening the focus of work on Roma inclusion and participation in new horizontal and structural areas outside employment, education, health and housing.

Operational objective: Guaranteeing the rights of citizens, with an emphasis on women and children, protection of public order, prevention and counteraction to the manifestations of intolerance and "hate speech".

General objectives:

1. Increasing the guarantees for effective protection of the rights of Bulgarian citizens in vulnerable social situations, belonging to different ethnic groups. Effective implementation of Roma integration policies to achieve equality, dignified existence and full participation in public life:

- Improve measures for the identification, prevention and protection of victims of anti-Roma attitudes, hate speech and hate crimes;
- Improve legal protection services for persons belonging to ethnic groups minorities, as well as persons living in households with deep poverty;
- Improve measures for effective criminal justice in cases in the language of hatred and hate crimes;
- Systematic implementation of measures, gradual increase of the legal culture among communities in a vulnerable socio-economic situation;
- Improve measures for the protection of minors belonging to ethnic minorities, as well as to children living in households with deep poverty.

2. Increasing the institutional culture and expertise of public institutions (including national and local administration, court, prosecutor's office and MoI bodies) in relation to EU policies on diversity, equality, dignity and fundamental human rights. Overcoming cultural barriers to communication and all forms of discriminatory attitudes:

- Raising awareness of the "equivalence" of cultures and respect for cultural diversity;

- Raising awareness of poverty as a factor in the emergence of negative social phenomena and the ethnic heterogeneity of poverty concentration areas;

- Capacity building to work with people living in deep poverty and people from minority communities (ie with different language, religion, community ethnicity, etc.) - with respect for diversity, dignity and fundamental human rights; trainings, seminars and other forms;

- Carry out inter - institutional cooperation to improve the dialogue with vulnerable groups; trainings, seminars and other forms;

- Conduct public campaigns to build a culture of policies for diversity, equality, dignity and fundamental human rights of the EU and raising public awareness of anti-Roma attitudes and discrimination.

3. Enhancing the capacity of law enforcement authorities to combat crime and acts of discrimination, violence or hatred based on ethnicity:

- Improving measures for the social reintegration of prisoners,

belonging to ethnic minorities or originating from a social environment characterized by deep poverty, incl. through targeted inter-institutional support;

4. Forming a culture of equality for Roma women. Encouraging their full individual, social and economic participation in public life;

- Raising awareness of Roma with a focus on Roma, women and youth, in relation to the possibilities for access to legal aid;

- Improving the access of Roma women to legal aid and justice.

5. Undertake targeted measures and innovative integrated enhancement services

of parental capacity to support vulnerable families, improve parental care and protect the rights of children:

- Raising the awareness of children and their families about the rights of the child, regulated in international and national standards and existing social, health, educational and other public services;

- Raising the awareness of children and their families about the prevention of violence among and against children;

- Improving the monitoring and control of the observance of the rights of the child.

6. Increasing civic participation and awareness of civil rights and obligations of persons living in areas of poverty concentration:

- Improving the legal culture of the Roma in connection with the acquisition, use and

the storage of Bulgarian personal documents;

- Raising awareness and civic culture of Roma in relation to

rights and obligations with regard to education, health care, housing and employment;

- Raising the awareness of the Roma about the adequate reaction against the language of hatred and false news, reinforcing anti-Roma attitudes and discrimination;

- Prevention of unwanted social phenomena in areas with poverty concentration (incl.

early marriages, domestic violence, domestic crime and anti-social behavior). Construction by the municipality and the law enforcement institutions of video surveillance systems, analogous to the rest of the settlements;

- Involvement of persons from the Roma community in the activity for protection of the public order, by including them in the Local Commissions for Public Order and Security.

