



**PAL LAB**

## State of the Art Review of the Educational System in Bulgaria

Developed by: ECF – Educational  
Cooperation Foundation Bulgaria

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## Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	3
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH FINDINGS .....	5
Section A: Examination of Reports .....	5
Report 1 .....	5
Report 2 .....	10
Report 3 .....	12
Report 4 .....	15
Report 5 .....	18
Report 6 .....	21
Report 7 .....	25
Report 8 .....	29
Section B: Revision of Case Studies .....	33
Case Study 1 .....	33
Case Study 2 .....	35
Case Study 3 .....	38
Case Study 4 .....	40
CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSIONS.....	43



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This document is created as part of the project PAL LAB: Pedagogical approaches for upskilling of teachers, mediators and experts working with Romani children and youth – Equal Opportunities and reducing early school leaving. It is an essential part of WP2 / Task 2.1: State of the art review of schools’ educational systems in partner countries, which will be delivered by all partner countries of the project.

The following document provides a consolidated report done by Educational Cooperation Foundation, Bulgaria. It is intended to provide an overview of the current stage of the national education system and its correlation with early school leaving.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

To create our report, our organization needed to make a detailed research over the available resources that are provided on the topic of teaching Roma children and youth. In order to provide a wider overview of the current situation, we looked for documents and reports made by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science, different schools in our country that teach Roma children and NGOs that work for the equal integration of Roma in Bulgarian society.

Looking at the available resources we could reach for the period of our research, it turned out to be a challenge to find accurate data and discover a brighter and wider overview of our project's topic. After careful consideration and research of different national strategies, policies and provided documentation of completed projects and activities, our organization decided to choose the report and case studies that map the situation in Bulgaria in the clearest way. Therefore, we have chosen to describe:

- Strategic framework for the development of schooling, education and learning in the republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030) by the Ministry of education and science;
- National action plan 2015-2020 for the implementation of the National strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma integration (2012 - 2020) by the Ministry of education and science;
- School strategy for prevention of school drop-out and reduction of early school leavers rate in the educational system at “Christo Botev” primary school, Krushovitsa village by “Christo Botev” primary school, Krushovitsa village;
- Interim Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for Reducing Early School Leavers (2013-2020) by the Ministry of education and science;
- Monitoring the implementation of the national strategy for roma integration by Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance;
- National strategy for promoting and enhancing literacy (2014 - 2020) by the Ministry of education and science;



- Strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities 2015-2020 by the Ministry of education and science;
- Citizen Monitoring Report on Implementation of the National Strategy for Integration of Roma of the Republic of Bulgaria - by the Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance "Amalipe", Association "World without Borders", Social Foundation "Indiroma", Roma Academy for Culture and Education and Gender Alternatives Foundation

Considering the findings we have described below in the section of the report, we also looked for practical examples of how schools are dealing with the situation of providing equal opportunities and reducing early school leaving. From our work and experience in working with teachers we have discovered many examples of successful school practices and we have chosen the ones that best describe the impact such creative and innovative approaches have:

- St. Paisii Hilendarski Primary school from Sotirya village with a special interest club named "Till the doctor comes";
- Vocational School of Light Industry, Ecology and Chemical Technologies, Professional school from Yambol city with linguistic competition, called "The limits of my language are the limits of my world";
- "Vasil Levski" Primary School, village of. Karadzhovo, municipality. Sadovo with "Charity evening of the school";
- Hristo Botev" Primary School located in Botevo village, municipality "Tundzha", Yambol region with the idea of "Open Doors Lessons".

The results that these schools share are truly inspiring and we are even more convinced that using creative, innovative and practical approach will help our partners' educational systems successfully deal with the educational integration , providing equal opportunities and reducing early school leaving for the Roma communities.



## CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH FINDINGS

### Section A: Examination of Reports

#### Report 1

##### General Information

**Name/Title of the Report:** Strategic framework for the development of schooling, education and learning in the republic of Bulgaria (2021 - 2030)

**Name of the Organization responsible for the Report:** Ministry of Education and Science

**Year of publication:** 2021

**Source / Reference:** <https://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=1399>

##### Executive Summary

This strategic document is created in accordance with the national vision and general policy objectives of Bulgaria's priorities in the field of "Education and Skills" of the National Development Programme Bulgaria 2030 in its part on pre-school and school education, vocational education and training and lifelong learning. It contents:

#### 1. Present status

The successful implementation of national policies in pre-school and school education is achieved through their integration with other public policies and a common focus of action. By engaging with parents, social partners, employers and citizens, education policies aim to be as visible and supportive as possible. Significant support for the implementation of the reforms set out in the Pre-school and School Education Act has also been provided through the European Structural and Investment Funds.

Here is a summary of the present status:

- Investment in the development and qualification of pedagogical specialists
- Having a sustainable policy to address teacher understaffing in the education system
- Providing a phased increase in remuneration appropriations for the period 2017 to 2021. In numbers, the starting teacher's salary at the beginning of 2017 was 660 BGN and for 2021 it has reached 1260 BGN.



- The interest in pedagogical professional fields and specialties in higher education is stimulated
- A Strategy for Educational Work in Educational Institutions has been approved and is being implemented. Its aim is the formation of personal qualities, values, attitudes and motives to support the full development of the child/student as a person and member of society.
- Measures are being implemented to expand access to pre-school education, to motivate parents for active cooperation between the family and the kindergarten, to implement innovations in pre-school education.
- A Mechanism for joint work of institutions on inclusion, inclusion and drop-out prevention (the Mechanism) is implemented. As a result of the Mechanism's activities, between 2017 and February 2020, outreach teams have returned 51,460 children and students back to school and kindergarten or enrolled them for the first time.
- In order to support the process of educational integration, a Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities has been established and the Operational Programme "Science and Education for Smart Growth" includes the investment priority "Socio-economic Integration of Marginalised Communities such as the Roma".
- Successes have been achieved in terms of increasing the number of children and pupils from vulnerable groups, including Roma, in pre-school and school education, and their participation in secondary and higher education.
- Standards and curricula are being streamlined to link more closely the knowledge and skills acquired at school with their practical application.
- Networks of innovative schools are supported from 2019.
- According to the predicted shortage of staff, there are various innovative new measures being implemented in regards to dual education, admissions to schools etc.
- Efforts continue to modernize and renovate the educational infrastructure and facilities in kindergartens and schools.

## **2. Challenges**

- The set of skills required for life in the 21st century is constantly expanding and dynamically changing.
- The success of individuals as well as the well-being of societies will increasingly be determined by the extent to which education shapes each person's values and value-oriented behaviour.
- It is crucial that we change the environment, subject areas and teaching methods at a pace that matches or addresses the dynamics of a changing world.



- Digitalisation and new technologies, in particular artificial intelligence, are changing the world and the structure of professions. They need to be prepared to adapt flexibly to emerging new professions.
- Deepening social inequalities and migration processes globally make it difficult for certain groups to be included in education and actively participate in the labour market. Bulgaria faces socio-economic, demographic and other barriers to education.

Over the next 10 years, policies for quality inclusive education need to be sustained and built upon in Bulgaria. Particular attention will be paid to the full inclusion and mainstreaming in the educational process of children/students with special educational needs, from vulnerable groups, including Roma, those seeking or granted international protection and migrants.

### **3. Analysis of internal and external environmental factors**

In this field in the Strategy a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis has been made. It provides details over the present status already described and summarized above.

### **4. Vision and priority areas**

This Strategic Framework forms the following Vision for Education, Training and Learning in the Republic of Bulgaria in 2030:

“In 2030, all Bulgarian youth will graduate from school as functionally literate, innovative, socially responsible and active citizens motivated to build on their competences through lifelong learning.”

