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## NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA (2012 - 2020)

### I. INTRODUCTION

This National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020), hereinafter referred to as “The Strategy”, is a policy framework document, laying down the guidelines for the implementation of the social integration policy of the Roma people. Following the EU framework for national Roma integration strategies, the term Roma is used in this document as an umbrella, which includes both Bulgarian citizens in a vulnerable socio-economic condition who identify themselves as Roma, and citizens in a similar situation, defined by the majority as Roma, regardless of their self-identification.

The National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020) is a strategic document, an expression of the political commitment of the Government to the European development of Bulgaria, in line with the National Reform Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria (2011-2015)<sup>1</sup> and with the National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 initiative. It was drawn up in compliance with the strategic and operational national documents of the institutions responsible for its implementation – Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Home Affairs, Commission for Protection from Discrimination, etc. in implementation of the national policy for raising the quality of life and ensuring equal opportunities for all Bulgarian citizens.

**The Strategy applies an integrated targeted approach to the citizens of Roma background in vulnerable condition, which falls within the framework of a more general strategy for combating poverty and exclusion, and it does not exclude rendering support to disadvantaged persons from other ethnic groups.**

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<sup>1</sup> The National Reform Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria (2011-2015) was developed in implementing the Europe 2020 strategy which was approved by the European Council in June 2010 and in compliance with the new instrument for better coordination of the economic policies in the EU, the so called European semester.

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The Strategy builds on what was achieved in the ten-year period of the Framework Programme for Roma Integration in the Bulgarian society and it includes the fully developed, updated and adopted by the Council of Ministers on 12 May, 2010 strategic document: Framework Programme for Roma Integration in the Bulgarian Society 2010-2020 which was the outcome of broad discussions within the Roma community, the civil sector, the responsible public institutions and the academic community.

The Strategy meets the international standards of human rights and rights of persons belonging to minorities: **International UN instruments**, tackling human rights, to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a signatory: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 (in effect for R. Bulgaria from 1970); International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 (in effect for R. Bulgaria from 1970); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1966 (in effect for R. Bulgaria 1992); The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979 (in effect for R. Bulgaria 1982); Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (in effect for R. Bulgaria 1991), etc.

The Strategy is based on the principles of the EU political **framework for the protection of human rights**, of ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens and prevention of discrimination based on various grounds, including ethnicity, such as: Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, etc.

The Strategy fits into the context of development of **the European policies in the area of Roma integration**, taking account of: the guidelines provided through the Communication from the European Commission (EC) of 5 April, 2011 - EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020; and the Council Conclusions, adopted on 19 May, 2011; The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion, adopted by the Council of EU on 8.06.2009 г.; the recognized necessity to enhance the efforts of the governments aimed at achieving tangible results of the Roma integration activities, the relevant EU political instruments and institutional mechanisms, programmes and initiatives; the outcomes of the actions within the framework of the European platform for Roma inclusion; the EU summit meetings on the Roma issue; the Communication from the EC to the

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European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions – Non-discrimination and Equal Opportunities: a Renewed Commitment, Community Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion {SEC(2008)2172} of July, 2008, Council Conclusions of 8.12.2008 on Roma Inclusion; European Parliament Resolution of 11.03.2009 on the social situation of the Roma and their improved access to the labour market in EU (2008/2137\INI), European Parliament Resolution of 01.06.2006 on the situation of Roma women in the EU; European Parliament Resolution of 28.04.2005 on the situation of Roma in the European Union<sup>2</sup>.

The Strategy is also in line with the Framework Convention of the **Council of Europe** on Protection of National Minorities. It is in compliance with Council recommendation on initiating affirmative actions for the Roma community, which must take place in the conditions of transparency, of public consent and strict observation of the democratic principles in the country.

The National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020) takes into account the existing situation of the Roma community in the country in terms of social economic and demographic conditions. It adopts and integrates into a single strategic document the objectives and measures contained in the strategic documents in the area of Roma integration, such as: Strategy for Educational Integration of the Children from the Ethnic minorities; Health Strategy for Disadvantaged Persons belonging to the Ethnic Minorities, 2005-2015 and National Programme for Improvement of the Housing of Roma in the Republic of Bulgaria in the period 2005-2015 г.

