SUMMARY PROJECT FICHE

Project Number: BG 9907
Title: Promoting the integration of the Roma
Sub-programme: Integration of the Roma
Geographical Location: Bulgaria

Objectives:

The overall objective is to facilitate the process of social and economic integration of the Roma into the Bulgarian society on the basis of respect for their ethnic and cultural identity.

The immediate objectives are to:

- increase the educational level of the Roma population as a key factor for social and economic integration;
- improve living conditions and urban environment in the most disadvantaged Roma quarters;
- improve public services to the Roma population through increased Roma involvement in the public administration and improved human rights and cultural awareness of relevant institutions.

Besides the priorities identified in the Accession Partnership, these objectives fully reflect the short and medium term objectives and tasks stated in the National Strategy for the Accession of the Republic of Bulgaria into the European Union, the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis and the Government's programme for the Integration of Roma in Society. The project objectives also relate directly to the UN Convention for the Abolishment of all Forms of Discrimination.

Background:

The Roma minority is traditionally the most marginalised group in Bulgarian society. The economic crisis Bulgaria has been undergoing has had heavy repercussions in the living standard of the vast majority of the population. However, most affected are some of minority groups and, particularly, the Roma community. According to data from 1992 census, the total number of the Bulgarian Roma community is 313,396, but unofficial data show number almost twice higher - around 557,000. The Roma population faces a number of characteristics related with structural poverty in terms of increasing isolation and fight for bare survival. The rate of unemployment has rapidly increased, reaching 70-90% in some locations. There is growing illiteracy, increasing number of school dropouts, malnutrition of children, deteriorating health conditions, increasing crime rate, serious housing and infrastructure problems.

The Government programme adopted in April 1999 (see annex 5-2) and supported by all major Roma communities and NGOs, seeks to establish a comprehensive and sustainable strategy to meet the current social-economic problems of the Roma community - problems, which are structural and have been accumulated in the course of many years, to create effective models for overcoming social, economic and cultural exclusion. In the framework of the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCEDI), a working group dealing with the issues of the Roma community in Bulgaria.
has been established. It consists of representatives of different Roma civic organisations and government experts.

The EU and the other donors are contributing to resolving the problems of social integration of Roma people through a number of other programs (CSDP, Democracy etc).

**Description**

**A. Access to education**

**Background:** Education is one of the critical issues relating to the integration of the Roma population. Most of the children face difficulties in coping with the school system due to the language and cultural barriers. The number of school dropouts is rapidly increasing. Few graduate secondary school, and almost none have chances to continue in the Universities or High schools. Low education and illiteracy is already a problem of all generations in the Roma community which deepens its further marginalisation and isolation in society. Relevant institutions at the national and local level have limited capacities to address the problems. There is an urgent need of designing adequate strategies based on new approaches of teaching in a multicultural environment.

**Activities:**

- Increased capacities of Roma children to cope with the school system in the primary school

Preparatory classes in Bulgarian language will be organised for at least 1000 children in four districts of the country. Teachers will pass specialised training in bilingual education. Teacher assistants from the Roma community will be introduced to facilitate communications among children and teachers during preparatory classes and the first grades. Teacher assistants will be selected from young Roma, secondary school graduates, who will pass through relevant training. Training courses will be organised by the Ministry of education involving relevant University departments, as well as NGOs which already piloted this approach in different schools in the country. Based on emerging practices new training materials and textbooks will be drafted to be introduced in the school system.

- Increased skills of teachers to work in a multicultural environment.

Inter-cultural training program will be developed by a Taskforce at the Ministry of education with active participation of NGOs and University departments with relevant experience. Training will be carried out in the four pilot districts. Based on emerging practices new training and methodology hand books will be developed and introduced in the school system. In addition a supplement on Roma culture and history to the textbook in history will be adopted, based on already existing pilot publications developed by NGO PHARE projects.

- Reduced school drop outs with 30 % through community involvement

Based on the experience of the Ministry of Education in re-establishing the School Board of Trustees as traditional for Bulgaria community structures involving parents, community leaders and local NGO in the decision making and education problem solving a special program for stimulating their formation and effective work in Roma
communities will be developed. Special attention will be paid to build capacities of these School boards to carry out community awareness initiatives on the importance of education for further development of children, regular monitoring of school attendance process, organising extracurricular activities, community events and regular meetings with the relevant local educational institutions. Best practices will be publicised by the national and local media.

- Stimulate Roma secondary school graduates to continue their education in Universities and High schools.

Preparatory courses for young Roma individuals who graduated secondary school will be organised with relevant Universities and High schools. Eligibility for participation will be based on criteria developed by the expert group on Roma education at the Ministry of Education with the active involvement of the school authorities, representatives of the School Board of Trustees and active NGOs. Courses will provide for overcoming gaps in knowledge due to the low quality of education in schools in Roma areas, thus providing for equal opportunities for competition of Roma for the University entering exams.