In order to achieve this vision and following the results of the SWOT analysis, 9 main priorities have been defined:

- ✓ Early childhood development
- ✓ Competences and talents
- ✓ Motivated and creative teachers
- ✓ Cohesive school communities and systematic work with parents
- ✓ Effective and sustainable inclusion, and educational integration
- ✓ Educational innovation, digital transformation and sustainable development
- ✓ Realization in the professions of the present and the future
- ✓ Lifelong learning
- ✓ Effective management and participation in networks



The priority areas cover all relevant cross-cutting challenges in the education and training system, following a holistic approach and in line with the identified policy areas.

## 5. Indicators of benefits / results

### Highlights

The Strategic framework for the development of schooling, education and learning in the republic of Bulgaria contains strong indicators in regards to the changes it is aiming to make till 2030:

	Name	Source	Current Value	Target value by 2030	Average value in the EU
1	Proportion of children aged 4 enrolled in pre-school education compared to the total number of children aged 4	Eurostat	76,6% as of 2018	91,0%	88,6% as of 2018
2	Proportion of children aged 7 enrolled in school compared to the total number of children aged 7	Eurostat	90,5% as of 2018	98,0%	97,7% as of 2018
3	Net ratio of children aged 3 to first grade enrolled in organized early childhood development groups	Eurostat	82,4% as of 2018	86,3%	95,4% as of 2018
4	Gross primary enrolment ratio (% of population of primary school age)	UN, Human Development Index	89% as of 2018	100%	N/A
5	Primary school dropout rate (% of primary school cohort)	UN, Human Development Index	6% as of 2018	0%	N/A
6	Proportion of early school leavers	Eurostat	12,7% as of 2018	7%	10,6% as of 2018
7	Proportion of early leavers from education and training by level 2 statistical regions	Eurostat	As of 2019:		N/A
	- North-West		22,9%	17,2%	
	- North Central		7,5%	2,5%	
	- North-East		18,7%	13,0%	
	- South-west		5,6%	1,5%	
	- South Central		16,3%	10,6%	
	- Southeastern		27,2%	21,0%	





8	Early school leavers by sex	Eurostat	As of 2019 Men - 14,5; Women - 13,3	Men - 7%; Women - 7%	Men - 11,9%; Women - 8,6%
9	Proportion of children aged 4-6 not enrolled in pre-primary education	Eurostat	17,6% as of 2018	5,0%	4,7% as of 2018
10	Average years spent in education	UN, Human Development Index	11,8 years as of 2019	14 years	N/A
11	Proportion of students scoring below critical (average across the three study areas)	OECD - PISA	46,0% as of 2018	25,0%	23,6% as of 2018
12	Percentage of Grade 4 students below average reading ability	PIRLS 2016	17	8	20
13	Percentage of Grade 4 students below average ability level in mathematics	TIMSS 2019	29	15	25
14	Employment rate of recent VET graduates (1-3 years) who do not continue their education	Eurostat	68,6% as of 2019 r.	80,0%	77,6% as of 2019 r.
15	Proportion of young people (aged 20-24) with at least secondary education	Eurostat	84,4% as of 2019 r.	92,0%	83,9% as of 2019 r.
16	Relative share of the population (25-64 years), participating in education and training (4 weeks before the survey)	Eurostat	2,5% as of 2018 r.	7,0%	11,1% as of 2018 r.
17	Proportion of the population aged 25-64 in formal and non-formal education Participation of the population aged 25-64 in formal and non-formal education (12 months before the survey)	Eurostat	24,6% as of 2016 r.	33%	38% as of 2016 r.
18	Proportion of teachers aged 35 and under	Eurostat	11,4% as of 2018 r.	32,0%	20,1% as of 2018 r.
19	Full-time and part-time teachers in primary and secondary education - as % of total active population	Eurostat	1,7% as of 2018 r.	2,0%	2,1% as of 2018 r.
20	Percentage of preservice teachers who feel (very) well prepared to teach in a	OECD, TALIS	78,8% as of 2018 r.	85,0%	86,6%



	multicultural or multilingual environment , %				
21	Population with basic digital skills	DESI	29% as of 2019 r.	37%	57% as of 2019 r.
22	Percentage of pre-secondary teachers who feel (very) well prepared to use IT in teaching	OECD, TALIS	77,4% as of 2018 r.	84%	83,9%
23	Proportion of lower secondary teachers who feel (very) well prepared to work with talented and SEN pupils	OECD, TALIS	71,8% as of 2018 r.	80% %	N/A
24	Proportion of people with basic or above basic general numeracy skills aged 16-74 living in a household with children under 16	Eurostat	32%, as of 2019 r.	58,0%	64% as of 2019 r.

## Report 2

### General Information

**Name/Title of the Report** - National action plan 2015-2020 for the implementation of the National strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma integration (2012 - 2020)

**Name of the Organization responsible for the Report** - Ministry of education and science

**Year of publication** - 2015

**Source / Reference** - NPlan\_NS\_RBulgaria\_romi\_2012\_2020.pdf

### Executive Summary

This report includes the Priority areas, Changes in the legal framework, Inter-ministerial working group for coordinated interventions for Roma integration funded by the programmes of the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020, Operational structures, Common Communication Plan by 2020 and expected results that the National action plan will bring.

The first part provides a detailed description of all the prioritized activities included and developed by the institutions that develop and implement measures under the priorities of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma integration (2012-2020). Those institutions also participate in their reporting and evaluation:

- Ministry of Education - Regional Education Inspectorate
- Ministry of Health - Regional Health Inspectorate



- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy: Employment Agency, State Agency for Children; Social Assistance Agency.
- Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Youth and Sports
- Ministry of the Interior
- National Commission for Combating Human Trafficking
- Central Commission for Combating Juvenile Delinquency
- Commission for Protection against Discrimination

**The priority areas included in the National action plan are: Education, Healthcare, Employment, Housing conditions, Rule of law and non-discrimination, Culture.** For each of these priority areas, there are objectives described with a detailed measure description and impact assessment and results. The National Action Plan for the period 2015-2020 in implementation of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration (2012-2020), contains an overall of 112 priority actions.

## Highlights

In the priority field of education, the Ministry of education decided to work on the objective of: “Reaching and retaining Roma children and students in the education system. Providing quality education in a multicultural educational environment.” They have described the following goals:

- Goal 1:** Guarantee the right to equal access to quality education, including through the integration of children and students of Roma origin in ethnically mixed kindergartens and schools
- Goal 2:** Increase the quality of education in separate kindergartens and schools in large Roma neighborhoods and in rural regions where they teach predominantly Roma children and pupils
- Goal 3:** Teaching in a spirit of tolerance and non-discrimination in kindergartens and schools. Preserving and developing the cultural identity of children and pupils of Roma origin
- Goal 4:** Prevention of school dropout and literacy of illiterate and low-literate Roma adults
- Goal 5:** Implement a variety of forms and programs to work with children with learning gaps and school dropouts to help their reintegration



- f. Goal 6:** Include parents of Roma children and students in the educational process and increase their participation in school life
- g. Goal 7:** Improve the quality of education by qualifying pedagogical specialists for interaction in a multicultural educational environment and for intercultural competence
- h. Goal 8:** Introduce the practice of teacher's assistant in the system of preschool and school education

Each of these goals has their priority actions and they are 31 for the field of Education. The implementation of the activities for priority “Education” will contribute to the inclusion and integration of Roma children and students in the education system, ensuring quality education in a multicultural educational environment.

The effective implementation of the activities set out in the plan will contribute to the realization of the objectives set out in the National Strategy of Republic of Bulgaria for Roma integration (2012-2020).