This document is adopted for the period up to 2020 inclusive. The operational implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020) shall be carried out through the Action Plan (AP), to be implemented in two periods. The first period, 2012-2014, will be completed with the completion of the implementation of the National Action Plan for the international initiative Decade of Roma Inclusion, updated in 2011. An overall analysis of the implementation during this period will be performed in connection with its completion (2 February 2015).

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<sup>2</sup> The above documents are available on the Web-site of the National Council for Cooperation on the ethnic and integration issues (NCCEII) [www.government.bg](http://www.government.bg)

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The second period, 2014-2020, shall cover the next European Union programming period for the Operational programmes to be implemented with the financial support and through the instruments of EU. An interim review/updating of the AP is foreseen for 2017 with a view to ensuring efficiency and sustainability of the measures.

The Strategy may be extended, complemented or modified after 2020, depending on the achieved results, the existing political, social and economic realities and new challenges.

## II. CURRENT STATUS OF THE ROMA COMMUNITY

Data from the National Statistical Institute from the population and housing census of 2011 show that the Roma ethnos remains the third largest ethnic group in Bulgaria. **325343 persons**, i.e. **4.9%** of the Bulgarian citizens identified themselves as belonging to the Roma ethnos.

The census shows a persistent tendency part of the people, identified by the general population as Roma or Gipsy to identify themselves as Bulgarians, Turks, Romanians, etc. which is possibly due to the fact that the persons participating in the census have the right to define their ethnic background themselves or to refrain from indicating it.

The persons from the Roma ethnic group are distributed across all regions in the country. Their share of the population is biggest in the region of Montana – 12.7% and Sliven - 11.8%, followed by the region of Dobrich – 8.8%, Yambol – 8.5% against country average of 4.9%. Approximately half (55.4%) of the persons who identified themselves as belonging to the Roma ethnic group reside in the cities.

The age structure of the Roma population shows a distinctly manifested tendency - – the relative share of the age groups decreases with the increase of the age: children in the age group 0 to 9 years constitute one fifth (20.8%) of all persons who identify themselves as Roma, the groups of 10-19 year-old and 20-29 year-old persons show equal relative shares of 18.3% each, 30-39 age group constitutes 15.2%; 40-49 age group – 11.6%; 50-59 age group. - 8,7%; 60-69 age group - 4,9%; 70-79 age group - 1.9%; 80+ age group - 0,4%.

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*Analysis of the conditions of the Roma community by sectors:*

**Housing conditions**

The extent of urbanization varies among the different ethnic groups. Three quarters of persons identifying themselves as Bulgarians reside in the cities (77.5%), against half (55.4%) of those who identify themselves as Roma, and almost two fifths of the ones who identify themselves as Turks (37.6%).

Table 1 presents data about the place of residence of the large ethnic communities.

**Table 1**

Place of residence of the large ethnic communities (%)

Settlement	Bulgarian			Turkish			Roma		
	1992	2001	2011*	1992	2001	2011*	1992	2001	2011*
year	71.6	73.5	77.5	31.6	37.0	37.6	52.3	53.8	55.4
city	28.4	26.5	22.5	68.4	63.0	62.4	47.7	46.2	44.6
village									

Source: NSI 1994, 2004, 2011

The growth of the urban Roma population is slightly slower and less expressed as compared to the one of the population of Bulgarian or Turkish ethnic origin.

The Roma is the only group where the share of children and young persons under 19 years living in the villages is higher than the relative share of the rural Roma population.

A serious problem facing the Roma is the increasing spatial isolation of their community. The concentration of Roma in isolated neighborhoods has increased during the last fifteen years both in the urban and rural areas. This concentration in separate neighbourhoods usually results in the social isolation of their residents, deterioration of their living conditions, problems with the construction and maintenance of the infrastructure and cleanliness, transport problems and difficulties in service provision. One of the most serious consequences is the deterioration of the opportunities for the young generations to be prepared for involvement in the formal economy, hence the increasing difficulties they encounter in seeking and finding jobs.

