



# **Peer Review on “Furthering quality and flexibility of Early Childhood Education and Care” Denmark, 13-14 December 2018**

**Peer Country Comments Paper - Bulgaria**

## **Pathways to affordable early childhood education and care**

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

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Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion  
Peer Review on “Furthering quality and flexibility of Early Childhood Education and Care”  
Copenhagen, December 13-14th

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## 1 Introduction

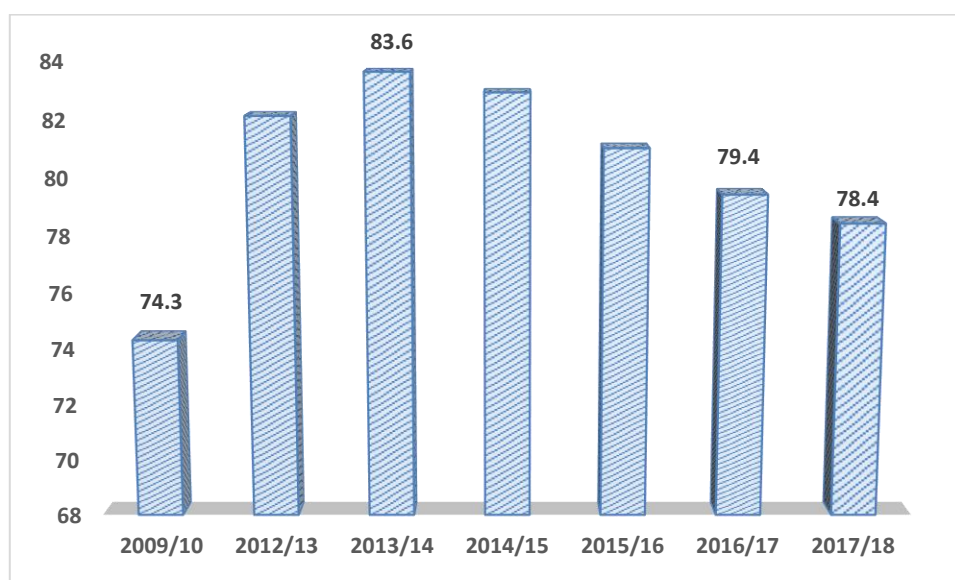
This paper has been prepared for the Peer Review on "Furthering quality and flexibility of Early Childhood Education and Care". It provides a comparative assessment of the policy example of the Host Country and the situation in Bulgaria. For information on the host country policy example, please refer to the Host Country Discussion Paper.

## 2 Situation in Bulgaria

Kindergartens are institutions within the pre-school and school education system for raising, education, and socialization of children from age of 3 up to the age of 7 (entering first class). Children aged 2 can also enter kindergarten in line with the conditions and rules of the Law on Pre-School and School Education.

In the period between school years 2009/2010 and 2016/2017, the enrolment rate of the children in the 3-6 age group in pre-primary education has improved nationally from 74,3 % (for school year 2009/2010) to 78,4 % (for school year 2017/2018).

Figure 1. Enrolment rate of children aged 3 to 6 years in pre-primary education in Bulgaria



Since the introduction of the two-year pre-primary education in 2010 to date, the enrolment rate of children aged 3-6 years registered the following trends:

- In the period between school year 2010/2011 and school year 2013/2014, the group net enrolment rate in pre-primary education has improved;
- Starting from the school year 2014/2015, it deteriorated significantly, with the exception of the South-Central Region.

The upward trend in the enrolment of children in pre-primary education between school year 2010/2011 and school year 2013/2014 is explainable by the introduction of compulsory two-year pre-primary education. However, the deterioration that followed has not been analysed yet.

The participation of children aged from 4 to compulsory school age (7) in early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Bulgaria decreased in 2016 to 86.5 % (-2.7 percentage points). As a result, this figure is significantly below the Education and Training 2020 benchmark of 95 % set in the context of the Strategic Framework for cooperation in education and training. Enrolment rates have decreased in last four years and rapid action is needed in order to reverse this trend

Another challenge for Bulgaria in ECEC is achieving of the 'Barcelona target' for children aged 0-3. This benchmark has only slightly increased from 7 % in 2011 to 12,5 % in 2016, but it is still far from the target of 33 %.