7. Increase efforts to combat trafficking in human beings through the effective implementation of

as set out in UN, CoE and EU documents and the use of existing instruments in the EU:

- Prevention of specific of trafficking in human beings in areas with a concentration of

poverty and providing additional measures to protect victims of trafficking in human beings belonging to ethnic minorities in order to reduce the number of cases of trafficking in human beings and increase the detection and prosecution of traffickers;

- Development and implementation of services for reintegration of children - victims of trafficking for the purpose

effective socialization of this most vulnerable group, achieving prosperity and overall development.

8. Establishing tolerant interethnic relations through sports

The measures to achieve the objectives are set out in the Action Plan for the implementation of The strategy.

The implementation of the measures on the priority "Rule of Law and Anti-Discrimination" will contribute to the implementation of the indicators on the priority "Social Inclusion" of the "NDP: Bulgaria 2030" and has a key role in the implementation of Objective 5 "Achieving Gender Equality and Empowerment Women and Girls ", Objective 10" Reducing inequalities between and within countries ", Objective 16" Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, ensuring access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions for all levels ”of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior (MoI), MES, MH, MLSP, Ministry of Culture (MC), municipalities, district administrations, Commission for Protection against Discrimination, consultative structures.

Partners: district administrations, municipalities and NGOs.

Source of funding: state budget, municipal budgets, EU Structural Funds, EEA FM 2014-2021, NFM 2014-2021 and other donor programs.

6. CULTURE AND MEDIA

Roma culture is part of the European cultural space and part of the cultural diversity in the country. Preservation of the cultural heritage of the Roma, promotion of creative development, cultural interaction and participation in the cultural life of the country have a crucial role in social cohesion.

The goals in the priority are aimed at improving the conditions and expanding the opportunities for socialization through cultural dialogue.

The National Action Plan has developed consistent measures to preserve and promote the traditional culture of the Roma community and to improve the conditions for creative development and participation in cultural life.

Special attention is paid to the crucial role of the media in reducing anti-Roma attitudes through non-discriminatory coverage of the Roma community; disseminating positive images of the Roma and the benefits of interculturalism and media inclusion.

Operational goal: Improving the conditions for equal access of the Roma community to public cultural life, preservation and promotion of Roma traditional culture, development and promotion of creativity as factors for cultural integration and social cohesion. Overcoming hate speech and reproducing prejudices against Roma in the media in order to build a positive image of the community.

General objectives:

1. Preservation and promotion of the traditional culture of the Roma community.
2. Encouraging the creative development of community representatives.
3. Stimulating the Roma community for active participation in public cultural life and promoting intercultural dialogue.
4. De-ethnicization of the phenomena of poverty in the Bulgarian social media.
5. Fight against xenophobia, racism, anti-Roma attitudes and hate speech in the media.

The measures for achieving the goals are set out in the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy.

The implementation of the measures under the priority "Culture and Media" will contribute to the implementation of the indicators under the priority "Culture, Heritage and Tourism" from

"NDP: Bulgaria 2030" and has a key role in the implementation of Objective 8 "Promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth". full and productive employment and decent work for all ", Objective 11" Transforming cities and towns into inclusive, safe, adaptable and sustainable places to live "and Objective 12" Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns "of the Sustainable UN development.

Responsible institutions: MC, municipalities, district administrations, Council for Electronic Media (CEM).

Partners: NGOs.

Source of funding: state budget, municipal budgets, EU Structural Funds, EEA FM 2014-2021, NFM 2014-2021 and other donor programs.

VIII. EMPOWERMENT AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES OF THE ROMA WOMAN

In the current strategy, the problems of the Roma woman are included not only as a horizontal policy, but are also addressed purposefully.

The priorities education, healthcare, housing, employment are enriched with specific goals and measures sensitive to women.

With special laws - the Law on Equality of Women and Men, the Law on Child Protection, the Law on People with Disabilities, the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, etc. special protection measures are provided for persons and groups in vulnerable situations. The Government adopted the National Strategy for the Promotion of Equality between Women and Men for the period 2021-2030. The main goal of the document is to contribute to the achievement of de facto equality between women and men in Bulgaria by implementing a unified, consistent and sustainable state policy. The adopted action plan to the strategy sets out measures to: promote equality between women and men in decision-making processes; combating violence and protecting and supporting victims; overcoming gender stereotypes in various spheres of public life, and sexism, etc.