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Data of NSI from the last population and housing census of 2011 shows that the ethnic Bulgarians have an average of housing space of 23.2 m.sq. per person, while the Roma have only 10.6 m.sq.

A significant part of the Roma residing in the cities, inhabit overpopulated neighbourhoods, frequently outside the regulated outskirts of the city, located at places that do not have water and sewer systems, or even if they have ones – they are in a very poor condition, where the electricity supply is quite often done illegally or is nonexistent at all. The rural areas in the country are in general with either underdeveloped sewer systems or none at all, which fact determines the much worse housing conditions of the majority of Turks, Bulgarian Moslems and almost half of the Roma citizens. Two fifths of the Roma still live in houses without water supply, taking water from outside/street taps and wells, three fifths of the Roma houses are not connected to the central sewer system, and four fifths have no bathrooms inside.

## **Employment**

The Roma people are in a disadvantaged position at the labour market as a result of the structural changes that have taken places in Bulgaria. The changes of the macroeconomic situation in the country have resulted in their exclusion from the labour market and in constantly persisting very high unemployment levels in their community, or employment in only very low-income jobs. They are less competitive in terms of qualification, education, social image of their labour status, and social capital.

NSI data from the population census of 2011 reveals persistently significant differences in the economic activeness of the large ethnic groups in the country. 53.5% of all ethnic Bulgarians above aged above 15 are economically active, compared to 45.4% of the Bulgarian Turks and only 38.8% of the Roma people, in spite of the fact that in this ethnic group with the youngest population the share of students in the age group after 15 years is the smallest one, and so is the share of pensioners.

87.7% of the economically active persons among the Bulgarians are employed. Among the citizens of Turkish origin the employed are 74.3% of the economically

active persons. Among the Roma population only 50.2% of the economically active persons are employed, that is 19.35% of all Roma aged 15 and more.

There are big social inequalities in the group of economically inactive persons. In the relatively smallest group of economically inactive persons – the one of ethnic Bulgarians – the pensioners constitute 68.1%, the students – 14.7%, housewives – 9.8% and 7.3% of this group were defined as “Others”.

Among the Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin economically inactive are more than half of the persons above 15 years of age. Pensioners constitute 46.4% of them, students 12.6%, housewives 23.1% and others – 17.9%.

Among the Roma population economically inactive are three fifths of the persons above 15 years - 61.2%. The group of pensioners (the only ones who generate own income) is the smallest one – just about 23.5% (14.4% of all Roma citizens at the age of 15 and more). The main reason lies in the age structure of the community, but also in the fact that many elderly Roma citizens who have been durably unemployed or have been employed in the informal sector have no pension insurance and do not meet the requirement for a definite number of years of service for pension. The share of students is extremely small – 7.3% of the economically inactive population, i.e. 4.4% of all Roma citizens above the age of 15. This low share of young people continuing their education after the age of 15 will determine the lower educational and qualification status of the Roma community in the long run, hence – the greater share of persons unemployed and dropping out of the labour market in the decades to come. Housewives constitute a huge share – 36.5% of the economically inactive Roma population, i.e. 22.4% of all Roma above 15 years of age.

The number of people durably falling off the labour market is the strongest indicator of the social-economic exclusion in Bulgaria after 1989.

## Education

Education/ years	Bulgarians		Turks			Roma			
	2001	%	2011	2001	%	2011	2001	%	2011
Higher	19.2		25.6	2.4		4.9	0.2		0.5
Secondary	47.6		52.3	21.9		29.7	6.5		9.0
Basic	24.9		18.0	46.9		44.5	41.8		40.8
Primary	6.9		3.4	18.6		13.4	28.3		27.9

Uncompleted primary and illiterate/ non-attendance	1.4	0.9	10.2	7.5	23.2	21.8
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*Source:* NSI

Observations show that the improvement of the educational status of the Roma community has slowed down during the last 20 years. Another specificity of the group is that functional illiteracy is three times more frequent among Roma women than men. Women are the ones bringing up the children and their illiteracy or low educational level are of crucial importance for the educational aspirations and school success of the children.