In addition, it is important to note that Bulgaria has one of the highest income inequalities in the EU. International surveys, such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) confirm the strong impact of parents' socio-economic status on students' educational attainment and achievements. These surveys show also that longer attendance in ECEC has positive influence and leads to better performance in school education.

Bulgarian Government's attention to increase the participation rates in ECEC is motivated by demographic and economic changes. Lower fertility rates, the rising age of motherhood, greater labour mobility, longer working lives and changing lifestyles have a strong impact on the traditional informal provision of childcare, such as grandparents. As a result, the demand for formal childcare outside the domestic environment is increasing. Therefore, improving access to high-quality provision of ECEC for children under the age of three, especially for disadvantaged children, will contribute to enhancing equal opportunities in employment between women and men and also to facilitate women to return to the labour market.

As a result, Bulgaria set up a system comprising four flexible ECEC organisation. Pre-school education can be full-day (10 hours), half-day (6 hours), part-time (3 to 5 hours) or self-organisation. All-day and half-day organization are carried out in separate age groups, while Part-time and individual organization are tailored to the individual need of the child and his/her parents.

Self-organisation includes education, socialization, training and upbringing of the child. It is organised by the parents and monitored by kindergarten or school at the beginning and end of school hours. Self-organisation is possible after a declaration from the parent and the approval of the administration of education according to the Pre-school and school education Act.

### **3 Assessment of the policy measure**

#### **Types of childcare facilities**

In Bulgaria, like in several European countries (Denmark, Germany, Spain and Austria), there are both unitary and separate childcare facilities. ECEC services can be delivered either in separate childcare facilities for younger and older children or in unitary childcare facilities for both age groups. However, some distinctions may be maintained between the two age groups even in unitary childcare facilities. In Bulgaria some childcare facilities offer both cycles of ECEC covering the entire pre-primary age. In these childcare facilities, while the management team is the same, the provision of ECEC for younger and older children differs in terms of staff qualifications, curricula and funding arrangements.

#### **Supporting disadvantaged children to access ECEC**

Ensuring access to quality early education can help preparing children for primary school by strengthening their physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development. However, many children, especially those from poor or disadvantaged families, have fewer opportunities to attend pre-school. Their families may not have financial capacity to enrol them, may not recognise the importance of early education or may not have access to a quality programme. To help all children to have equal opportunities to benefit from early education, some programmes (such as the Springboard for Social Readiness program, the Social Inclusion Project and the National Programme "Development of the Pre-Primary Education System") try to increase children's enrolment in pre-school. But what is the most cost-effective way to

do this and are there conditions for all children to benefit from earlier access to ECEC programmes? These questions have particular relevance in Bulgaria, where enrolment among children from three to six years old from the Roma communities in early education programmes is lower than their peers. Moreover, children from Roma communities can also face inequalities at a later stage in educational opportunities.

State programmes in Bulgaria are free of charge for five and six-year-old children enrolled in half-day programmes, but there are fees for full-day programmes and for children aged from three to four.

Parents should pay for meals for children attending compulsory pre-primary education. In addition, parents pay additional fees for activities which are not financed by the State, such as intensive foreign language teaching, computer courses, music, dancing or different kinds of sports.

The kindergarten attendance fees are determined by ordinances of the municipal councils. Each municipality usually establishes preferential terms for exemption from fees of certain groups of children based on social criteria.

### **Assessment of ECEC**

Education and socialization of children in kindergartens is organized and provided in line with the Pre-school Education State Standard. School readiness is assessed at the end of pre-school education stage by comparing acquired learning outcomes with the learning outcomes described in the standards. School readiness certificate is issued.