The Criminal Code of the Republic of Bulgaria defines as crimes preaching or incitement to discrimination, violence or hatred based on race, nationality or ethnicity (through speech, press or other media, through electronic information systems or otherwise); genocide and apartheid; insult and slander; human trafficking; coercion to marry; prostitution and other acts that often fall victim to persons belonging to ethnic minorities.

The Law on Advocacy, and in particular the Law on Legal Aid, establishes a mechanism for providing legal assistance to victims of offenses or victims of crime, including on the basis of their ethnicity and in cases where these persons do not have the necessary financial resources. funds to provide assistance.

Roma women throughout the European Union still face inequalities in many respects, which exacerbate extreme poverty, exclusion and discrimination.

Roma women face various forms of discrimination, including multiple discrimination, trafficking in human beings, marriages of minors and forced marriages.

In view of everything that is analyzed, ascertained and formulated as a problem in this document, the operational goal is to promote the empowerment of Roma women, to make her an active factor in social, political and public life, to overcome her exclusion in the main areas of education, health, employment and housing.

The issues of empowerment of Roma women have been reflected in the priorities of the current strategy. Eg Priority "Rule of Law and Anti-Discrimination" addresses key topics such as:

- Encourage and support the participation of Roma women in all forms of society and political life, including in public administration.
- Overcoming domestic violence, early marriages and other forms of traditional patriarchal practices of control and violence. Providing conditions for greater access to justice for Roma women.
- Improve measures for the identification, prevention and protection of victims of anti-Roma attitudes, hate speech and hate crimes;
- Improve measures for effective criminal justice in cases in the language of hatred and hate crimes;
- Improving the access of Roma women to legal aid and justice.
- Improve measures for the protection of minors belonging to ethnic minorities, as well as to children living in households with deep poverty;
- Improving the activities for limiting the drop-out of Roma children from school;
- Raising Roma awareness with a focus on Roma women and youth, in relation to the possibilities for access to legal aid;
- Prevention of unwanted social phenomena in areas with poverty concentration (incl. early marriages, domestic violence, domestic crime and anti-social behavior). Construction by the municipality and law enforcement institutions of systems for video surveillance, similar to the rest of the settlements;
- Prevention of specific forms of human trafficking in areas with a concentration of poverty and providing additional measures to protect victims of trafficking in human beings, belonging to ethnic minorities in order to reduce the number of cases of trafficking in people and increase the detection and prosecution of traffickers;
- Development and implementation of services for reintegration of child victims of trafficking in order to effectively socialize this most vulnerable group, achieving prosperity

and overall development.

Institutions conduct public campaigns to build a culture of diversity, equality, dignity and basic EU human rights and raising public awareness of anti-Roma attitudes and discrimination.

The National Legal Aid Office has experience in facilitating access to legal aid and justice for vulnerable groups, including victims of domestic and gender-based violence, children, women from minority groups and / or from remote and geographical areas. isolated areas through the introduction of mobile legal aid teams. This is a very important aspect of the work related to empowerment and equal opportunities.

Special attention is paid to the issue in the section Monitoring the implementation of the strategy. It is planned to attract young people and Roma women in the form of advisory councils and civic monitoring.

The National Action Plan 2021-2023 sets out measures on the issue, indicating the specific responsible institutions.

IX. MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATION POLICY

The National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of the Roma (2021-2030) is an integral part of the overall strategy of the government to achieve real changes in the lives of all Bulgarian citizens. The government pursues a policy to encourage investment in the development and improvement of people and their active participation in overcoming existing challenges.

Horizontal cross-sectoral approach

Given the horizontal nature of the policy, a number of institutions and organizations with different competencies and capabilities will be involved in its implementation. Therefore, the activities for the implementation of the National Strategy and the plans for its implementation will complement each other in order to create a cumulative effect.