The educational level of the three groups – Bulgarians, Turks and Roma - is being raised, but this change is notably weakest with the Roma community.

Part of the Roma children do not speak the official Bulgarian language well enough when enrolled in school, neither have they acquired the basic knowledge and skills needed to cope with the learning process. The socialization models in many Roma groups, particularly in neighbourhoods with predominantly Roma population, create additional difficulties for the adaptation of the Roma children in school if they have not attended pre-school classes.

The patriarchal norms of excessive control of the behaviour of the girls and women in some Roma subgroups also make them early school leavers.

In spite of all difficulties encountered, the period 2001 – 2011 saw an increase of the number of young Roma citizens graduating from the higher educational institutes in the country, specializing or obtaining higher degree abroad. The successes in this respect are even higher than the ones recorded by NSI during the census, because many young people do not identify themselves as Roma after completing higher education.

Data from the census of 2011 shows that in spite of the increase of the share of Roma young people with higher education, the tendency of a great number of young Roma citizens remaining without appropriate education, dropping out of school at an early stage, or not enrolling in school at all still remains. The situation varies across the different Roma subgroups, settlements and regions.

## **Healthcare**

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The risk factors create conditions and increase the morbidity rate. With the citizens belonging to the large minority communities in Bulgaria we observe the influence of the primary (mass scale and grave impoverishment, high unemployment rate, worse income and consumption structure, bad environment and housing conditions, lifestyles and genetic diseases) and the secondary risk factors (certain chronic diseases, creating conditions for complications or other diseases).

The most frequently reported symptoms, chronic diseases and maladies of adult Roma citizens, diagnosed by the physicians, are: high blood pressure, migraine and headache, arthritis and rheumatism, asthma and chronic bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cardiovascular diseases, problems related to the menopause, allergies, high cholesterol content, stomach ulcer, prostate problems. The health status of 10% of children under 9 years of age is bad as well. The survey shows that 12.6% of the entire Roma population in the country, including children, has some kind of disabilities or suffer from a heavy chronic disease. What is specific for the Roma people is the very early onset of disability and the widespread chronic diseases on a mass scale as early as the middle age. One third of the male Roma population and two fifths of the female population in the age bracket 45-60 have already lost partially or in full their work capacity due to poor health status.

Because of the lacking or poor infrastructure in their settlements and neighbourhoods, the members of the minority communities suffer from hepatitis, gastrointestinal diseases, other diseases caused by parasites. These problems are identified most frequently with the Roma population.

Infectious diseases are also a very acute problem in the Roma neighbourhoods in Bulgaria. The overpopulation of neighbourhoods and houses does not allow the virus carriers to be properly isolated and diseases often result into an outbreak of epidemics.

A serious problem is also the lack of health insurance among the Roma population.

### **III. VISION**

Social integration is a prerequisite for the successful and sustainable development of the Bulgarian society.

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**The integration of the Roma and of the Bulgarian citizens in a vulnerable situation, belonging to other ethnic groups, is a pro-active two-way process, aimed at overcoming the existing negative social economic characteristics of these groups and building prosperity of the society.**

#### **IV. STRATEGIC GOAL**

**Creating conditions for equitable integration of the Roma and the Bulgarian citizens in a vulnerable situation, belonging to other ethnic groups, in the social and economic life by ensuring equal opportunities and equal access to rights, goods and services, by involving them in all public spheres and improving their quality of life, while observing the principles of equality and non-discrimination.**

#### **V. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND HORIZONTAL ASPECTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION**

##### **Principles:**

The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion, adopted by the Council of EU on 8.06.2009 shall guide the implementation of the Strategy:

1. Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies
2. Explicit but not exclusive targeting
3. Inter-cultural approach
4. Aiming for the mainstream
5. Awareness of the gender dimension
6. Transfer of evidence-based policies
7. Use of European Union instruments
8. Involvement of regional and local authorities
9. Involvement of civil society
10. Active participation of the Roma

These principles shall underlie the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Roma integration policies. They call for pursuing constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies, applying affirmative measures and intercultural approach, preventing the exclusive targeting, so that citizens in

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vulnerable situation from other ethnic groups may benefit as well. They take into account the needs and status of Roma women. The principles refer to key success factors, such as the transfer of evidence-based policies, the use of the EU instruments (legislative, financial and coordination), to the involvement of regional and local authorities, of civil society and the active participation of the Roma.