Pre-school education is included in the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Bulgaria, which was adopted by Council of Ministers' Decision No 96/2002. In this level knowledge, skills and competences (self-dependence and responsibility, and communicative and social competences).

Preschool education lays the foundation for lifelong learning by providing physical, cognitive, linguistic, moral, social, emotional and creative development of children, taking into account the importance of the game in the process of pedagogical interaction.

Competences are defined as expected results from education, training and socialization of children for each age group in educational areas: Bulgarian language and literature, Mathematics, Environment, Arts, Music, Construction and Technology and Physical Culture.

Assessment in Early Childhood Education and Care is regulated by Regulation № 5 of 06.03.2016 on pre-school education issued by the Minister of Education and Science. Assessment is the process of establishing and measuring learning outcomes as well as children's level of preparedness. Assessment has 2 main objectives:

- Diagnostics of individual achievements and the progress of each child;
- Monitoring of the education process for implementing measures for improving the quality of education.

The evaluation of the achievements should foster and demonstrate the positive aspects of the child. That process should be well grounded and based on the understanding of development, training and initiative. The assessment should always encourage the natural qualities and abilities of the child.

Traceability of the achievements of children for any age group is determined by the teachers in accordance with the rhythmical and balanced distribution of the content on educational fields.

Pre-primary education creates conditions for the:

- full development of the child's personality;



- acquisition a combination of competencies - knowledge, skills and relationships necessary for successful transition to school education

### **Improving the quality of ECEC**

In May 2018, the European Commission adopted a proposal for a Council Recommendation on high quality early childhood education and care systems. This proposal expects EU Member States report on existing experience and progress on access to and quality of ECEC. The proposal is directly related to the policy priorities of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science such as:

- investing in the development and qualification of teachers;
- increasing the scope of compulsory pre-primary education in preparatory groups and regulating compulsory pre-school education at the age of four;
- implementing of the policy for inclusion in education and support for the personal development for each child.

In June 2018, during the Bulgarian Presidency, the Council of the European Union adopted the Conclusions "Integrated early childhood development policies as a tool for reducing poverty and promoting social inclusion" also through child and family support, including integrated early childhood development policies.

Investments in pre-primary education are the means for creating the basis for further learning and contribute to the prevention of school-leaving and to increased benefits upon graduation and achievement of the general level of mastered skills. Pre-primary education is an important period in the life of children in view of building a positive attitude to school and creating motivation for learning. At the same time, compulsory pre-primary education poses two major challenges. The first one is creating conditions for forming a positive attitude of the child towards school and a motivation for learning, which are important factors for success at school. Building motivation for learning at an early age strongly contributes to a positive attitude to this activity and creates motivation for lifelong learning. The second one is related to improve the attitude of parents towards education. Motivated parents help their children to resolve the difficulties and overcome obstacles with a view to guaranteeing their successful schooling.

To this end, the Government Program for the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2017-2021 targets the introduction of compulsory pre-primary education from the school year in which the child attains the age of four.

The introduction of compulsory pre-primary education at the age of 4 will contribute to:

1. Smaller number of children not covered by education and leaving school

Bulgaria still registers a high percentage of children in compulsory school age who are not covered by or leave the educational system. This problem has wider social dimensions as primary education, is very important in view of forming a positive attitude to school and creating motivation for learning.

Despite the evident benefits of the lower compulsory pre-school age, this remains a sensitive public issue. In that light, the matter is still at the stage of public discussion with the widest possible circle of stakeholders. Another essential factor for the introduction of a compulsory pre-primary education for the four-years old children is the availability of places for all children, which is still a challenge in some bigger cities.

2. Support families who receive family allowances for the regular attendance of their children to pre-school and school education

In Bulgaria a significant measure in the support of families with children is the provision of family allowances for children under the Family Allowances Act (FAA). "Family allowances are provided in cash and/or in kind to parents or legal guardians to

support raising children in a family environment. Two of the ten family allowances are linked to the regular attendance of children to school until graduation (including pre-school and school preparation). Parents receive also a one-off benefit when they enrol their child to first grade.