B. Urban development of Roma areas.

Background: Roma communities in Bulgaria are settled for over 50 years and live clustered in densely populated areas (mahali) at the outskirts of almost all towns, cities, and many villages. Most of the housing there is illegal and large areas remain unregulated. Sewerage system is missing or broken. Renovation is often impossible due to unregulated housing. As a result sanitation conditions are rapidly deteriorating with increasing threat for the health situation in the areas. Due to lack of income, families cannot pay for utilities and consume water/ electricity illegally. Illegal electricity consuming leads to overloading of the systems and black outs of whole quarters where people live for weeks with no heat. Municipalities have no resources to develop strategies and projects for solution of current urban situation.

Activities:

To meet these objectives an Urban development fund will be created. It will be managed by the NCEDI in partnership with Roma and other NGOs with experience in urban matters and sustainable development.

The fund will give priority to projects carried out in partnership of municipalities and local NGOs in the area of urban regulations, improving infrastructure through community work schemes, clean-up campaigns, innovative suggestions and plans for urban sustainable development. Projects will be subject to an open call for proposals and selected subject to pre-defined criteria by the designated evaluation committee. Emerging practices will be assessed and disseminated through active partnership with other agencies active in sustainable development like the UNDP, or local NGOs like the Foundation for Local Government reform and the National and regional Associations of Municipalities.

C. Training for Roma representatives to work in public administration and police structures.

Background: Generally Roma minority is the most underrepresented group in Bulgarian society both at the national and municipal level. A very limited number of Roma
Community representatives work in the different sector departments of public administration both at the national and local level. Adopting the national program for social integration Bulgarian Government announced its political will to provide access of Roma representatives to work in the different structures of public administration. Main obstacle in this direction is limited number of people from the Roma community eligible to meet the educational and qualification public administration requirements.

Activities:

• Increased number of Roma professionals eligible to work in public administration and police structures.

A long term strategy for building Roma public administration professionals will be developed in the framework of the National Council with priority in the areas of social work, health care, urban and economic development, education, and police. All relevant Ministries have expressed commitment to work in this direction. To develop this commitment into concrete actions a work program will be drawn-up with a view to:

- optimise exiting resources by identifying Roma who have some specialised education in the relevant area and enrolling them in re-qualification programs and public administration training.
- promote new professionals by identifying young Roma with potential and readiness to continue their education. Stimulating them through University preparatory courses (see access to education component). Those, who succeeded with the University exams will be provided with opportunity to practice in public administration, working as community outreach assistants in the relevant departments.

• Increased human rights and culture awareness of public administration working with Roma constituency

The NCEDI together with Roma and other NGOs active in human rights and intercultural programs will develop an awareness building program, including handouts on basic issues, seminars and workshops with representatives of public administration at the national and local levels. Partners in carrying out the awareness this direction will be the Ministry of Public Administration, as well as NGOs like the Foundation for Local government Reform, the National Association of Municipalities and the regional Associations of Municipalities.

Institutional framework

The National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCEDI) is a new agency established in 1998 by a decree of the Council of Ministers (see annex 4). The NCEDI is composed of representatives of all government ministries and agencies and associative members from NGOs of ethnic and religious minorities. It is located with the Council of Ministers and disposes of premises, core staff (7 people) and equipment
support necessary to ensure the implementation of the project. The NCEDI will be assisted in its work a public council (to be established), established NGOs and relevant central and local government agencies.

The NCEDI plays a focal role in co-ordinating government policies, programs and funds concerning minorities. At the initiative of the NCEDI the Government adopted in April 1999 a Framework Programme which will further develop and enhance the public administration capacities for inclusive and participatory policies for the integration of the different minority groups and the Roma in particular (see annex 5-2). The NCEDI has developed an effective interaction and co-operation with relevant government ministries and agencies and the network of NGOs active in this field.

The ministries concerned will provide information and expertise in their respective areas needed for the implementation of the project. A number of NGOs have developed capacities in provision of social, educational and other services, which will be utilised on contractual basis for the specific project component as appropriate.

**Budget** (in MEURO):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Investment</th>
<th>Total Phare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to education</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fund for urban development of Roma areas</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for Roma representatives to work in public administration</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>500,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>500,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Implementation arrangements**

The implementing authority will be the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCEDI). Its full and associated members will serve as a Steering Committee providing strategic guidance and overseeing project implementation. The Central Finance and Contracts Unit (CFCU) will be responsible for tendering, contracting, payments and financial reporting. The Secretary of the NCEDI will serve as project officer. The NCEDI will be assisted by the Roma working group. An Evaluation Committee will be established under the Steering Committee in order to select projects for funding under the Fund for urban development. The Steering Committee shall draw up the criteria and procedures for the operation of the Fund and assure appropriate transparency.

**Implementation schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start of tendering</th>
<th>Start of project activity</th>
<th>Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4Q 1999</td>
<td>1Q 2000</td>
<td>2Q 2001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conditionality**
The Government shall take active steps to implement the Framework Programme for equal integration of Roma in Bulgarian society, adopted on 7 April 1999 in order to enhance the conditions for the integration of Roma communities. The Government shall improve the legal framework to ensure equal access to Roma and other minorities to serve in the public administration at local and national levels. Coordination of donor activities shall be ensured by the NCEDI. The Government shall assure adequate staffing and budget for the NCEDI to perform its role and functions effectively in particular as concerns its capacity to implement the Phare project.