The implementation of the National Strategy will be carried out by institutions and organizations, which according to their powers and competencies will set specific activities and measures related to the promotion of equality between women and men in Bulgaria.

The organization for the implementation of the policies for equal inclusion and participation of the Roma is built on the basis of efficient and purposeful use of the available resources at national, regional and local level, as well as those at European level, arising from the EU membership and access to funds. of the EU for the programming period 2021-2027

The main tool for implementation at the operational level of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of the Roma (2021-2030) is the National Action Plan (NAP). The action plan is open to flexibility in the event of changes and in compliance with relevant budgetary procedures.

The plan is prepared for a period of 3 years (2021-2023) and includes activities, responsible authorities, financial resources and indicators for the implementation of activities. The activities contained in the plan are structured according to the priority areas of the Strategy. The competent institutions and organizations propose to include in the plan activities that implement and provide information on their progress.

The coordination and methodological support for the implementation of the Strategy and the NAP is provided by the Secretariat of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues at the Council of Ministers, which is the National Contact Point (NCP) for the implementation of the Strategy.

Operationally, all measures for the implementation of the Strategy and the NAP, including resource provision measures, are coordinated, controlled and approved by the Deputy Prime Minister appointed Chairman of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues at the Council of Ministers (NCEEIB).

Coordination of the model for distribution of managerial responsibilities between the executive bodies:

The coordinating role in the implementation of the current National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of the Roma (2021-2030) has the National Contact Point, which is the Secretariat of the NCEEIB.

An inter-institutional mechanism has been set up, which includes representatives of the ministries responsible for the respective priorities, agencies, and secondary budget managers. They participate in the development, planning and reporting of the measures and activities of the National Action Plan and report on the progress of the implementation of the Strategy through the Monitoring, Evaluation and Control System:

- The Chairman of the NCEEIB, who is the Deputy Prime Minister, approves, coordinates and coordinates the measures for the implementation of the Strategy and the NAP.

- Establish and maintain the necessary administrative capacity in key line institutions and secondary budget managers by entrusting certain functions to directorates, departments, units or individual experts responsible for the implementation of Roma inclusion policy, as well as by establishing specialized units. The key line ministries and bodies are responsible for updating the relevant thematic program operational documents for Roma integration, implementing the planned measures, monitoring, evaluating and reporting to the NCEEIB and the National Contact Point.

- Formation of the necessary administrative capacity in the structures of the District Administrations by assigning certain functions to directorates, departments, units or individual experts responsible for the implementation of Roma inclusion policy. At least one official should be appointed in each district administration, whose main job functions should be related to inclusive policy. The regional governors have established regional councils for cooperation on ethnic and integration issues, as consultative and coordinating bodies, supporting the implementation of the policy on ethnic and integration issues at the regional level.

Improving the mechanisms for coordination with the structures of the civil society through to line departments, district governors and local authorities. Their formation and capacity building for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy will be consistently encouraged.

- Cooperation with legitimate civil and religious organizations.

- Active participation of Roma and all stakeholders at all stages (planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review) of the policy.

Involvement of municipalities in the implementation of policies for inclusion and participation of Roma through:

- With a decision of the respective municipal council in the municipalities may be created municipal councils for cooperation on ethnic and integration issues.
- Development, together with representatives of the local Roma community, of specific annual plans based on prior identification, analysis and assessment of problems and needs of local Roma communities and in accordance with regional strategies and the National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma in Republic of Bulgaria (2021-2030). These plans are adopted by the municipal councils, should be provided with resources, and their implementation should be closely linked to the inclusive goals and indicators set out in the Integrated Development Plan of the municipality.
- Delegation of activities supported by the municipalities' own funds for the inclusion and participation of Roma at the municipal level.
- Establishment of appropriate participatory consultation and coordination mechanisms civic structures and all stakeholders, including representatives of the Roma community.
- Formation of the necessary administrative capacity in the municipal structures administrations by assigning certain functions to directorates, departments, units or individual experts responsible for the implementation of integration policies. Appointment of municipal experts on ethnic and integration issues, where necessary.