These benefits are suspended or terminated in case the child is not going to school.

At the suggestion of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), in October 2017 amendments to the legal framework were adopted to further link family allowances and benefits with the regular attendances of children to pre-school and education.

One of the important amendments is that the monthly allowance for raising a child until graduation from high school are provided not to the family but they are directly transferred by the Social Assistance Directorate to the school and kindergarten to pay for meals or other fees.

### **Social services**

One of the key dimensions of the integrated approach being applied in Bulgaria is the provision of social services for children. As a result of child care reform and the implemented process of deinstitutionalization of child care over the last years, there has been a steady rise in the number of the community-based social services for children as alternative to the institutional care. The number of the community-based social services for children in 2018 is 618 while in 2014 their number reaches 464. At the same time there is a decrease in the number of specialized institutions for children from 137 in 2010 (including 31 Homes for medico-social care for children (HMSSC)) to 29 specialized institutions in September 2018 (including 15 HMSSC). The following community-based social services have been provided to support parents in bringing up their children - "Mother and Baby" units, Centres for Community Support, Centres for Social Rehabilitation and Integration, Day-care centres for children with disabilities, etc.

Protection measures under the Child Protection Act have been also implemented in a family environment. These measures include provision of pedagogic, psychological and legal assistance to parents, concerning problems with child rearing, upbringing and education; referring persons to appropriate social services in the community; consulting and assistance on issues of social assistance and services; conducting social work to facilitate child-parent relations and solution of relations conflicts and crises; studying the individual abilities and interests of a child and referring him or her to a suitable educational establishment, etc.

## **4 Assessment of success factors and transferability**

The children involved in pre-primary education are better equipped for and perform better at school. PISA 2015 data show, in line with previous PISA surveys, that in 2015 in almost all OECD countries the 15-year-olds who have attended pre-primary education perform better than non-attendees (the results of students involved in pre-school education 10-15 years ago, between 2000 and 2005, are taken into account). The longer a child participates in pre-school education, the less likely is for him/her to score low in PISA. This conclusion is supported by the fact that 22 % of the students who have attended pre-school education for less than a year scored low in the basic level of knowledge of the learning content (lower than level 2 on the PISA scale). In contrast, only 10% of the students who attended education in early childhood age for more than two years scored lower than this level.

Therefore, ensuring that children attend pre-school education is a priority of the Ministry of Education and Science. However, the measures to include children and students in pre-school and school education and to keep them in the system cannot be the responsibility of a single institution. Non-inclusion in pre-school education has complex causes and, therefore, the measures to address it should be comprehensive.

The causes are most often attributable to social, economic and ethnocultural factors such as low income, unawareness of the benefits of pre-primary education, parents not employed in the labour market, who cannot take care of their children, etc. There is no doubt that the attendance fees of full-time kindergartens are a barrier for some families.

The trend (from 89,3 % in 2013 to 86,5 % in 2016) shows that it will be difficult to achieve ECEC benchmark. The Bulgarian Government implemented some measures to overcome this problem, such as:

- introducing compulsory pre-school education (2003, 2010);
- ensuring free activity books for children aged five and six in kindergartens;
- additional training in Bulgarian language;
- introducing a mechanism for inter-institutional cooperation to identify out-of-school children (at age for compulsory pre-school and school education) and return them to education. These multidisciplinary teams, comprising teachers, social workers, Roma mediators and other experts, visit homes of children who had either dropped-out or never attended to kindergarten or school, emigrated or changed kindergarten/school, but who were not being tracked.

The Ministry of Education and Science also adopted a number of measures to improve the quality of pre-primary education. The measures include support of specific activities in the kindergartens financed by different instruments, as well as amendments to certain legislative instruments.