In the selection of the activities and measures to be funded under the urban development component appropriate measures shall be taken to avoid possible conflict of interest.
Annexes

1. Log-frame in standard format
2. Detailed implementation time chart
3. Cumulative contracting and disbursement schedule
4. Relation of project with previous Phare activities
5. List of relevant Laws and Regulations
6. Reference to relevant Government Strategic plans and studies
**LOGFRAME PLANNING MATRIX FOR Promoting the Integration of the Roma**

**Contracting period expires:** 31/12/01  
**Disbursement period expires:** 31/12/02  
**Total Budget:** 500,000 Euro  
**Phare contribution:** 500,000 Euro

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wider Objective</th>
<th>Indicators of Achievement</th>
<th>How, When and By Whom Indicators Will Be Measured</th>
<th>Assumptions and Risks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Facilitate the process of social and economic integration of the Roma into the Bulgarian society | • Improved socio-economic conditions for Roma population | • European Commission review reports  
Assessments by NCEDI, independent NGOs and international organisations | • Continued Government commitment in terms of policy and financial contribution to institutional framework and pro-active measures |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate Objectives</th>
<th>Indicators of Achievement*</th>
<th>How, When and By Whom Indicators Will Be Measured</th>
<th>Assumptions and Risks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Roma integration into the Public administration system and police;  
• Improve Roma quarters living conditions;  
• Improve access to education | • Roma integration in the public administration system, adopted policies and people employed  
• Improved physical environment of Roma quarters - number & quality of improvements;  
• Better access to education of Roma children, Roma teachers employed, teaching aides developed and approved by MES | • independent reviews;  
• NCEDI regular reports;  
• sub-contractors reports;  
• Government and NGO reports  
• independent NGO reviews and reports | • Central and local governments commitment  
• Additional support attracted by NCEDI from NGOs, government sources and public and private donors;  
• Co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Indicators of Achievement*</th>
<th>How, When and By Whom Indicators Will Be Measured</th>
<th>Assumptions and Risks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • 5 Roma neighbourhoods improved  
• 50 Roma teachers trained and employed  
• 50 Roma policemen trained and employed | • number of improved Roma neighbourhoods and quality of improvements  
• courses held and Roma teachers trained and employed | • evaluation reports;  
• regular reports by NCEDI  
• reports from the Ministry of Education and Science, school attendance statistics  
• reports of the Ministry of Interior | • timely contracting of SISS activities to NGOs and companies  
• effective involvement of press & electronic media |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Inputs</strong></th>
<th><strong>Outputs</strong></th>
<th><strong>Evaluation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EC Phare Funds, 0.5 MEuro NCEDI programme staff and facilities</td>
<td>Funds fully disbursed by end of disbursement period</td>
<td>European Commission DG1A Monitoring and Evaluation reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching aids developed</td>
<td>teaching aides developed</td>
<td>reports from sub-contracted NGOs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2

TIME IMPLEMENTATION CHART FOR PROJECT ON PROMOTING THE INTEGRATION OF THE ROMA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SISS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Access to Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fund for Urban Development of Roma Areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Increase Roma involvement in public administration</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Annex 3

Cumulative Quarterly Commitment Schedule: Promoting the integration of the Roma

**Budget:** (in MEUR)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Access to Education</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fund for urban development</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>0.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Increase Roma involvement in public administration</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.380</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.500</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Cumulative Quarterly Disbursement Schedule

**Budget:** (in MEUR)

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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Access to Education</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fund for urban development</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>0.280</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>0.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Increase Roma involvement in public administration</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>0.290</td>
<td>0.410</td>
<td>0.480</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.500</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Annex 4  

**Relation of project with previous Phare activities**

Phare assistance in support of the Roma population has been provided through the horizontal Phare Democracy and LIEN programmes as well as the national Civil Society Development programmes in 1994, 1996 and 1998 managed by the Civil Society Development Foundation. Grants have been provided to NGOs following open call for proposals in areas of education, culture, training, media, social (housing), and information activities.
Annex 5

REGULATION

of the structure and organisation of the work of
the National Council on Ethnic and
Demographic Issues at the Council of Ministers
(unofficial translation)

Art. 1 The National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues at the Council of Ministers referred to as "The National Council" is a body for consulting, co-operation and co-ordination between the governmental institutions and the non-governmental organisations /NGOs/ aiming at design and realisation of a national policy regarding the ethnic and demographic issues and migration.