### Report 3

#### General Information

**Name/Title of the Report :** School strategy for prevention of school drop-out and reduction of early school leavers rate in the educational system at “Christo Botev” primary school, Krushovitsa village

**Name of the Organization responsible for the Report :** “Christo Botev” primary school, Krushovitsa village

**Year of publication:** 2018

**Source / Reference:** [https://ou-krushovitsa.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/strategia\\_otpadane.pdf](https://ou-krushovitsa.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/strategia_otpadane.pdf)

#### Executive Summary

The development of the “School strategy for prevention of school drop-out and reduction of early school leavers rate in the educational system at “Christo Botev” primary school, Krushovitsa village” (2016-2020) is created in line with the strategy of the Regional Inspectorate of Education - Vratsa to implement the state policy in the field of education at the regional level. It specifies the key measures in policies for prevention, intervention and compensation of early school leaving. The strategy is based on the guiding principles of legality, coherence, partnership, transparency and



dissemination of measures and results, continuity, sustainability of results as defined in the national strategy, timeliness, accountability, monitoring and control and innovation.

**This School strategy has the following objectives:**

1. Development, implementation and monitoring of the school policy for reducing the risk of early school leaving of the education system through targeted, unified impact, the creation of a set of measures and cooperation with the relevant stakeholders. There is a need to introduce a system of drop-out prevention activities.
2. Improvement of the work of pedagogical teams in developing and implementing their own programmes, resulting in a reduction in the number of pupils at risk of dropping out.
3. Increase the variety and effectiveness of measures and activities implemented by schools to prevent and reduce the risk of early school leaving by supporting and publicizing good practices and policies. The need to be ready to meet new challenges related to the preconditions for dropping out (social and economic factors, migration processes, frequent change of residence, etc.)
  - a. implementation of a coherent set of policies, plans and measures at municipal and school level, in line with national standards and based on systematic monitoring, analysis, evaluation, regular reporting and transparency, from which corrective action can be taken, the development of resources and targeting impact according to identified needs;
  - b. improved learning outcomes, regional assessments and appropriate educational support provided for the development of every pupil, including pupils from vulnerable ethnic communities and pupils with special educational needs;
4. Building motivation for school attendance and participation in school community life. Achievement indicator - unexcused and excused absences (reduction).
5. Create positive attitudes towards the learning process. Achievement indicator - success of at-risk students.

Achievement of the defined objectives and expected outcomes will be monitored and measured through the quantitative indicators attached to each specific measure.

## Highlights



Important part of the document is the Analysis of the situation at “Christo Botev” primary school, Krushovitsa village, which includes statistical data for the school years 2012-2013 to 2015-2016:

School year:	Total number of dropouts:	Percentage (%):
2012-2013	0	0
2013-2014	2	0.8
2014-2015	1	0.9
2015-2016	1	0.9

According to the above data, for the last 4 years, the number of dropouts has remained stable. An unfavorable circumstance in the village of Krushovitsa is the increasing processes of emigration abroad or to the larger city, the reasons for which can be sought in the severe economic crisis characteristic of the region. In addition, the number of absenteeism in the last 2 years has increased, the carriers are students at risk of dropping out, low social and educational status of the family, careless attitude towards education and future.

Following the statistical data provided, the School strategy was developed accordingly and contains a detailed description of the activities for the implementation of the Regional strategy to reduce school dropout and early school leavers rate (2016 - 2020). They are divided into two main fields:

1. Drop-out and early school leaving **prevention** policies - it contains different school measures and policies to prevent and support students and actions to provide a positive learning environment;
2. Drop-out and early school leaving **intervention** policies - which takes into consideration providing timely and adequate support to students and support for teachers by strengthening individual and group mentoring.

**Activities carried out by the school to date:**

- Timely and adequate response to any absence from school related to irregular attendance and risk of dropping out -home visits, discussions, support, etc.;
- Individual work with students at risk of dropping out and their families by community educators;
- Involvement in ECD, GCSEs, competitions and Olympiads
- Involvement of at-risk students in activities and initiatives of the CCC
- Free breakfasts grades I-IV



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- Free textbooks Grades I-VII
- Free transport
- “School Fruit”

## Report 4

### General Information

**Name/Title of the Report :** Interim Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for Reducing Early School Leavers (2013-2020)

**Name of the Organization responsible for the Report :** Ministry of education and science

**Year of publication:** 2019

**Source / Reference:** <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/bg/resource-centre/content/mezhdinen-doklad-za-izplnenieto-prez-2019-g-na-strategiyata-za-namalyavane>.

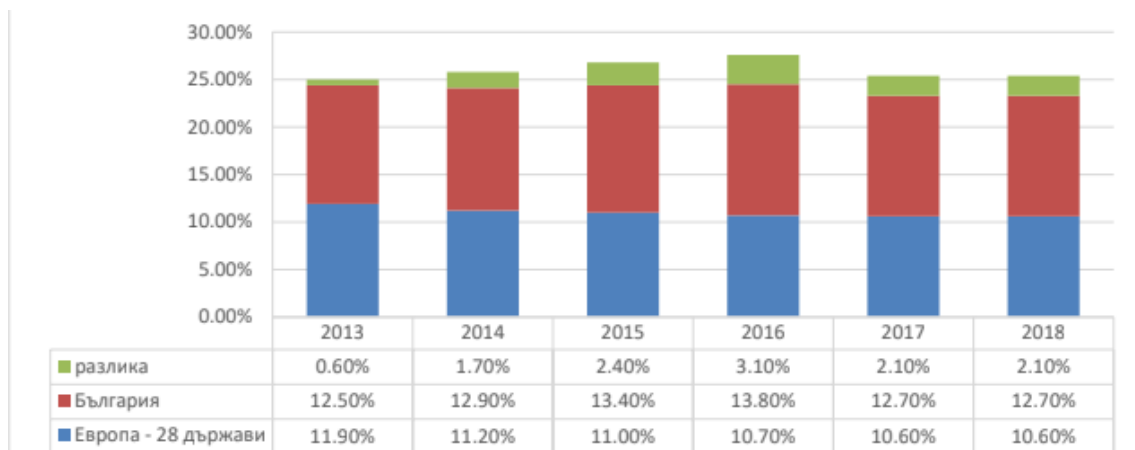
### Executive Summary

This interim report on the implementation of the Strategy presents the results of the implementation of the set policies and measures, taken for prevention, intervention and compensation of early school leavers. It contains the information reported by competence by the different stakeholders - ministries and departments, directorates and units in the Ministry of Education and Science.

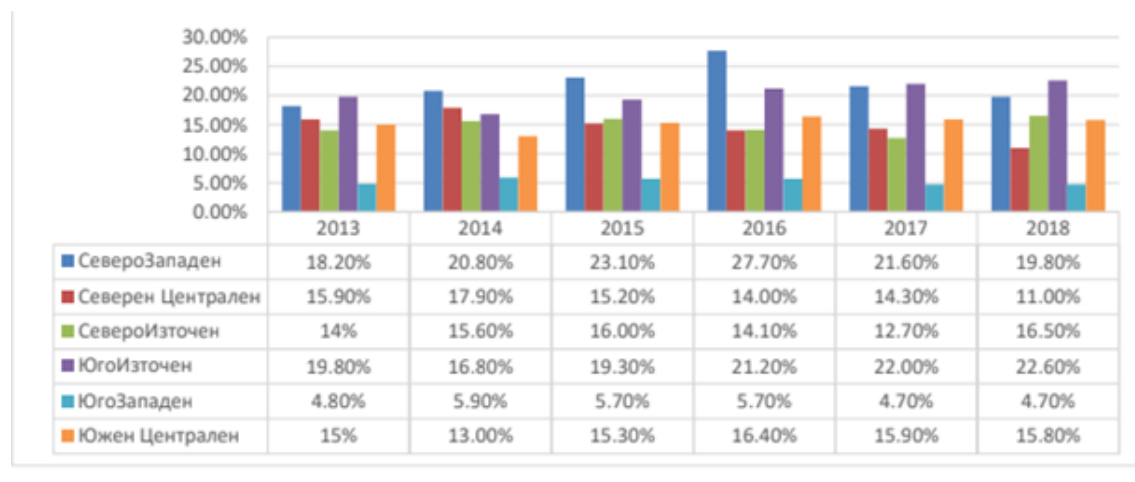
The Interim report examines the main challenges the education system in Bulgaria is facing in terms of the out-of-school and drop-out rates and the identification of children and students at risk of dropping out of school, especially those of compulsory pre-school and school age. Conclusions and recommendations are formulated, which are also conditioned in the context of the current values of the share of early school leavers and other key indicators of the progress of the Republic of Bulgaria in the field of education and training.