The financing of inclusive policies and programs is carried out with funds from the state budget, European funds and other sources.

Financial support for the implementation of the activities set out in the National Action Plan is carried out through:

- Provision, within the funds for the municipalities of the total subsidy for the delegates by the state activities, the development and implementation of municipal programs in line with the priorities of integration policy.
- Financial provision, within the budgets of the line ministries and institutions, incl. with targeted funds, the implementation of integration policy.
- Funding of measures and activities at national and local level to bear information on the state and trends of the situation in the priority areas of this Strategy in the respective territory; this will help plan measures or take action in a crisis or emergency;
- Encourage municipalities to finance the implementation of measures and initiatives through municipal budgets at the expense of own revenues, and in partnership with NGOs; adequate funding for NGOs that provide such activities, as these activities are crucial for creating an environment and conditions for inclusion and participation.

- Financing of thematic projects under Structural Funds Programs and The Cohesion Fund.

- Financing and co-financing of thematic projects under European programs Union, the World Bank, the United Nations, the Council of Europe and others.

- Adequate integration of the needs and problems of the Roma in the new one

the multiannual financial framework for the period 2021-2027 and the respective priorities of the programs with a view to financial support through EU instruments. Financial support through EU instruments has an important complementary role to the policies implemented to reduce poverty and social exclusion. For the next programming period 2021-2027, Bulgaria will receive funds from the European Social Fund + for the Human Resources Development Program 2021-2027 (HRD), the Food and / or Basic Material Assistance Program 2021-2027 (FP) and the Program for Education 2021-2027 (PA), as well as the European Regional Development Fund for the Regional Development Program 2021-2027 (RDP).

In HRD 2021-2027, the integration of the Roma community for the period will be implemented through three approaches:

1. Mainstream approach (horizontal approach - implementation through all measures): The mainstream approach includes the Roma as part of the vulnerable groups that will receive support through the measures of the program at the national level (including socially excluded people living in poverty) and material deprivation, persons belonging to disadvantaged groups on the labor market, persons without education, with low qualification or without such, etc.).
2. Integrated Territorial Investment Approach in Level 2 areas.
3. Community-led local development approach.

The two territorial approaches, ITI and CLLD, will pursue specific objective 8 of the draft ESF Regulation + "Promoting the socio-economic integration of marginalized communities, such as the Roma". Territorial approaches will allow for targeted impact in the communities and thus will complement the measures of the national implementation of the program, which are on a horizontal level (mainstream approach). These two territorial approaches will make it possible to finance measures in places that are most in need in relation to the specific population profile of the territory concerned.

The focus for future ESF + investments has always been on the ECtHR, which has been declared an "EU compass" for employment and social cohesion. It will lay the foundations for even more focused and effective efforts for equal opportunities, access to the labor market, fair working conditions, social protection and inclusion. Investing in people is a top priority, from education and training to health, equality and social inclusion. It is important that the means for implementing these policies reach those who need them most, especially in regions with high social inequalities.

Continuity and resilience over time

The implementation of this Strategy will aim to ensure a lasting positive effect of the implemented policy for equality, inclusion and participation of Roma in all priority areas.

Adherence to the above principles will contribute to the implementation of this strategy and the measures set out in the plans for its implementation.

X. MONITORING

The National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of the Roma (2021-2030) sets quantitative target results for monitoring the achievement of minimal progress towards its 2030 targets in pursuance of the long-term goal of ensuring effective equality and reducing disparities between Roma and the general population.

The evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy is carried out through a System for monitoring, evaluation and control for the implementation of the Strategy (the System). The system takes into account the implementation of Roma inclusion and participation policies at regional and local level, which includes cooperation with Roma civil society and other stakeholders.