Art. 2 The National Council:
1. Develops and proposes the Council of Ministers:
   a/ strategies for the demographic policy and migration processes in the country;
   b/ specific measures to keep tolerance and good will between Bulgarian citizens from different ethnic and religious groups;
2. Co-ordinates with the state institutions and NGOs the specific measures for the implementation of international obligations undertaken by the Republic of Bulgaria in the sphere of Bulgarian citizens rights who belong to the minority groups and their integration in the society;
3. Co-ordinates together with the Agency for the Bulgarians Abroad and with other state institutions and NGOs measures for implementation of the national policy on the issues of the Diaspora and socialisation of its representatives in the country who wish to settle down permanently in their native land;
4. Supports the contacts with the various ethnic groups with similar groups abroad and together with the Agency for the Bulgarians Abroad assists for the implementation of the foreign policy of the Republic of Bulgaria;
5. Keeps contacts with akin institutions abroad as well as with international organisations with similar tasks and activity spheres;
6. Supports the implementation of nationally significant National and Regional Projects of NGOs in the sphere of ethnic relations, the demographic policy and migration processes and reports the final results;
7. Organises the survey work on issues concerning its activities;
8. Discusses and prepares statements on projects of legal acts which regulates the rights of the Bulgarian citizens who belong to different ethnic and religious groups.

Art. 3 /1/ The National Council consists of: chairman - vice prime-minister, secretary - civil servant and members.
/2/ The members of the National Council are constant and associated.
/3/ The constant members of the National Council are:

2. Representatives of public organisations of the ethnic groups and the Bulgarian Diaspora which activities correspond to the aims and tasks of the National Council and which are registered under the Person and Family Act.
The associated members of the National Council are representatives of other institutions, scientific institutes or NGOs invited for the purpose by the chairman of the national Council.

Representatives of the ministries under Par. 3, point 1 are vice-ministers, while representatives of the institutions are their heads. As an exception the determined representatives of the ministries and the units under par. 3, point 1 can be replaced at the meetings of the National Council by authorised servants.

Public organisations from one and the same ethnic group may set up for participation in the National Council associations of similar organisations by submitting the relevant protocol.

The representatives of the constant and associated members have equal rights and obligations.

Political parties can not be members of the National Council.

Art. 4 The Participation of the particular representatives at the meetings of the National Council is determined by the themes of the specific meetings.

Art. 5 On the issues discussed the National Council takes Agreements which are signed by the participants at the meeting and the Agreements are opened for additional integration by other institutions and public organisations.

Art. 6 NGOs wishing to participate in the work of the Council as constant or associated members hand in an application to participate and enclose the following documents:
1. an order of the court for registration;
2. statute;
3. list of the local structures with addresses and telephones of their official representatives.

The chairman of the National Council has the right to require also additional information as well as to check the authenticity of the submitted documents.

Written materials for meeting of the National Council are submitted 5 (five) days preliminary. The names of the participants are defined 2 (two) days earlier.

Art. 7 The chairman summons the National Council at least 1 (one) per 3 (three) months, manages its activities and submits for discussion Council of Ministers with materials, suggestions and statements of the National Council.

Art. 8 The preparation for the meetings is carried out by the secretary of the National Council he:
1. prepares the agenda;
2. keeps record on the decisions taken at the meetings and co-ordinates and controls their implementation;
3. by order of the chairman of National Council conduct preliminary consultations with different institutions and NGOs as well as other activities concerning the realisations of the tasks of the National Council.

Art. 9 The National Council may create working groups and other subsidiary units.

Art. 10 The National Council confirms rules for consultancy and co-operation on local level.

Art. 11 The organisational, technical and financial servicing of the activities of the National Council on ethnic and demographic issues is secured by the Council of Ministers.


Authorised representatives of the councils under par. 1 have the right to participate at the meetings of the National Council.
THE MAIN GUIDLINES OF THE BULGARIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY CONCERNING MINORITY GROUPS

The Republic of Bulgaria has ratified all basic international Conventions concerning minority rights including UN Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Council of Europe Framework Convention for Protection of Minorities.

A fundamentally new beginning was laid down in the state policy for the successful solution of various problems of the minority groups by Decree No 449 of the Council of Ministers (December, 1997). That Decree established the National Council for Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCEDI) with the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria. Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Vesselin Metodiev chairs the Council and this guarantees direct relation with the Government. The Secretary of the Council – Mr. Peter Atanassov is responsible for the organization and implementation of the activities of the Council.

All ministries in Bulgaria are presented in the Council at a vice-ministerial level, as well as 4 relevant governmental agencies (including the National Office for Refugees and the Agency for Bulgarians Abroad). Also members of the Council are representatives of NGOs of all the ethnic groups who traditionally live in Bulgaria: Turks, Tatars, Jews, Armenians, Karakachans, Wallachians and Roma people. All members of the Council have equal rights.

The National Council Standing Regulations provide that it is a body for consultation, co-operation and co-ordination between the government institutions and non-government organizations to design and implement the national policy with regard to ethnic and demographic issues and migration.

The participation of the representatives of the NGO’s of the various minorities in the Council promotes and facilitates them to take part in the state management of issues that directly concern them.

The Council supports the best projects of the NGOs concerning the ethnic and demographic issues. The members of the Council reach agreements which they sign after consultations. These agreements are open i.e. other institutions and public organizations may join the agreed document.