The first group of measures includes:

- Implementation of the National Programme "Development of the Pre-Primary Education System". In the past school-year, the programme was implemented in 205 kindergartens and schools with pre-primary groups. The objective of the National Programme is to improve the quality of pre-primary education and to ensure equal start in life for the children before enrolment in school through the use of modern teaching materials and by encouraging the involvement of parents. The main project activity includes additional Bulgarian language classes for children whose mother language is not the Bulgarian. Apart from creating conditions for optimal physical and personal development of the children by the provision and use of modern teaching materials, the programme also focuses on promoting the active involvement of parents in the pre-primary education process. Parental involvement is a requisite element of the programme activities: a total of 2 562 parents are involved in programme activities. In the past school year, 402 teachers worked under the National Programme "Development of the Pre-Primary Education System" and 1 603 children were awarded certificates for completed pre-primary education. The five-year-olds included in the programme were not awarded certificates as their language level was considered sufficient. They will continue their compulsory pre-primary training for another year. In the current 2018/2019 school year, the participation of 520 groups (each composed by four to eight children) covering 3 468 children for participation in activities funded under the National Programme has been approved.
- Approval of selection criteria for the operation "Active involvement in the pre-primary education system" under Science and Education for Smart Growth Operational Programme (SESG OP). The Monitoring Committee of SESG OP met on 18 May 2018 to approve the operation selection criteria and the methodology and criteria for technical and financial evaluation for the operation "Active involvement in the pre-primary education system" under Priority Axis 3 "Educational Environment for Active Social Inclusion". The specific beneficiary is the Ministry of Education and Science. The budget is BGN 82,5 Million. The

main objectives of the operation are: to support early coverage and educational inclusion of children from vulnerable groups in pre-primary education; to support their access to quality education; to strengthen their social acceptance and cohesion with a view to their growing up as full citizens and their successful professional, social and personal development. Activities are planned to cover 50 000 children in 1 500 kindergartens across the country.

- Approval of a model of smooth transition from family environment to kindergarten. The model will be applied in 15 kindergartens in Bulgaria and the results of its implementation will be reported at the end of the school year. Depending on the results achieved, the model will be presented for implementation in the other kindergartens across the country. This model aims to ensure smooth transition from family environment to kindergarten for children that enter for the first time in kindergarten at the age of three. Its implementation aims to build community of parents and involve them in some activities. Design of an early childhood development strategy. In October 2018 an interdepartmental working group was set up with an order of the Minister of Education and Science and tasked to draft the early childhood development strategy. This strategy aims to establish successful management and financing models for inter-agency cooperation between ECEC, health and social services, local authorities and universal entitlement to publicly funded, affordable provision and to promotes a common understanding at national level of what constitutes good quality service provision.

The second group of measure focusses on legislative amendments necessary to adopt an Ordinance on quality management of the institutions of the pre-primary and school education systems so that they are aligned with the State Education Standards for inspection of kindergartens and schools. The draft ordinance is pending for finalisation and publication for public discussion.

Finally, through the Social Inclusion Project (SIP), implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and financed by a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) a network of new types of services for children and families was built in 66 municipalities. This includes integrated services for early childhood development, to prevent risks from an early age, to better address and improve children's readiness for inclusion in the education system, improving the family environment, etc. In order to continue the activities of the services created under the SIP, from the beginning of 2016 the Operation 'Services for Early Childhood Development', under Operational Programme "Human Resources Development" (HRD OP) 2014-2020, was launched. This operation has the objective to ensure the sustainability of SIP-revealed services by the end of 2019. Contracts have been signed with 64 municipalities- beneficiaries. The activities to be funded under the operation are related to:

- individual and group work with children and parents, including children and parents who are not from vulnerable groups, aimed to attend kindergarten;
- individual pedagogical support for children with disabilities;
- additional pedagogical preparation for raising the school readiness of children for equal start at school;
- early intervention of disabilities, direct work with children with disabilities and their families, including rehabilitation and counselling activities, training, mobile work<sup>1</sup> with the child at his/her home;

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<sup>1</sup> Mobile work is a twofold service: it includes rehabilitation work (carried out at home of the beneficiary) as well as an outreach work to inform the beneficiaries about existing services, identify their needs and facilitate their inclusion in the appropriate services.