### **Horizontal aspects:**

The policies of integration of Roma and of disadvantaged persons from other ethnic groups are an inseparable part of the national policies aimed at raising the well-being of the Bulgarian people.

The Strategy integrates the existing strategic documents and plans for the development of the different sectors with a view to achieving better interaction and complementing the planned activities. By ensuring integrated management of the sectoral policies we shall raise the effect of their implementation. The activities under the individual priorities will be carried out by using the following approaches, which complement each other:

- Mainstreaming the rights, obligations, needs and problems of the Roma citizens into the general government and sectoral policies. Guaranteeing effective equal access to the basic social spheres.
- Encouraging affirmative actions for overcoming the various forms of inequality in all public sectors. Promoting affirmative public attitudes to the Roma community.
- Promoting affirmative actions aimed at overcoming the traditional practices of the Roma community that violate the rights of women and children.
- Applying an integrated territorial approach, allowing the simultaneous undertaking of measures across the territory of the country and unifying the resources under different priorities, taking account of the specific local needs, particularly the needs of the most disadvantaged people, in order to bring about visible changes in the individual settlements/neighbourhoods.

<p><b>1. PRIORITIES :</b> <b>EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, HOUSING CONDITIONS,</b> <b>EMPLOYMENT, RULE OF LAW AND NON-DISCRIMINATION,</b> <b>CULTURE AND MEDIA.</b></p>
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## 1. EDUCATION

***Operational Objective: Enrolling and retaining in the educational system all Roma children and students, ensuring for them high quality education in a multicultural environment***

Tasks:

1. Ensuring the right to equal access to quality education, including by integrating Roma children and students in ethnically mixed kindergartens and schools.
2. Raising the quality of education in kindergartens and schools located in large Roma neighbourhoods and rural areas, where predominantly Roma children are enrolled.
3. Education in kindergartens and schools in the spirit of tolerance and non-discrimination by preserving and developing the cultural identity of Roma children.
4. Prevention of early school leaving and teaching the illiterate and barely literate adult Roma citizens.
5. Applying various forms and programmes for work with children with learning difficulties and deficiencies and with drop-outs, with the purpose of reintegrating them.
6. Making Roma parents a party to the educational process and promoting their involvement in school life.
7. Improving the conditions in order to offer quality education by raising the qualification of the pedagogical specialists to work in a multiethnic educational environment, developing the intercultural competences of the school principals, teachers and other pedagogical specialists.
8. Introducing the practice of work with educational mediators in the system of the preparatory class and secondary education.

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The measures for attainment of the objectives are set out in the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Science is the leading institution responsible for the achievement of the objectives of the Strategy, defined under priority Education.

The implementation of the measures under priority Education will contribute to the implementation of National objective 4: The relative share of early leavers of the educational system to drop to 11% by 2020 and the relative share of persons in the age group 30-34 with higher education to rise to 36% by 2020, and will also contribute indirectly to the achievement of National objective 5: Reducing the number of those living in poverty by 260 persons. The National objectives are set in the National Reform Programme for implementation of Europe 2020 Strategy.

## 2. HEALTHCARE

*Operational objective: Ensuring equal access to quality healthcare services and preventive programmes*

Tasks:

1. Preventive care for mothers and children.
2. Ensuring equal access to healthcare services for disadvantaged persons belonging to ethnic minorities.
3. Increasing the number of Roma specialists working in the healthcare system. Developing health mediation and various forms of work for and within the community (social health centres, etc.).
4. Raising the health awareness and ensuring access to healthcare information.
5. Increasing the number of health insured persons of the ethnic minorities in disadvantaged position, by launching legislative initiatives relating to health insurance of low income people, including the ones durably unemployed.

The measures for achieving these objectives are laid down in The Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy.

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The Ministry of Health shall be the institution responsible for the achievement of the objectives of the Strategy under priority Healthcare.