### Highlights

Bulgaria is one of the first countries in the European Union to acknowledge the problem of early school leaving and is developing specific policies to reduce the share of early school leavers. At the time this report was written, planning was made to reduce this share to 11% by 2020. The dynamics of early school leavers (ESL for short) for the period 2013 to 2018 - average for EU countries and Bulgaria, is observed in the table below. Please note: in blue is “Europe”, in red - “Bulgaria” and in green - the difference between them:



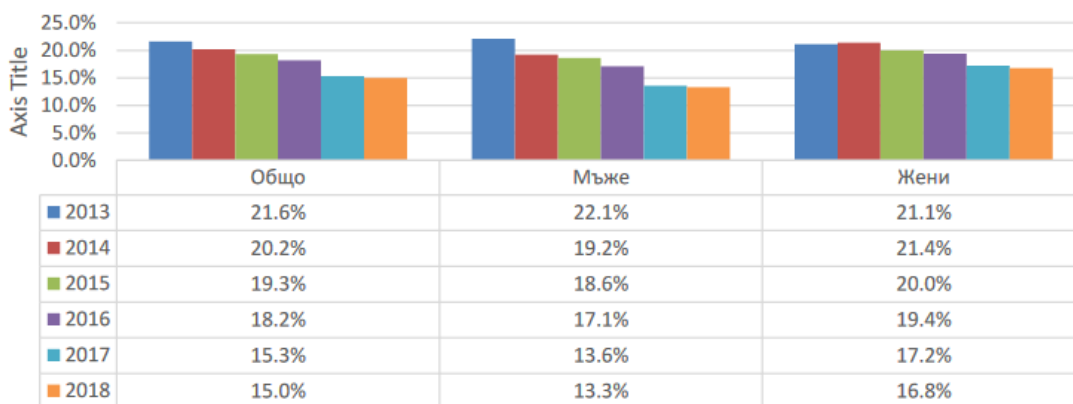
Since 2013, the value of the share of early school leavers for Bulgaria has increased from 12.5% in 2013 to 13.8% in 2016. In 2017, for the first time since 2013 the value of the indicator shows a positive change, decreasing to 12.7%. For 2018 The value of the share of early school leavers remains at the level of 2017 - 12.7%, i.e. In 2018, no progress is noted. In Bulgaria, the trend of differences in the share of early school leavers by statistical regions. In the table below, you can find the statistics for the Dynamics and share of early school leavers in Bulgaria for 2013-2018 by region. In colors you can find: dark blue - Northwestern; red - North Central; green - Northeastern; violet - Southeastern; light blue - Southwestern; orange - South-Central region:



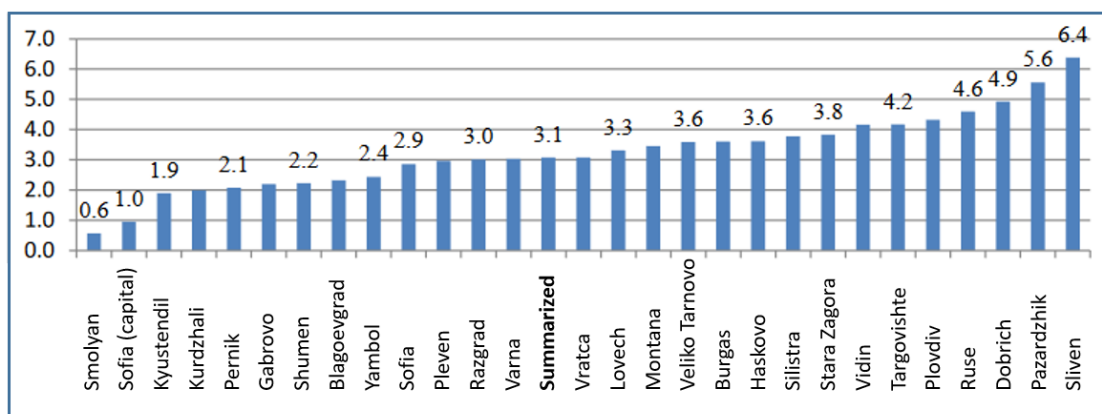


This figure shows that during the period, the lowest rates were for the South West region, where the value for 2018 reached 4.3% and marked a decrease compared to past years. This is mainly due to the very good educational structure of young people in the capital. The highest early school leavers rates in 2018 were observed in the Northwest region at 19.6% and in the Southeast region at 22.6%. In addition, the mentioned two regions have the highest values for the whole period 2013-2018. Overcoming these challenges requires flexibility, resilience and coherent action by all stakeholders at both region, municipality and school policies.

In addition to these statistics, in the report we can find statistics for the share of unemployed and out-of-school youth aged 15-24 for the period 2013 - 2018. In the first column is data for men and women together, in the second - only for men, in 3rd - only for women:

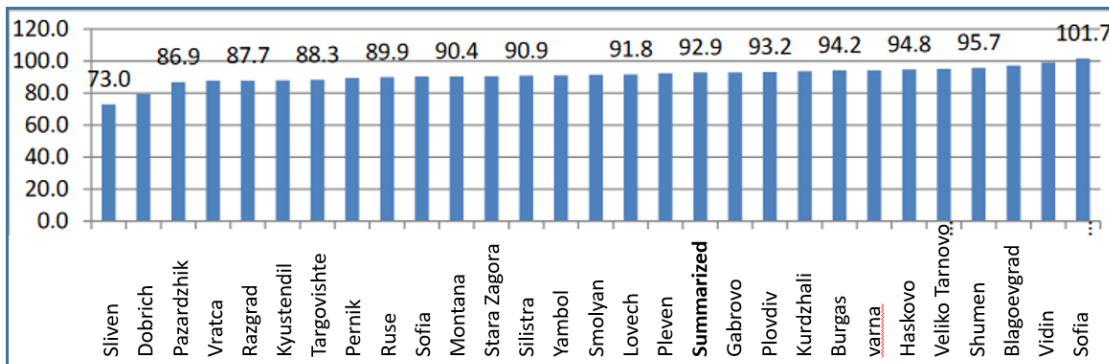


There are also a few statistics for the Relative share - % school leavers for the school year 2017/2018 by district for the different grades. Here is the statistics for I - VII grade:



The ratio between the number of students in grade VIII in a given academic year and the number of students in grade VII in the previous school year characterizes the "passability" of the education system at the border between primary and secondary education. Children not enrolled in grade VIII fall into the category of out-of-school

children at compulsory education age and are subsequently sought out by outreach teams. This "leakage" of students subsequently affects both the educational structure of the population, as well as on the strategic indicator for early school leavers of 18-24 years of age. The following statistics shows the ratio between the number of students in class VIII during the school year 2018/2019 and the number of students in class VII in the previous academic year 2017/2018:



There are many factors for early school leaving that are described in the report, but here are a few important ones that also show the difference between genders as well:

- cultural factors (strong pressure of ethno-cultural traditions) - forced separation of girls from the educational process by the parent and their involvement in looking after younger siblings, household chores, childcare marriages, etc.;
- insufficient flexibility and coherence of literacy and employment policies; and insufficient effectiveness of reintegration measures into the education system. B this requires a greater degree of coherence between the actions of institutions and local businesses in order to 'close the circle' - once a person is literate and has mastered the relevant learning content, to be supported in gaining qualifications and finding employment.