The main functions of the Council according to the Standing Regulations are:

- protection and promotion of tolerance and understanding between Bulgarian citizens belonging to various ethnic and religious groups;
- co-ordinates with the government institutions and non-government organizations specific measures to fulfil the obligations of the country on international conventions in the sphere of Bulgarian citizens rights who belong to minority groups and their integration in the society;
- supports for the contacts of the various ethnic groups with similar ones abroad;
- maintenance of contacts with similar governmental institutions abroad as well as international organisations with similar activities and spheres of interests;
- supports for the fulfilment of projects of great significance on national and regional level of NGOs in the sphere of ethnic relations;
- discusses and evaluation of draft legislation concerning the rights of Bulgarian citizens belonging to various ethnic groups.

The Council exists for one year and even in this very short period it has solved many problems faced by the various ethnic groups. The most important of them we consider the already signed agreements with the Karakachans concerning the compensations for those deprived of their sheep during the communist period. Agreements were also reached with the Wallachians for starting work on a mutual basis with the Romanian colleagues on issues
concerning Wallachian people and establishing a Bulgarian school in Bucharest and Romanian college in Sofia.

Within the context of the administrative and territorial reform taking place in Bulgaria at present, new regional administrations will be created. Their number will increase from 9 to 28. With the aim of developing a modern regional policy the establishment of regional councils on ethnic and demographic issues is envisaged in the nearest future. They shall function by virtue of the Standing Regulation of the NCEDI in the relevant region. The Council will only co-ordinate the work of those 28 councils on a local level. The responsibilities of these new units will be to conduct dialogue with the ethnic non-government organizations and in this way the ethnic groups will take part in the decision-making process on the local level as well as on national level.

In the 1990s Bulgarian citizens of Roma origin acquired the absolute right to a freedom to identify themselves as Romas and moreover to develop their own culture and integrate themselves into associations issuing their own publications.

As a result of all that various non-government organizations appeared including: the Roma Democratic Union, the Roma Unified Union, Confederation of the Romas in Bulgaria, Federation of the Unified Romas Communities, as well as the Roma Public Council “KUPATE” and others. Various newspapers and magazines are being published as for example: Romano ilo, Romano devleti, Drom drumendar, Gitan, etc.

According to the data of the survey from December, 1992 the number of the Roma people who live in Bulgaria is 313 396 (three hundred and thirteen thousand three hundred and ninety six) which is 3.7 % of the total population of the country.

Having in mind the extremely difficult economic situation of major part of the Roma people in Bulgaria who have already been marginalized the National Council made a step forward developing a specific programme for their integration in the society with the objective to provide conditions for the complete integration of the Roma people in the society, respecting their legal rights and cultural distinctions.

That Programme is being prepared together with the Roma organisations, in a close collaboration with the Ethnic Relations Project and on the basis of Spanish and other countries experience. Fundamentally the aim of the Programme is to solve the most important problems of the Roma people: education, qualification and employment, public health, accommodation (housing), respect to human rights, culture, Roma woman and elimination of prejudices. On 7 April 1999 on a National Round Table the Government and the representatives of the main Roma organisations in Bulgaria signed an Agreement for “Framework programme for equal integration of Roma in the Bulgarian society”.

Through the mediation of the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues with the Council of Ministers some framework agreements for a mutual activity were signed between the Roma non-government organisations and the Government institutions.

Such agreements have been signed with the following ministries:
- Ministry of Defense: for the establishment of a Council on Ethnic Issues, which shall consider problems on the multiethical composition of the army, the full-time appointment of Romas at sites of the defense complex of the country, on providing conditions for the social adaptation of young Romas while serving in the army and providing a possibility that some cultural activities could be held among young Romas, doing their military service by Roma organisations.

- Ministry of Justice and Legal European Integration: for accomplishing a Programme for re-socialisation of Roma people who are serving different sentences, for their integration into the society and for the protection of the rights and freedoms of the individual and activities to improve the legal culture of the Roma people.
- Ministry of Trade and Tourism: for an assistance for offering real employment possibilities among the Roma people, in accordance with their education and qualification and in accordance with the main functions of the ministry. That will stimulate the enterprising activities of the Roma people which will contribute to the development of Roma people crafts and the creation of some alternative forms of employment.

- Ministry of Culture: to attract Roma experts to a full-time employment with the objective to develop traditional Roma culture and to support the establishment of a Romas Culture and Information center.

- Ministry of Ecology and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy together with Romas non-government organisations: for the implementation of projects for temporary employment of about 2 000 Roma people.

Through the mediation of some non-government organisations the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues and the municipal authorities undertake a campaign for the adoption of programs with to work with Romas at the municipal level.

In the Bulgarian Parliament in the list of the governing majority Members of the Parliament belonging to different minorities were included and elected among them the Member of Parliament Assen Hristov who is of Roma origin and an ex-Mayor. Also a number of municipal councilors and Mayors in various towns are of Roma origin. Some special programmes are being developed for attracting Roma people to army and police structures.