### 3. HOUSING CONDITIONS

*Operational objective: Improving the housing conditions and of the technical infrastructure*

Tasks:

1. Improving the housing conditions in neighbourhoods with compact Roma population, aimed at ensuring modern housing environment.
2. Providing new plots for house construction allowing to deconcentrate the compact Roma neighbourhoods.
3. Continuing the process of devising cadastre registers to cover the zones with compact Roma population and the newly designated zones for housing construction.
4. Updating/creating detailed spatial development plans of existing and newly designated land plots.
5. Designing and building technical infrastructure – water and sewer networks, streets, public works, etc.
6. Building and providing social housing.
7. Ensuring appropriate housing for Roma persons moved out of illegally occupied houses or evacuated in case of danger for their safety and health.
8. Improving and closing the lapsuses in the housing legislation.
9. Building/reconstructing the social infrastructure for the purposes of education, culture, etc.
10. Forming an attitude of responsibility and diligence in the Roma people when giving them the right to use real estate. Attracting NGOs and prominent local community leaders in creating modern patterns of behaviour.

The measures for achievement of the objectives are laid down in the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy.

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The Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works shall be the leading institution responsible for the implementation of the objectives of the Strategy under priority Improving the Housing Conditions.

#### 4. EMPLOYMENT

*Operational objective: Improving the access of Roma to the labour market and raising Roma employment rate*

Tasks:

1. Ensuring Roma access to the labour market and to various self-employment instruments and initiatives. Qualification and prequalification of unemployed Roma, as well as of employed Roma to meet the demand for specific professions at the labour market.
2. Promoting employment by educating unemployed persons in key competences.
3. Promoting entrepreneurship, own business starting and managing.
4. Applying concrete mechanisms ensuring sustainable employment of Roma in working age together with representatives of the employers, trade unions, local governments and Roma organizations.
5. Encouraging the social and civil dialogue to assist Roma work performance.
6. Introducing legal and economic mechanisms as incentives for employers to hire persons of Roma origin, including through the mechanisms of corporate social responsibility, subsidized employment, etc.
7. Activating persons experiencing durable unemployment and economically inactive persons by promoting work mediation.
8. Encouraging green employment by subsidizing the creation of jobs in environmental activities with a view to creating quality employment and environment protection.

The measures for achievement of the objectives are laid down in the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy.

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The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy shall be the leading institution responsible for implementation of the objectives of the Strategy under priority Employment.

The implementation of the measures under priority Employment will contribute to achieving National objective 1: Achieving 76% employment rate among the population aged 20-64 by 2020. Together with the implementation of the complementing measures under priority Education, aimed at raising the skills level of the labour force and the competences and qualifications of workers with low qualification, this will contribute to alleviating the poverty of the employed and their families and to attaining National objective 5: Reducing the number of those living in poverty by 260 persons.

## **5. RULE OF LAW AND NON-DISCRIMINATION**

*Operational objective: Guaranteeing citizen rights, with an emphasis on the rights of women and children, protecting public order, prevention and combating any manifestations of intolerance and hate speech.*

Tasks:

1. Enhancing the guarantees for efficient protection of the rights of the Bulgarian citizens in vulnerable social conditions, belonging to different ethnic groups.
2. Efficient implementation of Roma integration policies with a view to ensuring equality, decent life and full participation in public life.
3. Overcoming cultural barriers in the communication, as well as any forms of discrimination attitudes.
4. Establishing tolerant inter-ethnic relations through all possible forms, including sports activities.
5. Creating the mindset of recognition of the equality of the Roma women. Encouraging their full individual, social and economic participation in social life.
6. Undertaking targeted measures and offering innovative integrated services to raise the parental capacity in support of the vulnerable families, to improve the parental care and defend the rights of children.

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7. Increasing institutional and public sensitivity and intolerance to discrimination and hate speech. Adopting priority measures for prevention of ethnically motivated radicalization, particularly among the young people.
  8. Enhancing the capacity of the law enforcement bodies to combat crime and discrimination, violence and hate speech, based on ethnicity.
  9. Increasing the efforts in combating trafficking in human beings by effectively applying the principles underlying the documents of the UN, the Council of Europe and EU, and using the instruments available in the European Union.
  10. Raising the legal culture relating to the acquiring, using and keeping of the Bulgarian personal ID documents.