The data from the study of reasons for leaving school found that more than half of pupils leave because they go abroad. The reasons for this are mostly economical, as they and their families search for better living conditions or work. Most departures of pupils from home to abroad are not registered under the Civil Registration Act when changing their current address.

**Lastly, in this report one can find details in regards to the many implemented policies by the Ministry of education and science described in detail with relevant data for the effects they have for prevention of early school leavers.**

**Report 5**



## General Information

**Name/Title of the Report:** Monitoring the implementation of the national strategy for roma integration

**Name of the Organization responsible for the Report:** Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance

**Year of publication:** 2021

**Source / Reference:** [https://amalipe.bg/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Monitoring\\_na\\_izpalnenieto\\_na\\_Nacionalna\\_strategia\\_z\\_a\\_integracia\\_na\\_romite\\_WEB\\_BG.pdf](https://amalipe.bg/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Monitoring_na_izpalnenieto_na_Nacionalna_strategia_z_a_integracia_na_romite_WEB_BG.pdf)

## Executive Summary

This report provides a detailed analysis and aims to contribute to the evaluation of the concluding National Strategy for Roma Integration and its implementation in terms of necessary changes in the new document for equality, inclusion and participation of the Roma community. The detailed analysis complements the existing evaluation reports of the National Strategy - the Civic Monitoring Reports on the implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Integration in Bulgaria, produced by a broad coalition of leading Roma NGO organizations and the Evaluation of Integration Policies towards Roma in the period 2012-2019, from by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

In the document we can find:

- a description of the current situation of the Roma community in Bulgaria;
- an overview of the policies Bulgaria used to have before its admission to the EU;
- a detailed analysis of the National Strategy for Roma Integration in Bulgaria with comments on its different parts and how the actions were actually implemented versus what was planned;
- Actual monitoring of the institutional framework at national and local level and financial framework with allocated budgets
- Overview of 2 out of the 6 main priorities stated in the national strategy for roma integration: rule of law and non-discrimination

This monitoring report provides a great overview of the actual implementation of the national strategy for roma integration with examples, critics and appraisals.

**Among the important merits of the National Strategy we can point out:**

- It has been adopted by a decision of the National Assembly. This makes the strategy binding for implementation by all institutions, including those that are not directly



subordinate to the executive - municipalities, ombudsman, Commission for Protection against Discrimination and others;

- Realistic national targets have been set for most of the Strategy's priorities;
- A decentralized implementation modality is foreseen through a mandatory requirement for
- the preparation and adoption by decision of the relevant municipal council of Municipal Roma Integration Plans
- There is an Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy
- An important advantage is the inclusive way of preparing the strategy through the participation of the civil sector and all stakeholders.

Despite the above-mentioned advantages, the National Strategy for Roma Integration also contains a number of weaknesses which prevent its implementation from bringing about a real change in the situation of Roma communities.

**Among the main weaknesses we can point out:**

- Lack of appropriate administrative infrastructure for the implementation of the integration. An adequate infrastructure to implement integration policies;
- Lack of appropriate indicators and mechanisms Monitoring and evaluation of implementation;
- A weak action plan that only summarises already implemented by the various ministries no consistency and no added value;
- Lack of commitment and political will on the part of the various ministries - or at least a large part of them - to implement and prioritise the relevant integration policies;
- Key obstacles to the implementation of the National Integration Strategy for deepening anti-Roma stereotypes and discrimination. Priority Rule of law and non-discrimination in the National Strategy contains numerous gaps and weaknesses - both in strategic and operational level.

These strengths and weaknesses should be taken into account when developing a new National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for equality, inclusion and participation of Roma 2021- 2030

**Highlights**

One of the most significant parts that concerns our project, is the description on the commitment of the national budget. As described in the report, it remains modest and is primarily aimed at covering the costs of recruiting different types of mediators - health, labour and education.

Here is an overview table of the 120 actions that were included in the Plan, showing that for 71 of them there is no targeted funding secured:



Priority area	Number of actions	With provided Funding	No targeted funding secured:
Education	40	13	27
Health	39	27	12
Labour	8	0	8
Housing conditions	18	6	12
Rule of law	7	3	4
Culture and media	8	0	8

Nevertheless, in the overview of the many different aspects of the Monitoring report, we find that the only positive development **in the last 3 years has been in the field of education**, where the national budget has started to provide relatively large amounts for the activities of schools educating students from vulnerable groups. The provision of services to schools and kindergartens educating more than 20% of children and pupils from families with a low educational status is the first case in which the state budget has committed to this type of support. This is in connection with the implementation of the commitment to increase teachers' salaries and the allocated funds are actually for salaries and fees. The Ministry of Education recommends that educational mediators are employed with these funds.

## Report 6

### General Information

**Name/Title of the Report:** National strategy for promoting and enhancing literacy (2014 - 2020)

**Name of the Organization responsible for the Report:** Ministry of education and science

**Year of publication:** 2014

**Source / Reference:** strategy\_literacy\_22.10.2014

### Executive Summary

This report describes Bulgaria's National strategy for promoting and enhancing literacy for the period 2014 to 2020. In the Strategy, different measures are envisaged to increase literacy, to address the causes of the lack of satisfactory literacy. Particular



attention is paid to at-risk groups - those where low incomes limit learning opportunities and reduce motivation, and **those where language is a significant barrier to education**. Emphasis is placed on the creation of an environment to promote literacy, in which special attention is given to modern information tools and the role of teachers in this environment. Specialized training of all teachers in modern teaching methods and reading diagnosis is provided.

The targets in the educational and training fields that Europe is aiming for with the program Horizon 2020 are outlined as well as the results for our country of the international study PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study), aimed at measuring the reading skills of 10-year-olds (students in grade IV). This study shows that Bulgaria has the 16th result out of 48 participating countries from all over the world and the achievement of Bulgarian fourth graders is 532 points with an average score of the participating countries 500 points. As an overall result, the studies show that Bulgarian students have achieved the necessary basic literacy to a high degree, but still a significant group of them do not have the necessary functional literacy.

The strategy provides for periodic standardized external and internal assessments to provide a clear picture of student achievement and the need to optimize teaching methods and modernize the educational environment. Assessment should take into account the specificities of the particular subject and class and the expected results at the end of each stage, on the one hand, and established international assessments, on the other.

## Highlights

The processes of dropping out or early school leaving are directly correlated with the acquisition of functional literacy, and hence with improving socio-economic factors and ultimately economic growth.