The co-operation between the government institutions and minorities is of great importance for the complete implementation of the guidelines of the Bulgarian government policy. The active presence of representatives of the various ethnic groups at all levels guarantees the realisation of the government policy concerning the problems of the minority groups.

In conclusion, despite the difficult economic situation in Bulgaria imposing financial and budget limits in the administration and state-owned enterprises, all administrative and political conditions are created for the active participation of the minorities, who traditionally live in Bulgaria in the decision-making processes on issues that concern them.
PART ONE

The Framework program for equal integration of Roma in Bulgarian society which is an outcome of the dialogue between the Roma community and the Bulgarian government, contains the core principles of a comprehensive state strategy for accomplishment of real equality of the Roma people in Bulgaria. The basis of this framework document are the “Program For Equal Participation of Roma in the Public Life of Bulgaria” and the program documents of the government.

The integration of Roma in Bulgarian society is directly linked to the creation of conditions for respect of the individual civil rights. The strategic goal of this Program is the elimination of the unequal treatment of Roma in Bulgarian society. Discrimination against Roma in society preconditions the problems of the community in the socio-economic, educational and cultural field. The successful integration of Roma is possible only after the emancipation of the Roma community. Emancipation can be achieved through the establishment and effective implementation of mechanisms to neutralize the consequences of previous discrimination. In this respect the Program highlights the goal of eliminating discrimination towards Roma as one of the main political priorities of the Bulgarian State.

In compliance to the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, ratified by Bulgaria, this Program outlines the mid-term schedule of activities to be undertaken by the state towards establishment of real political, economic and cultural guarantees for the integration of Roma in society. The Program recognizes that for the accomplishment of positive results from the state policy towards Roma it is a conditio sine qua non that Roma themselves be involved all levels of the state administration. Roma people should not be a passive object of influence but an active subject in the public sphere.

The development of concrete mechanisms and means for the accomplishment of the main principles in this document will be assigned to groups of experts, representatives of the Roma community, as well as to representatives of the state administration.

These strategic guidelines are approved for a period of 10 years, after which, depending on the results, the activities will be continued, updated or changed.
PART TWO

Roma in Bulgaria are the group, which occupies the lowest level in the social hierarchy. They are not adequately represented in the political life and the government of the country. In the socio-economic aspect as a whole, the status of the Roma is dramatically lower than the Bulgarian average: high unemployment rate, deplorable living conditions, bad health, high illiteracy rate, etc. These stable characteristics in the situation of the Roma community are external manifestations and direct consequences and out of discriminatory treatment.

The elimination of discrimination towards Roma should become one of the main political priorities of the Bulgarian State. The solution of this main goal is the object of all the specific proposals for the state policy in the different spheres of public life that are stated below.

I. Protection from discrimination

The United Nation Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination makes explicit that ethnic discrimination is tantamount to racial discrimination (Art. 1, par. 1). The Convention requires effective protection against acts of racial discrimination not only from the courts but also from other state institutions (Art. 6). Unfortunately, Bulgaria is among the few countries, which have not set up special bodies for protection from discrimination. Such bodies should be established.

1. Legislation changes for protection from discrimination

A number of laws should be amended by special clauses, which provide protection against discrimination. In particular, the Bulgarian Penal Code should exhaustively define the aggravating and extenuating circumstances of the offense. The discriminatory motivation should be necessarily included as an aggravating circumstance. For a number of crimes such as murder, body injuries, rape, etc. there should be a higher punishment for racial motivation. Special anti-discrimination clauses should be introduced in the laws on education, health care, territorial development and sports.

2. Establishment of a state committee for prevention of discrimination

The specifics of interethnic relations and the social problems related to them require the establishment of a specialized state body.

The state committee (commission for ethnic equality, commissioner on the ethnic issues, or another name) should be established by a law and approved by the Parliament; its activities should be public; it should have structures according to the administrative division of the country and their composition should be proportionate to the ethnic composition of the respective regions.
The prerogatives of this committee should include: investigation and punishment of illegal actions (or failure to act) on ethnic basis committed by physical and juridical entities; participation as a representative of the state in litigation on cases of discriminatory treatment; and formulation of obligatory recommendations about non-discriminatory treatment to state bodies and non-governmental organizations, as well as to other juridical entities.

The state committee for prevention of discrimination will exert control over the actions of the police officers as well. It should have a central body with local branches according to the administrative division of the country. The member of the committee should represent proportionately the ethnic composition of the respective region and should be independent from the organs of the Ministry of Interior. The prerogatives of the committee related too the control over the acts of the police should include: investigation and punishment of illegal actions of police officers according to the Administrative Violations and Punishments Act; submission of signals to the prosecutorial organs, which are obliged to respond about the results of the investigation; appealing of prosecutorial and judicial acts; participation in the penal procedure as Public Prosecutor; submission of obligatory recommendations to the respective organs for just remedying of the victims.