The measures for achievement of the objectives are laid down in the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy.

The responsibility for implementation of the measures under priority Rule of Law and Non-Discrimination shall rest with all state institutions, agencies, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, advisory structures, etc. in accordance with their competences.

## 6. CULTURE AND MEDIA

***Operational objective: Creating conditions for equal Roma access to the cultural life and preserving and developing the traditional Roma culture and creativity***

### **Tasks:**

1. Preserving and promoting Roma traditional culture;
2. Developing Roma amateur arts as a prerequisite for their professional development and realization;
3. Encouraging Roma community to participate actively in the cultural life of the society.

The measures for achievement of the objectives are laid down in the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy.

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The Ministry of Culture shall be the leading institution responsible for achievement of the objectives of the Strategy under priority Culture.

## **MEDIA**

*Operational objective: Creating conditions for equitable presentation of the Roma community, for changing its negative image and combating hate speech in the printed and electronic media.*

### **Tasks:**

1. Presentation in the printed and electronic media of the Roma community – problems, traditions, culture and current achievements in all walks of social life;
2. Encouraging, motivating and offering incentives for journalists of Roma origin to work at the mass media;
3. Combating hate speech in the printed and electronic media.

NCCEII shall be the leading institution responsible for the achievement of the objectives of the Strategy under priority Media, in cooperation with the Committee of Culture, Civil Society and Media at the National Assembly, The Council for Electronic Media, the commission for Protection from Discrimination, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Bulgaria and the public media – Bulgarian National Television, Bulgarian National Radio and Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, the National Council of Journalist Ethics (Commission of Ethics in the Printed Media and Commission of Ethics in the Electronic media).

The measures for achievement of the objectives are laid down in the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy.

## **VII. MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTEGRATION POLICY**

The National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020) is an element of the overall Government strategy aimed at making real changes in the life of all Bulgarian citizens. The Government is pursuing a policy of

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promoting investment in human development and citizen active participation in overcoming the existing challenges.

The organization of the implementation of the policy of equitable Roma integration is based on the efficient and targeted use of available resources at the national, regional and local level, as well as the EU level, ensuing from Bulgaria's membership in EU and its access to the Structural and Cohesion Funds.

The National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020) shall be implemented at the operational level through the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy, (till 2014 this is the updated National Action Plan under the international initiative Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005- 2015). The Action Plan is an open document which can flexibly reflect any changes needed, while observing the relevant budget procedures.

The coordination and control of the implementation of the Strategy and of the AP shall be exercised by the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues (NCCEII). The Secretariat shall render information, analytic, administrative and technical support to the activity of NCCEII.

**In terms of operational activities all measures for the implementation of the Strategy and AP, including the measures for provision of resources, shall be coordinated, consulted and endorsed by the Deputy Prime-Minister, Chairperson of NCCEII and National Coordinator of the International initiative Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015.**

**1. Optimizing the model of allocation of management responsibilities among the executive bodies:**

- NCCEII shall be the managing and coordinating institution, represented by its Chairperson and assisted by the Secretariat to him/her. The managing institution shall be responsible for improving the inter-institutional coordination mechanism applied in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the integration policy, including the measures under the respective priorities of the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy.
- The necessary administrative capacity shall be built and maintained in the key institutions and secondary budget execution units by assigning specific functions to directorates, departments, units or individual experts in charge

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of the implementation of the integration policy, or by forming specialized units for the purpose. The key line ministries and authorities shall be responsible for updating of the operational Roma integration documents in their respective areas, for the implementation of the planned measures, the monitoring, evaluation and reporting before NCCEII.

- The necessary administrative capacity of the key institutions and secondary budget execution units shall be built and maintained by assigning to them specific functions and responsibilities.
- The necessary administrative capacity of the regional administrations shall be built by assigning specific functions to directorates, departments, units or individual experts in charge of the implementation of the Government Roma integration policy. At least one employee shall be appointed at each regional administration, with the basic duties to work on the integration policy.