- improving access to health and health promotion through support for providing child health counselling and disease prevention activities;
- providing psychological support and counselling to parents and future parents for the formation and development of parenting skills;
- family counselling and support, including working with parents and children, family planning activities, individual work;
- providing transport for the purpose of attending integrated services, kindergarten, mobile work, etc.;
- support for the activities of the family centres for children from 0 to 3 years of age.

The scheme has a budget of BGN 39 361 800 and its duration is until the end of 2019. So far 9 099 children have received support through these services. It should be noted that the development of early intervention services in Bulgaria is closely related to the current process of deinstitutionalization of child care aimed at closing down all specialized institutions for children until 2025, prevention of child abandonment and development of alternative services. Therefore, the service "Early intervention for children with disabilities" provided under SIP includes various activities designed to prevent child abandonment or institutionalization of children with disabilities and to build specific skills that help parents to raise their children: physiotherapy visits to hospital's maternity wards, visits to the Early intervention centre for children with disabilities (individual activities with parents participation and integration of the child into a peer group work, counselling services), regular visits of mobile teams at parents' homes. It is important to clarify that early intervention services can also be provided to children with disabilities between 3 and 7 years of age. These activities include supervision of the kindergarten integration process, monitoring of the child development, etc.

## **5 Questions**

1. Is there a discussion going on in Denmark about lowering the age of compulsory pre-school education? If so, who are its actors and what are the questions?
2. Could you please provide a state of play of implementation of the recent measures to improve the quality of pre-school education? What are the main bottlenecks in implementation?
3. What is the role of parents in the ECEC?
4. Could you please share recent measures to ensure smooth transition from family environment to kindergarten and from kindergarten to school?

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## Annex 1 Summary table

The main points covered by the paper are summarised below.

Please summarise the main points covered by the paper. Give a maximum of five bullet points per heading.

### Situation in the peer country

- Access: age 0 – 3 – early child care in nursery groups; age 3 – 6/7 – kindergartens; age 5 and 6 – compulsory preschool education in preparatory groups
- Workforce: legal framework on the basis of standards in the form of teacher knowledge, skills and competences aligned with the Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications; mandatory qualification and a system of qualification credits have been introduced
- Curriculum: State educational standard, 2016
- Governance/funding: public budget at central and municipal level + fees, paid by parents

### Assessment of the policy measure

- Encouraging early return to the labour market of mothers/parents who have used maternity/parental leave or leave for child-care up to 2 years of age through payment of 50% of the respective maternity/parental benefit for the remaining period after the return
- Mechanism for joint work of the institutions for enrolment and retention in preschool and school education ([back2school.mon.bg](http://back2school.mon.bg))
- Regular preschool and school attendance is a precondition for monthly family allowances and social assistance allowances
- Payment of fees for kindergartens could be in-kind monthly family allowance, and the type of the in-kind allowances for children in preschool and school age are proposed to the social workers by the kindergartens and schools

### Assessment of success factors and transferability

- Improving the management of institutions and processes in the system of pre-school and school education, including inspection
- Developing standards for guaranteeing the quality of pre-school education with the participation of all stakeholders
- Updating existing curricula to guarantee acquisition of both cognitive and non-cognitive skills and to lay the foundation of key competences
- Supporting smooth transitions from family to kindergarten and from kindergarten to primary school
- Developing family support programmes aiming to encourage the participation of parents in the process of education

### Questions

- More effective solutions for pre-school – school transition
- Measures taken to raise the involvement of children to their first-grade enrolment
- How to enhance parents' motivation and commitment