The System provides regular, systematic verification, control and monitoring of the progress and quality of the implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan under it, as well as of all other interventions (activities, projects, research, studies, etc.) for inclusion and participation of persons belonging to vulnerable ethnic groups with a focus on the Roma, including those implemented at the local level by municipalities, NGOs, research and analytical institutions, centers, etc. An impact assessment of the implemented interventions shall be provided, identifying problems in the implementation of the measures in order to improve their effectiveness and efficiency.

The System implements:

- data collection through formal and informal methods at local, regional and national level in different areas (sectors) according to a certain methodology;
- allows analysis of the collected information, incl. by different sections / segments, as well as to detect the information in them; to assess the impact;
- allows learning lessons and formulating recommendations and guidelines for improving the implementation of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma (2021-2030) and integration policies.

Monitoring is measured by an indicator model, which includes a list of indicators, definition and methodology (algorithm) of formation, collection, processing and analysis of primary data for the formation of indicators. The Strategy includes a baseline and measurable goals.

Along with the general statistical approaches, data on the implementation of the Strategy are also collected on a territorial basis for settlements and parts of settlements with poverty concentration, illegal construction and other indicators characteristic of this Strategy.

Monitoring the implementation of the Strategy

1. The monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy is carried out through the annual reporting on progress. This is done by preparing an annual Administrative Monitoring Report based on the information from the System.

- The NSEIV Secretariat coordinates the preparation of the report, summarizes information and prepares a draft report.

- The discussion of the report takes place within the Coordination Committee of the implementation of the National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of the Roma 2021-2030.

- The report is submitted for approval to the NCEEIB.

- The report is adopted by the Council of Ministers.

- The report adopted by the Council of Ministers is sent for information to the National Assembly.

2. Attracting young people and Roma women in the form of advisory councils and forms of civil monitoring.

3. Establishment of a Council for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy.

4. Collection, systematization and analysis of information on good practices for monitoring of sectoral policies.

The National Contact Point is the Secretariat of the NCEEIB with address Sofia 1000,

1 Knyaz Alexander Dondukov Blvd., Council of Ministers and e-mail address www.nccedi.government.bg.

Progress in the implementation of the Strategy and the NAP is also reported to the European Union

commission through an electronic reporting platform.

Evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy

The evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy aims to provide information for achieving the objectives and effectiveness of the measures taken. It is implemented at the end of the period of validity of the Strategy.

Principles of monitoring

Transparency - to provide sufficiently reliable information, which, provided that stakeholders have access to it, is a prerequisite for public policies to be understood, monitored and adopted. The transparent management system through monitoring and evaluation has clear procedures

for public decision-making and open channels for communication between stakeholders and public institutions.

Accountability - to provide information on the degree of achievement of the set goals, the efficiency, effectiveness and rationality of the use of public resources and the degree of impact on stakeholders.

Management responsibility - institutions need to constantly try to take into account the interests of all target groups and stakeholders in the implementation of policies.

Monitoring builds capacity to create, implement and implement quality policies with optimal combination of results and resources. Increases interest and intensifies participation - monitoring creates a mechanism for civic participation in the process of formulating and implementing local policy. A well-developed civil society, which is interested in the implemented policy, monitors the achievement of the goals and performs a control function.

CONCLUSION

Achieving equality, inclusion and participation of the Roma requires the cooperation of all directly involved institutions at national, regional and local level in partnership with civil society and the full participation of the Roma in this process.

In order to make real progress by 2030, in which Roma communities in all their diversity have equal opportunities and equal participation in all spheres of life, joint action is required from all participants in the process.

The strategy has a framework character. It sets guidelines for action in the priority areas for the period 2021-2030. They can be supplemented and updated according to the dynamics of development needs and the challenges of the socio-economic situation.

This Strategy is adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria.