**2. The mechanisms of coordination with the civil society structures** shall be improved through the functioning of:

- The National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues to the Council of Ministers.
- Roma Integration Commission within the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues (HCCEIB).
- The creation of advisory structures and mechanisms with the participation of the civil society to be set up at the line ministries, regional governors and local governments shall be encouraged.
- Cooperation with legitimate religious organizations.

**3. Inclusion of the local governments** in the implementation of the Roma integration policies by:

- Undertaking the development jointly with representatives of the local Roma communities and adoption by the municipal councils of specific annual action plans for implementation of the priorities of the National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020). These plans should be properly resourced.
- Delegation of activities for Roma integration at the municipal level, supported with municipal own funds.

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- Setting up of appropriate advisory and coordination mechanisms with the participation of civil structures.
  - Building the necessary administrative capacity of the structures of the municipal administration by assigning specific functions to directorates, departments, units or individual experts in charge of the implementation of the Roma integration policies. Appointment of municipal experts on the ethnic and integration issues where needed.

**4. Ensuring financial resources** for the integration policies and programmes, to be allocated from the national budget, the European funds and other sources.

The financing of the implementation of the activities included in the National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion initiative 2005-2015 and the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy shall be ensured by:

- Providing financial resources through the budgets of the line ministries and institutions, including funds earmarked for the implementation of the integration policies,
- Providing financial resources as a portion of the general subsidy granted to the municipalities to finance activities delegated by the central government, for the purpose of which municipal programmes shall be developed and implemented with a view to achieving the priorities of the Roma integration policy.
- Providing incentives to the municipalities to finance the implementation of measures and initiatives from the municipal budgets, with their own revenues, and in partnership with NGOs.
- Financing projects related to the issue of Roma integration under the Operational Programmes funded from the Structural and Cohesion Funds.
- Financing and co-financing projects related to the issue of Roma integration under programmes funded by EU, the World Bank, UN, the Council of Europe, etc.
- Adequate incorporation of Roma needs and issues in the Partnership Agreement on Investment and Development in accordance with the Multiyear Financial framework for the period 2014-2020 and the relevant priorities of the Operational Programmes with a view to ensuring funding under EU instruments.

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**5. General Communication Plan** in support of the implementation of the integration policies.

Keeping the society informed about the implementation of the integration policies by implementing the Communication Plan. This will be done by NCCEII, the line ministries and agencies and civil organizations.

## VIII. MONITORING THE DELIVERY

The evaluation of the delivery of the National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020) shall be done by monitoring the implementation of the National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion initiative 2005-2015 till 2014 and the AP for implementation of the Strategy till 2020. The progress shall be reported in an administrative report, which does not exclude the applying of other forms of monitoring and evaluation as well.

The monitoring objective shall be: on the basis of systematically collected and analysed information to assess the achievement of measurable results of the activities for implementation of the measures under the programme document, while actively involving the stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation process:

1. The progress made in the implementation of the foreseen priority activities shall be presented in an administrative monitoring report.
2. The secretariat of NCCEII shall coordinate and summarize the received information in the report.
3. The report shall be discussed by the Commission for Roma integration and by the ministries and agencies involved in the implementation of the AP.
4. The report shall be submitted to NCCEII for approval.
5. The report shall be adopted by the Council of Ministers.

The secretariat of NCCEII shall be the national contact point.

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## IX. CONCLUSION

Of crucial importance for the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020) will be the cooperation of all institutions directly involved at the national, regional and local level with the representatives of the NGOs and Roma community.

The active Roma involvement in the implementation will be a key success factor. Participating not only in the development and implementation of the Roma integration strategy, but in all other policies, they will contribute to the development of the society. Roma involvement at every stage of policy making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation will improve the process by really combining the interests of the community and the expertise of the specialists working on Roma issues. This calls for involving representatives of the Roma community in the administration in order to guarantee Roma participation in the implementation of all priority areas of this Strategy.

The draft of this Strategy is to be adopted by the Council of Ministers, which shall submit it to the National Assembly as a strategic document of the Government for development of the country.