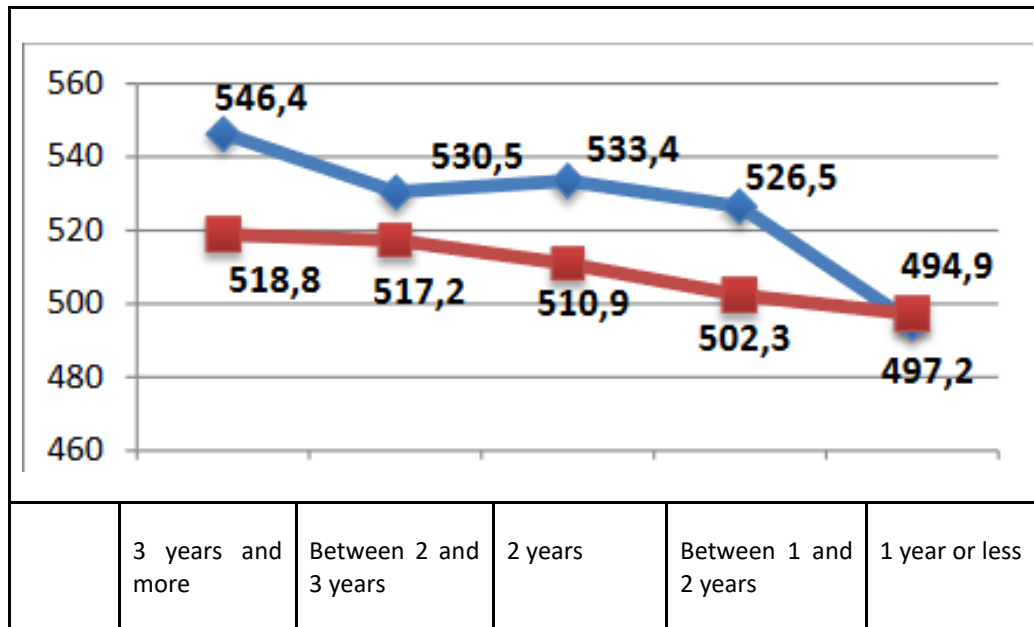
For the first time during the 2011 census in Bulgaria, the category "never attended school" was added. According to the National Statistical Institute (NSI), the number of such persons in Bulgaria was 81 thousand, or 1.2% of the population aged 8 and over. The number of illiterate persons in Bulgaria is 112 778, and their relative share of the population aged 9 and over is 1.5%. In the self-identified as Bulgarians 0.5% are illiterate, in the Turkish ethnic group - 4.7%, **and in the Roma - 11.8% (NSI, 2011)**. Overall our country's data on the share of early school leavers is at the level of the EU average (12.5% for Bulgaria vs. 12.8% for the EU in 2012).

In the 2011 International Reading Literacy Study PIRLS3 examined the relationship of children's achievement and length of attendance of preschool (ISCED Level 0). The results presented in the graph below clearly show that there is a pronounced relationship between the achievement of children's achievement and their participation in pre-school education and training, which for Bulgaria is even strongly



correlated. Further efforts are therefore needed to cover children from the age of 4 years up to their entry into first grade in pre-school (87.8%, 2013).

The blue line is for Bulgaria and the red line shows the medium results for 45 participating countries:



According to the PISA international reading survey (2012), 39.4% of sampled Bulgarian students scored below the critical second level (out of six levels). When compared with previous studies - PISA (2006) and PISA (2009), the results of the latest PISA (2012) confirm the existence of a positive trend for our country - the share of students scoring below the critical threshold has steadily decreased from 51.1% (2006) to 41% (2009) and to 39.4% (2012).

This raises the question of the gap between the performance of 10- and 15-year-old bulgarian students. The explanation can be sought in the nature of the two researches - PIRLS is oriented towards measuring basic perceptual skills and processing information from different types of text, while PISA is aimed at interpretation of information from text, to interpret and make sense of the content and its form. Clearly, our students have achieved to a high degree the necessary basic literacy, but a critical group of them still do not have the necessary functional literacy. And the reasons for this are not solely in school but are complex. There are several groups at risk in our country - the poor, where low incomes limits opportunities and reduces motivation; bilinguals, where lack of Bulgarian language skills is a significant barrier to education; **Roma children, where poverty and language increase barriers to education.**



In the search for solutions that will lead to a significant increase in students' reading skills, a number of integrated and comprehensive measures were applied, the basic of which include:

#### **Prevention measures**

- Expanding the scope of pre-school education and training with extending pre-school education and training to 5-year-olds
- Gradually expanding the provision of full-day schooling days
- Provision of additional Bulgarian language modules in the nursery for children whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian

#### **Intervention measures**

- Diagnosis of gaps and provision of additional training in Bulgarian language and literature (NP "With care for every student") and monitoring of the progress
- Increasing motivation to learn through meaningful leisure time (Success Project)
- Focus on functional literacy in national external assessments and state matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature by including questions and tasks, that provoke thinking and application of learning in new and unfamiliar situations to solve everyday life cases
- Holding interdisciplinary competitions and Olympiads (e.g. I Know and I Can Olympiad) and national initiatives (e.g. Be Literate, "Little Big Read")
- Improvement of standards and teaching curricula (Operational program "Raising the quality of general education) with a focus on the acquisition of key competences and increasing functional literacy.

#### **Compensation measures**

- Development and implementation of an adult literacy system (Operational program "New Chance for success)

Despite the existence of a variety of initiatives aimed at promoting reading, they are very sporadic and not yet subject to a united government policy which consolidates the efforts of all stakeholder institutions and communities.

**At the end of this report, details over the mentioned researches can be found as well as detailed description over the main activities for the implementation of the Strategy.** Among the main activities, we find Measure 2. Overcoming inequalities for bilinguals, which includes:

- Providing additional support for children whose mother tongue is different than Bulgarian





- Offering of language courses for parents who do not speak Bulgarian and for persons seeking or being granted international protection
- Development and implementation of a system for assessing the level of proficiency of Bulgarian language by persons whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian
- Development of school programmes for joint activities with parents and local community to support the acquisition of the Bulgarian language.

At the end, we can also find a list with examples of school initiatives to promote literacy among students, which only shows again the willingness of our educational system to search for effective ways to work for more inclusion and prevention of drop-outs.

### Report 7

#### General Information

**Name/Title of the Report:** Strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities 2015-2020

**Name of the Organization responsible for the Report:** Ministry of education and science

**Year of publication:** 2014

**Source / Reference:** Strategy\_obrazovatelna\_integracia\_2015

#### Executive Summary

The Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from ethnic minorities, upgrades the approved Strategy by the Minister of Education and Science in 2004 and updated in 2010, which was the first sectoral document contributing to the development of Bulgarian education in the context of the educational integration of children and pupils from ethnic minorities. This Strategy aims at achieving acceptable solutions to such severe problems inherited from the recent past, such as the segregation of schools in Roma neighborhoods and the secondary segregation of schools around these neighborhoods in more recent times. Discovering those solutions is possible with a well-planned, locally specific and manageable desegregation process , with joint efforts of responsible institutions and civil society organizations.



In the content of this report, we can find:

1. Problems relating to the educational integration of children and pupils from ethnic minorities
2. Analysis of educational integration policies
3. Guiding principles for strategy implementation
4. Strategic objectives
5. Activities to achieve the strategic objectives
6. expected results
7. Planning, monitoring and reporting on implementation strategy
8. Evaluation of implementation of the strategy

The need for development of an action plan has to enable the Ministry of Education and Science to improve the coordination between the directorates, the secondary budget authorizing officers municipalities, universities training teaching staff and structures of the civil society working on educational integration issues.

## Highlights

In the last 15 years, some significant success is marked in the field of educational integration. First of all, there are the adoption of the Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and students from ethnic minorities since 2004. In the short term afterwards, in view of its implementation, proceeded to building and strengthening administrative capacity in the field of education: a department was established in the Ministry of Education (for the period 2006 - 2010); each Regional Education Inspectorate appointed an expert to be responsible for educational integration; Education Integration Advisory Council was established under the Minister for Education and Science. Particularly important was the establishment of the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Education of Ethnic Minority Students in 2005 - an institution with the exclusive purpose to support the process of educational integration, which alone continues its activities.

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in integration issues of ethnic minorities by region: appointment of experts in municipalities and regional municipalities; development of municipal strategies for educational integration; carrying out sociological and scientific research; activities of NGOs. At the same time, important strategic such as the National Strategy for Demographic Development of the Population in Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2030) and National Strategy in Republic of Bulgaria for the Roma Integration (2012-2020).