XII. ANNEX: Indicators for monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Roma Participation (2021-2030)

<u>number</u>	<u>Indicators</u>	<u>Current value in%</u>	<u>Target value in%</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Note (possibility to collect data on ethnic grounds)</u>
1	Relative share of people at risk of poverty	22.6% (2019) total for the country; 64.8% (2019) identified themselves as Roma	Halve the poverty gap between the Roma and the general population	NSI (<u>National statistical institute</u>), BG-SILC	Yes Indicator with code 00000010 in the Monitoring, Evaluation and Control System
<u>2</u>	Relative share of Roma who have been discriminated against for any reason (in one of the areas included in the study) in the last 12 months	FRA PROJECT TOGETHER WITH BULGARIAN STATISTIC OFFICE	Halve the share of Roma who have been discriminated against	The source is a one-time study (2020), data from which will be available in the autumn of 2021	YES
<u>3</u>	<u>Relative share of children under 18 at risk of poverty</u>	<u>27.5% (2019) total for the country; 74.6% (2019) identified themselves as Roma</u>	<u>Halve the poverty gap between Roma and other children</u>	NSI, BG-SILC	<u>Yes Indicator with code 00000010 in the Monitoring, Evaluation and Control System</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>Relative share of Roma who have been</u>	<u>NSI: Data will be available in the autumn of</u>	Doubling the proportion of Roma who	FRA PROJECT TOGETHER	yes

	<u>discriminated against (in any area) in the last 12 months and have reported this</u>	<u>2021</u>	report when discriminated against	WITH BULGARIAN STATISTIC OFFICE	
<u>5</u>	<u>Proportion of children aged 4 to the age of compulsory primary education attending pre-school education</u>	<u>82.4 (school year 2019/2020)</u>	<u>91.0%</u>	<u>NSI, Survey of Educational Institutions</u>	<u>NO FRA PROJECT TOGETHER WITH BULGARIAN STATISTIC OFFICE</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>Relative share of young people (aged 20-24) with at least secondary education</u>	<u>84.4% for 2019</u>	<u>89.0%</u>	<u>NSI, Labor Force Survey</u>	<u>NO</u>
<u>7</u>	<u>Relative share of children aged 6-14 from households in which at least one member identified himself as Roma attending schools where "all or most of the classmates are Roma"</u>	FRA PROJECT TOGETHER WITH BULGARIAN STATISTIC OFFICE	<u>Less than 1 in five Roma children attend schools where most or all of the children are Roma</u>	FRA PROJECT TOGETHER WITH BULGARIAN STATISTIC OFFICE	<u>yes</u>
<u>8</u>	<u>Employment rate of persons aged 20-64</u>	<u>75.0 % for 2019</u>	<u>Reaching the EU average</u>	<u>NSI, Labor Force Survey</u>	<u>NO</u>
<u>9</u>	<u>Employment rates for men and women aged 20-64</u>	<u>Men 79.3 % for 2019</u> <u>Women 70.7% for 2019</u>	<u>Reaching the EU average</u>	<u>NSI, Labor Force Survey</u>	
<u>10</u>	<u>Relative share of unemployed</u>	<u>16.7% for 2019</u>	<u>Reaching the EU average</u>	<u>NSI, Labor Force Survey</u>	<u>NO</u>