In one year after the endorsement of the Framework Program the Council of Ministers of Republic Bulgaria will make a draft law for the functions of the State Committee for Prevention of Discrimination. Over this period with an act of the Council of Ministers a temporary structure within the National Council for the Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCEDI) will be established (Specialist Group). The Chair of NCEDI will head it and its members will include representatives from the President’s Office, National Assembly, the judicial system and non-governmental organizations of minority groups. The Chair of the NCEDI will approve the regulations for the functioning of the temporary structure. Due to the fact that the temporary structure cannot have the prerogatives of the State Committee for Prevention of Discrimination without a special law and amendments in other laws, its functions will be reduced too the functions of the state institutions represented in it. The Specialist Group will have to work out the bill for the establishment and functioning of the state committee for prevention of discrimination.

2.1 Establishment of a special sub-committee for Roma at the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights.

II. Economic Development

Roma people in Bulgaria are deprived of the opportunity to enjoy their right to an adequate standard of living. There are objectively measurable indicators ranking the standard of living of the Roma degrees below the average for the country.

1. Employment
The high unemployment rate among Roma in Bulgaria is one of the most serious factors contributing to the social isolation of the group. Urgent actions are necessary for providing employment to the Roma.

One of the steps to be taken here is the development and implementation of training and employment programs in correspondence with the needs of the labor market and the particularities of some traditional working and vocational attitudes in the respective groups of Roma. It should be noted that the “rescue operations” of the type of alternative and temporary programs for employment, although appropriate at the given moment, are not enough as a perspective for the future development.

In order to guarantee employment of the Roma, it is necessary to create a special state fund. This fund must grant preferential loans and require their use for employment of Roma. Professionally competent people should do the management of the fund, and a large number of Roma with the respective qualification must be represented in it. Its activity should be public and there should be an effective public control mechanism.

It is necessary too organize efficient information tools to educate the Roma community about the main legal principles related to the labor.

2. Social support

The Social Welfare Act should be amended by introduction of a special subcategory “vulnerable ethnic minorities” within the general category of the socially vulnerable groups. The social workers dealing with these groups should pass a special training. The role of the civil control over the application of the Act, through Roma organizations and other NGOs, should be considerably enhanced.

3. Land distribution

It is necessary that the procedure becomes simplified and that the state activates and stimulates the process of acquisition of land from the state and municipal agricultural land distribution funds by Roma with little or no property, as this process is not related to the receiving of social welfare. The appropriate legal framework should be created for the inscription of Roma in the existing cooperatives as well as for the creation of independent Roma cooperatives.

III. Health Care

In order to accomplish a satisfactory level of health condition for Roma people, it is necessary to:
- increase the sanitary control over the basic parameters of the Roma housing spots;
- intensify the programs for health education and stimulate the active involvement of Roma in them.

IV. Territorial structure of the Roma neighborhoods

The separated Roma neighborhoods, most of which are not in the
respective city plans and do not have adequate infrastructure, are one of the most serious socio-economic problems of the community.

It is necessary to make amendments to the Territorial Development Act in order to abolish the sophisticated bureaucratic procedure of house legalization. Then, it is urgent to start legalizing the illegal construction on the basis of the principle of minimum interference with the existing situation. The goal is to legalize a large part of the illegal construction in its existing forms and amounts and to provide owners with ownership documents within the shortest possible terms. Together with this, the housing resources should be improved, not so much by building expensive new houses but through different forms of support (by financial credit, materials, land spots etc.) to the people who desire to improve their housing conditions.

For the purposes of achieving larger variety in the opportunities for housing for Roma people, it is appropriate to create effective financial mechanisms in the municipal budgets for relocation of Roma families through the use of additional financial resources and control over the existing ones.

V. Education

There still exists the system, inherited from the previous regime, of factual segregation of Roma children in the so-called 'Gypsy schools' with an emphasis on vocational-type education, which more recently is being transferred into the formation of segregated Roma classes within the normal schools. The low quality of the education received by Roma children in these conditions, the poverty, the lack of active programs compensating the insufficient command of Bulgarian, and the ethnocultural differences, lead to a critical increase of the number of Roma children who do not attend school or drop out before finishing their high school education.

In order to overcome the disadvantaged position of Roma children in the system of education, the following measures should be undertaken:

1. Desegregation of Roma schools

The solution of this problem requires a long-term strategy for the total disintegration of the segregated schools in the Roma neighborhoods; efficient measures for providing free access of Roma children to 'normal' schools; and prevention of the segregation of Roma children into separated classes.

With the awareness that the desegregation of the 'Gypsy schools' is a long process, we propose that in the meantime the Ministry of Education should intervene to improve the quality of education in these schools.

The following actions should be undertaken to this effect:
- support and stimulation to the introduction of preparatory classes for Roma children who do not know Bulgarian language;
- introduction of unified general education programs in Roma schools and total abolition of early vocational and labor education.
- stimulation of the employment of teachers with adequate qualification and specialization and elimination of the practice to send "irregular" teachers, i.e. teachers who do not have necessary qualifications, to the schools with
prevailing number of Roma children;
- introduction in the system of education of the position of the so-called “Assistant teachers” from the Roma community, who will help in the process of teaching of the Roma children;
- facilitation of the access to information and enhancing the consultation of Roma families with low income and living in bad conditions, to ensure that they receive food, teaching materials and other school materials from the respective schools.