A number of measures have been implemented to improve access to quality education, which have led to positive results. One of the most important is the phased introduction of compulsory pre-school education for all children aged 5 years old according to the latest changes. Over the last 11 years, the number of children attending kindergarten has increased from 201 145 to 240 622, and the net enrolment ratio in kindergartens has increased from 78.0% to 85.5 %. Here is the data of Net enrolment ratios in enrolment in education by age group (%):

Coverage by age groups	2003 - 2004	2013 - 2014
3-6 years old	78%	85.5%
7-10 years old	~100	97.2%
11-14 years old	98.1%	95.1%
15-18 years old	82.8%	87.3%
19-23 years old	29.7%	43.7%

According to the National Representative Equality Pathway to Progress Survey in 2011, the inclusion of children from vulnerable ethnic communities and groups in pre-school education and training is significantly lower than the national average. The proportion of children attending kindergarten for children aged 3 to 6 years among ethnic Bulgarians is over 55%, while for children of Roma origin is almost twice lower - only 30.9%. **A large part of children whose mother tongue is different from Bulgarian face difficulties in the process of learning, which often leads to their social exclusion in the school community.** The phased introduction of full-day education in Bulgarian schools is had a positive impact on the quality of education and training of all pupils, but the benefits for pupils from vulnerable ethnic groups are undeniable. Here is a statistics of changes in the 10 years period from 2001 to 2011 for population aged 15 and over by education for the three largest ethnic groups (by self-definition):

Education	Bulgarians			Turkish			Roma		
	2001	%	2011	2001	%	2011	2001	%	2011
Higher	17.8	%	24.2	2.1	%	4.5	0.2	%	0.5
Secondary education	46.0	%	50.6	21.2	%	28.4	5.9	%	8.3
Primary education	27.8	%	20.9	48.3	%	46.7	40.5	%	42.1
Elementary education	6.9	%	3.4	18.4	%	13.1	29.5	%	28.1



Incomplete primary or never attended school	1.5	%	0.9	10.0	%	7.2	24.0	%	21.1
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The data also show a clear trend of increasing numbers of young people from the largest ethnic groups - Bulgarians, Turks and Roma - successfully completing secondary and higher education. However, studies and analyses show that enrolment rates in all levels of education for Roma are much lower than for all other ethnic groups. According to 2011 census data, in the population of children of compulsory school age (7 to 15 years), **Roma children not attending school accounted for 23.2%**, Turkish children 11.9%, ethnic Bulgarians 5.6% 8 .

To achieve these results in recent years in Bulgaria there is an effort put to develop better teaching curricula and content of general education subjects in the direction of intercultural understanding. New opportunities are sought for interaction between children from different ethno-cultural communities. The focus on educational integration has given momentum to a number of intercultural initiatives at school level, most often within the framework of projects financially supported by European and other international sources and implemented with the active participation of civil society organisations. Learning Teaching materials were developed, pedagogical specialists were trained to implement intercultural approaches and programmes. Teachers are continuously trained to work in multicultural educational environments and the appointment of a 'teacher's assistant' also have had a positive impact. However, a number of unresolved problems can be pointed out in the area of intercultural education, the most important of which are:

- the intercultural approach is still not fundamental in planning activities and in the organisation of the training;
- The history and culture of ethnic minorities are underrepresented in the curriculum.
- methodological support for teachers is insufficiently implemented; use of teachers practical experience; no good interaction between schools and universities;
- insufficient use is made of extracurricular activities, and 'interest activities' and 'organised recreation and sport' within all-day organisation of the school day, due to the lack of specialised methodologies for such work;
- There is a shortage of pedagogical specialists with competences to impart to children the knowledge and skills to perceive ethno-cultural differences, overcoming negative stereotypes and cultural distances.

With all these highlights in mind, we share also the **official vision** for the use of the strategy: By 2020 the Republic of Bulgaria is a country where the education system



successfully integrates children and pupils from ethnic minorities, preserves and develops their ethno-cultural identity and contributes to their development as full-fledged and for their successful personal, professional and social realisation

Report 8

General Information

Name/Title of the Report: Citizen Monitoring Report on Implementation of the National Strategy for Integration of Roma of the Republic of Bulgaria

Name of the Organization responsible for the Report: prepared by the Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance "Amalipe", Association "World without Borders", Social Foundation "Indiroma", Roma Academy for Culture and Education and Gender Alternatives Foundation

Year of publication: December 2018

Source / Reference: https://wp.flgr.bg/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/NSRI\_cit\_monitor\_2018.pdf

Executive Summary

This report assesses the implementation of the National Strategy for Integration of Roma of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2016-2017. A wide range of methods were used to develop this report. The review of available information included an analysis of existing data from the national census, standard large sample size surveys (national and European), specific surveys (Human Rights Agency, Institute "Open Society, Ministry of Education, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Amalipe Centre, Equal Opportunities Foundation ), sectoral databases in education and anti-discrimination, provided by the responsible institutions, as well as publications in the media and social media.

The report consists of detailed analysis of:

- **Governance and general policy framework** - topics like representing the Roma interests in our Parliament, inclusion in local government policies, Policies and measures addressing the specific needs of women, children and youth of Roma origin, etc.
- **Anti-discrimination** - implementing the Racial Equality Directive, Educational and residential segregation, etc.
- **Tackling antigypsyism** - Countering hate crime and hate speech against Roma, anti-Gypsy rhetoric by politicians, public figures and media, Analysis and formation of attitudes towards Roma, etc.



- **impact of mainstream education policies on Roma** - Access to quality early childhood education and care, especially in kindergarten, Promoting inclusive education, Avoiding early determination of school careers (early admission), Overcoming grade repetition, targeted support for vulnerable schools
- **Local research done in Plovdiv city**

There are also a great number of recommendations based on the findings and analyses made in the report. .

### Highlights

According to the report, for the years 2016-2017, education is the area with the most significant progress in implementing the National Roma Integration Strategy. The development of basic education policies and the political attention to ensuring full participation in pre-school and primary school education (which has become top priority for the current government) are among the main reasons for progress on educational integration. Here is a number of projects that run on national level financed by operational programs:

Measure:	Operational program:	Budget in euro (mln)	Beneficiaries	Approved by Committee on Monitoring	Announced by Ruling organization
Educational integration of students from ethnic Minorities	OP Science and education for smart growth	12.78	Schools, municipalities NGOs	May 2015	September 2015
Support for Preschool education of vulnerable groups	OP Science and education for smart growth	10.23	Kindergartens Municipalities NGOs	May 2015	September 2015
Adult Education	OP Science and education for smart growth	12.78	Ministry of education and science	May 2015	September 2016
Support of vulnerable groups for acquire higher educational	OP Science and education for smart growth	1.53	NGOs, schools	october 2015, November 2016	Not announced



degree					
Training on teachers for work in a multicultural environments	OP Science and education for smart growth	2.56	Universities, NGOs, schools	october 2015, November 2016	Not announced
Providing access to quality education in small settlements localities	OP Science and education for smart growth	40.91	Local initiative groups within CLLD / LEADER	November 2016	April 2017
Integrated measures for improving access to education	OP Science and education for smart growth	10.23	Municipalities in partnership with Schools/ kindergartens/ NGOs	June 2016	March 2018
Socio-Economic integration	OP Human Resources Development	40.91	Municipalities in partnership with employers and NGOS	November 2015	March 2018

The number of Roma children attending pre-school education has increased, but is still below the national average. The presence of financial barriers (e.g. fees for kindergartens), the lack of an intercultural perspective and the lack of modern teaching methods that take into account the specific needs of Roma children and parents, represent the most serious challenges in terms of their access to quality pre-school education. As an additional serious challenge, this report points out the lack of an intercultural perspective and modern teaching methods that take into account the specificities of Roma children and parents. This is a challenge in terms of access to quality pre-school education for the Roma. There are almost no teachers who know even just basic words in Roma or Turkish, even though many Roma and Turkish children do not speak Bulgarian. The curriculum focuses only on the culture and traditions of ethnic Bulgarians. Roma parents are rarely involved in the work of the children's kindergartens. In this respect, pre-school education is still significantly more underdeveloped than primary school education, which includes - although albeit to a very insufficient extent - certain intercultural practices. Since removing financial and other barriers to access to pre-school education could lead to the enrolment of half



the children not covered, the key to attracting the other half lies in attractive kindergartens that are culturally sensitive towards children and parents.