	<u>and uneducated young people aged 15-29</u>				
<u>11</u>	<u>Life expectancy</u>	<u>(2016-2018) Total - 74.8 years Men 71.4 Women 78.4 y.</u>	<u>Reaching the EU average</u>	<u>National statistical institute</u>	<u>NO</u>
<u>12</u>	<u>Relative share of people living in poor housing conditions</u>	<u>8.9% (2019) total for the country; 44.3% (2019) identified themselves as Roma</u>	<u>Reduction by 1/3 of the difference in terms of the share of residents of homes with extremely poor conditions</u>	<u>NSI, BG-SILC</u>	<u>YES</u>
<u>13</u>	<u>Relative share of persons living in overcrowded housing</u>	<u>41.1% (2019) total for the country; 80.1% (2019) identified themselves as Roma</u>	<u>Halve the overcrowding gap</u>	<u>NSI, BG-SILC</u>	<u>Yes Indicator with code 30000009 in the Monitoring, Evaluation and Control System</u>
<u>14</u>	<u>Relative share of persons living in a household without a toilet and bathroom inside the dwelling</u>	<u>7.9% (2019) total for the country; 35.2% (2019) identified themselves as Roma</u>	<u>Halve the difference in the share of self-identified Roma</u>	<u>NSI, BG-SILC</u>	<u>Yes Indicators with code 30000007 and 30000008 in the Monitoring, Evaluation and Control System</u>
<u>15</u>	<u>Human Development Index *</u>	<u>0.812 for 2019</u>	<u>0.840</u>	<u>UN</u>	
<u>16</u>	<u>Relative share of children (0-17 years) living in material deprivation</u>	<u>18.9% (2019) total for the country; 63.2% (2019) identified themselves as Roma</u>	<u>Reaching the EU average</u>	<u>NSI, BG-SILC</u>	<u>Yes Code indicator 00000008 in the Monitoring, Evaluation and Control</u>

					<u>System</u>
<u>17</u>	<u>Relative share of households with internet access</u>	<u>75.1% for 2019</u>	<u>Reaching the EU average</u>	<u>NSI, Survey on the use of ICT in households and by individuals</u>	<u>NO</u>
<u>18</u>	<u>Burden cost burden according to poverty - EU-SILC study</u>	<u>16.0% (2019) total for the country; 24.2% (2019) identified themselves as Roma</u>	<u>Reaching the EU average</u>	<u>Eurostat</u>	<u>YES</u>
<u>19</u>	<u>Unsatisfied needs for medical care in the lowest income quintile</u>	<u>For 2019, relative share of persons aged 16 and over from the first quintile with unmet needs - 6.0%</u>	<u>Reaching the EU average</u>	<u>Eurostat</u>	<u>NO</u>
<u>20</u>	<u>Early school leavers (relative share of persons aged 18-24 who completed most primary education and did not participate in education and training, of the population of the same age.)</u>	<u>13.9% for 2019</u>	<u>7.0%</u>	<u>NSI</u>	<u>NO</u>
<u>21</u>	<u>Net enrollment ratio of the population in the educational system (V-XII grade)</u>	<u>82.3% for 2019</u>	<u>Reaching the EU average</u>	<u>NSI</u>	<u>NO</u>
<u>22</u>	<u>Share of major or above basic</u>	<u>32.0% for 2019</u>	<u>58.0%</u>	<u>Eurostat</u>	<u>NO</u>

	<u>common digital skills of faces of ages 16 to 74 living in household with children under 16 years of age</u>				
<u>23</u>	<u>Share of teachers, prepared for teaching in multicultural conditions,%</u>	25.8% for 2018	35.0%	OECD, TALIS	
<u>24</u>	<u>Relative share of the poor, self-identified as employed by ethnicity (Roma)</u>	<u>27.5% for 2019</u>		<u>NSI, BG-SILC</u>	<u>Yes</u>

* The Human Development Index measures the average performance of a country in the following three main aspects of human development: The assessment given to each country is the weight of life expectancy, education, income level in that country. The index is a standard tool for measuring the level of well-being and especially the well-being of children.

- Life expectancy and healthy lifestyle, which is assessed according to the probable life expectancy at the time of birth; allows to calculate indirectly the satisfaction with essential products, including access to drinking water, housing, good hygiene and medical care and services.

- Knowledge or level of education, which is assessed according to the level of literacy of adults. This is the percentage of the population over the age of 15 who can read and understand a short and easily accessible text about everyday life. The total sum of the ratio of enrolled students in primary and primary, secondary and higher education is also reported. This number expresses satisfaction with intangible benefits such as the opportunity to participate in decision-making in society or in the workplace.