## Annex 2 Example of relevant practice

Name of the practice:	Springboard for Social Readiness program
Year of implementation:	School year 2014/2015
Coordinating authority:	World Bank, Trust for Social Achievement
Objectives:	Design and evaluate strategies for increasing early childhood education participation among the poorest families in Bulgaria, including Roma, and identify cost-effective approaches for improving early childhood education enrolment and attendance for the poorest families.
Main activities:	<p>In collaboration with the Trust for Social Achievement, the World Bank designed a rigorous impact evaluation of barriers to kindergarten attendance for Bulgaria's disadvantaged population using a randomized control trial. This project involved 236 settlements and 5 772 children throughout the country, 87 % of which belong to a minority group, mostly Roma. Each settlement was randomly assigned to one of eight possible intervention groups, combining a mix of information and financial incentives. A control group was also assembled and assigned no intervention.</p> <p>Researchers employed a cross-cut design to test the impacts of providing information and easing financial constraints.</p> <p>Communities were randomly assigned to two groups – one that received information on the benefits of pre-primary education and an introduction to the school system and school officials, and one that received no information or introduction. There were a total of eight experimental groups. These included: A control group that received nothing; a group that only received the information program; a group that received free preschool; a group that received free preschool plus the information campaign; a group that received free preschool plus a small conditional cash transfer; a group that received free preschool, a small conditional cash transfer and the information campaign; and a group that received free preschool plus a larger conditional cash transfer; a group that received free preschool, a larger conditional cash transfer; and the information campaign. The information intervention, organized by mainly Roma-led groups, consisted of five public community meetings held over ten months. In total, 188 communities received the information campaign and 188 didn't, divided across the three treatment groups and one control group.</p>
Results so far:	Too few Bulgarian children from minority and marginalised communities attend kindergarten, which impacts their educational and life outcomes. A 2014-2015 World Bank study proved that making kindergarten free of cost cuts non-enrolment rate of children from disadvantaged groups in half and raises daily attendance by 20 %. The study also showed that Bulgarian and children belonging to minorities have different kindergarten experiences, and that access to information about the importance of early education can have a positive impact on parents' perceptions



	<p>of their children’s potential, especially for girls. By making kindergartens, information about education, and training for teachers of pupils belonging to minorities available to the most marginalised communities, Bulgaria can improve its economy and assume a leadership role in striving towards inclusion and prosperity in European Union (EU) Member States.</p> <p>Giving disadvantaged children access to pre-school is an important first step to ensure an even playing field, so that all children begin primary school with the tools they need to succeed. But as the results of this evaluation underscore, simply lifting barriers to enrolment is not always enough and disadvantaged children may need additional resources to ensure they are fully benefitting from educational services.</p> <p>Main findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simply doing away with tuition costs and other fees turned out to be the most cost-effective approach for increasing preschool enrolment and attendance.</li> <li>• Additional financial incentives didn’t matter, nor did additional information.</li> <li>• Making pre-school free also led to increased attendance at the informational meetings.</li> <li>• The information campaign had a positive impact on parent’s understanding of the importance of early education and improved their aspirations for their daughters, especially within Roma and other minority communities.</li> <li>• However, the program did not benefit children’s cognitive development, and in some developmental domains, it even had negative effects that were worse for Roma and Turkish children.</li> <li>• Lower parental involvement, combined with teacher quality, also may explain why children’s cognitive and social-emotional skills didn’t improve when they went to pre-school.</li> </ul>
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Name of the practice:	Implementation of the National Programme "Development of the Pre-Primary Education System"
Year of implementation:	School year 2017/2018
Coordinating authority:	Ministry of Education and Science
Objectives:	The objective of the National Programme is to improve the quality of pre-primary education and to ensure equal start before enrolment in school through the use of modern teaching materials and by encouraging the involvement of parents.
Main activities:	The main project activity includes additional Bulgarian language classes for children whose mother tongue is not the Bulgarian language. Apart from creating conditions for optimal physical and personal development of children by provision and use of modern teaching materials, the programme also focuses on promoting the

	active involvement of parents in the pre-primary education process. Parental involvement is a requisite element of the programme activities.
Results so far:	2 531 children whose mother tongue is not the Bulgarian language 2 562 parent are included in programme activities 402 teachers worked under the National Programme 1 603 children were awarded certificates for completed pre-primary education