2. Elimination of the Practice to Send Normal Roma Children to Special Schools for Mentally Retarded

A large percent of the Roma children are sent to “special” schools for mentally retarded children and are included in “special” programs after being categorized as incapable to command the regular school programs. Thus the Roma children are denied the right to equal opportunities in education. The mechanism, which allows that the cultural specifics of Roma children and their unequal status in society be defined as mental incapacity, is deeply discriminatory. An urgent tasks to be accomplished by the government is to terminate these habits of social exclusion.

3. Counteraction against the manifestations of racism in the classroom

There are many and various means by which Roma children are being subjected to inhuman, degrading and humiliating treatment in school. The negative attitudes of both teachers and students are among the factors, which contribute to the absenteeism of Roma from school. The Ministry of education should develop and implement programs for training teachers in intercultural communication and ethnic tolerance. At all levels of the school process there should be organized such training in order to fight racism at school. Manifestations of racism should be sanctioned.

4. Securing the opportunity of Roma children to study their mother tongue at school.

The study of one's mother tongue is a fundamental human right. It is also guaranteed by the Bulgarian Constitution. With regard to the Roma, however, this right is being systematically violated. Introducing the mother tongue as an 'optional' subject and not as a part of the obligatory school curriculum invalidates the practical realization of the right to study one's mother tongue.

One of the main obstacles to the teaching of Romany language is the absence of teachers who should be both implementers and driving forces to this process. The preparation of such teachers must be done in the higher education pedagogical schools where the major subject of 'Romany Language and Culture'
should be introduced. There is a pressing need for the introduction of such a major first of all in the University of Sofia where there will be the possibility to train specialists also in other areas related to Roma.

5. Training of specialists with university education.

The old policy of segregating the Roma in schools and of depriving them of the opportunity to have a high school education equal to that of the other citizens has led to the lack of highly qualified specialists of different professions among the Roma community. The percentage of Roma having B.A. and M.A. degrees is insignificant. In order to overcome these negative results of the discrimination of the Roma in the sphere of education, it is necessary that the state continue to encourage the preparation of specialists from the Roma community through the introduction of preferential admittance of Roma into Bulgarian universities.


VI. Protection of the Ethnic Specifics and Culture of Roma in Bulgaria.

During the recent decades, the opportunities for a public manifestation of the Roma culture have been restricted. This fact, apart from being a violation of the cultural rights of the Roma, contributes to the isolation of the Roma community as alien and unknown to the rest of the society. The development of the Roma culture as a specific ethnic culture and in the same time as a part of the Bulgarian culture must be guaranteed and encouraged by the Bulgarian State. In relation to this, it is necessary to secure the fulfillment of the following objectives:

- the theme of the Roma history and culture should be present in the textbooks for the primary, secondary, and high school education, presented within the general context of the Bulgarian history and culture;
- the cultural centers in the Roma neighborhoods should be restored, maintained and supported;
- the Roma must have the opportunity to take equal part in the national and regional folklore festivals;
- Roma should receive support for the development of their authentic folklore through support for their music festivals, production and circulation of audio- and video products with this folklore and ensuring the access of Roma folklore to the national media;
- the Roma theater should be restored and its existence should be supported by the state;
- the Roma printed periodical and non-periodical literature should be supported.

VII. Presence of the Roma in the National Media.
The representatives of the Roma community are deprived of the possibility to have equal access to the national media, both the electronic ones and the press. This fact, as well as the constant negative and often derogatory tone of the media in the years after 1989, is a favorable ground for the increase of hostility towards the Roma community. The impossibility to have access to the public sphere through the media puts the Roma in an unequal position with regard to the majority and leaves the development of negative social attitudes without alternative.

The Bulgarian State must guarantee the participation of Roma in the Bulgarian National Television and the National Radio. This participation must include both the transmission of Roma programs and the participation of Roma journalists in other programs of the television and the radio.

VIII. The Roma Woman

It is necessary to promote culture of equality among Roma women for an adequate individual, social and economic participation in public life. For this purpose:

- it is necessary to increase the direct participation of the Roma woman in educational projects in order to gradually overcome discrimination;
- it is necessary to stimulate the access of Roma women to high and higher education through special activities on part of the social workers and pedagogic teams;
- it is necessary to implement programs for information and professional orientation of the Roma women in order to increase their opportunities for finding jobs;
- there should be a preferential regime in the employment contracts for the Roma women or there should be additional benefits for them;
- it is necessary to implement programs for consultancy of Roma women, who are entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSION

The cooperation between the state and the Roma community has a crucial importance for the effective implementation of this program. The experience so far, and not only in Bulgaria, has demonstrated that any program, which is not developed and implemented by the large participation of Roma, is doomed to a failure. The active position of members of the Roma community at all levels of the state administration that are responsible for the implementation of this program, is an obligatory condition for its success.