Significant progress has been made in enrolling Roma children in primary school enrolment and drop-out rates. Some challenges, particularly in ensuring enrolment in secondary schools (8-12 and the development of rural education. During the period under review 2016-2017, significant challenges emerged for promoting ethnically mixed, intercultural education and desegregation. There is also a need for development towards improving learning outcomes and quality education. The new funding model for the school system provides hope for better targeting of resources to vulnerable schools.

Two groups of schools in Bulgaria can be defined as "vulnerable":

1. Schools in small settlements: we use the term "small settlements" for villages and towns where there is one school or no functioning school. Since the introduction of the pupil funding system in 2007 and 2008, over 700 schools were closed due to insufficient budget, and the remaining 792 schools, which are the only ones in the locality, have relatively low budgets. Most of these schools teach Roma or Turkish pupils;
2. Schools with a predominant percentage of Roma pupils: in the majority of cases, the quality of education in these schools is lower.

Vulnerable and segregated "Roma" schools in Bulgaria teach the same curriculum and standards as other schools, but the quality of education in most of them is significantly lower, dropout rates are high, and the number of pupils dropping out of secondary and higher education is negligible. A significant fact is that when grouping all schools into 7 groups according to access to education and the quality of education, carried out by the Ministry of Education in 2016, almost all segregated Roma schools fell into the most problematic first and second group. Moreover, all schools from the district towns included in group 1 are segregated "Roma" schools.

The new system of 2018 significantly increases the budgets of schools with fewer students. Rural municipalities, especially those located in remote areas, also gain budget increases. Additional funds are provided for work in schools with concentrations of pupils from families with low educational status.





## Section B: Revision of Case Studies

Education is undergoing a continuous transformation spurred by several major drivers: the need to minimize early school leaving of children from social exclusion groups and Romani children; to mitigate low performance of these children; to illustrate the skills and competences teachers and facilitators must acquire in order to better understand the needs of these children and help them develop and flourish within the educational system.

In the framework of PAL LAB project, each partner is invited to select 4 case studies that explore how schools in their countries are adopting specific tools, methods, techniques, and approaches in their pedagogical system and learning environment to help children from exclusion groups and Romani children stay in school and consider schools an interesting and useful place to be in. Moreover, case studies should reflect the skills and competences that teachers must have when working with these children and implementing the suggested practices and methods. In the following tables, 4 case studies from Bulgaria are being presented and analysed.

### Case Study 1

General Information
<b>Country:</b> Bulgaria
<b>Name of the school:</b> St. Paisii Hilendarski
<b>Level(s) of education:</b> Primary School
<b>Capacity of the school (number of children, staff, buildings, etc.):</b> 392 students with 45 teachers and staff
<b>Description of the community in which the facility is located:</b> Sotirya village, Sliven area. The village has a big Romani community that has little interest in the educational system
<b>Source of the case study (reference):</b> Ministry of education and science website, <a href="file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/34_OU_Sotirja_Sliven.pdf">file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/34_OU_Sotirja_Sliven.pdf</a>
Project information
<b>The challenge addressed</b>
Students consider school an unnecessary and boring place to be and the school has very big percentage of dropouts. The school was searching for a way to address this problem



and change the way of thinking in both students and their parents. In addition, students refuse to speak in Bulgarian in schools.

### **The project developed**

A senior teacher of the school decided to find a way of showing the students and their parents that the school gives practical knowledge and is an important part of life. As she is a biology teacher, she was searching for a way to inspire the students interest in the subject with an innovative idea and with some practical information. She noticed that they could not and did not know how to give first aid in minor injuries, to take medicine for a headache or abdominal pain. They also don't know the mechanism for calling an ambulance. This is also difficult for their parents because they regularly need it as they don't have a doctor in the rural area they live in.

Following their need and combining it with her own aim, she decided to create a special interest club named "Till the doctor comes".

Students' participation in the club is optional, according to their interests and all club's activities were created using innovative approaches for working in a multicultural environment. The main goal was for the students to gain health knowledge about the human body, to build hygiene habits and mainly - to form skills for providing medical care.

### **Way(s) of implementation**

The teacher structured the program for 2 years so that the students can develop and build on knowledge and skills. The club was gathering regularly, learning different useful skills and gaining information. Step by step and through role play and different games, they were introduced to the mechanism of calling an ambulance, studied the types of trauma, learned to do heart massage, how to stop bleeding in different types of wounds and many more. In these hours they played the "sick", students who provide medical assistance and "doctors" - dressed in white aprons, with headphones around their necks and a doctor's bag. In the form of games and studying case studies we also studied the biological features of the human body.

In order to inspire students to speak our national language in school, the teacher decided to use music in the background. She played both Romani and Bulgarian music to inspire them to understand the richness of different cultures.

### **Results**

The project had a big impact and achieved great success to increase the interest of both students and their parents in education. It helped them realize the meaning of going regularly to school and this led to a decrease in the drop-out rates of the school. Some results achieved with the students were:

- Awareness of the need for knowledge gained in school



- Development of social and civic competences
- Development of Communication and critical thinking skills
- Ability to express and defend own opinion
- Developing teamwork skills.
- Increased motivation to learn.
- Improving aesthetic and cultural values in students.
- Bulgarian language competences:
  - improvement of literary Bulgarian language;
  - listening to different genres of music - developing musical culture;
- Developing knowledge of the human body;
- Improving upper limb motor skills.
- Building health and hygiene knowledge of the human body;
- Developing helping skills until the ambulance comes with the doctor.
- Reducing the number of unexcused absences from classes.

## Case Study 2

### General Information

**Country:** Bulgaria

**Name of the school:** Vocational School of Light Industry, Ecology and Chemical Technologies

**Level(s) of education:** Professional High School

**Capacity of the school (number of children, staff, buildings, etc.):** The school has 410 students with more than 300 being from the Romani community. They have 29 teachers and staff. They have 1 building with 14 classrooms and 6 specific classrooms for teaching professions.

**Description of the community in which the facility is located (village, town, small city, segregated / developed area, concentration of specific social groups, etc.):** The school is located in Yambol city, where there is a big romani community and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the students are Romani children.

**Source of the case study (reference):** <https://pglpeht-yambol.com/> & <https://amalipe.bg/wp->



[content/uploads/2021/09/%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B8-2017-2019\\_final.pdf](#)

## Project information

### The challenge addressed

Every year approximately 10 percent of minority students drop out of school, some as early as ninth grade, months after enrolling in school. Thus, they do not complete their education and are left without the opportunity for social and labour realization. The others who stay in school face serious problems in mastering the curriculum and lack lasting learning habits. They are at risk of dropping out. One of the areas in which the problem was rising is the lack of interest in learning any language where part of the curriculum of the school is learning English and Russian, which they need to perform their future professions.

### The project developed

After careful consideration of the reasons for this problem, the school came up with a new project in the form of a linguistic competition, called “The limits of my language are the limits of my world”. This pedagogical method is based on extracurricular activities related to foreign language learning to support students' work in English and Russian classes.

The main objective was to increase students' interest in learning foreign languages and to create habits of communication in both languages. Main pedagogical objectives:

1. To increase the students' interest in learning foreign languages and create habits of communication in both languages - English and Russian.
2. To stimulate independent thinking, creative imagination and creativity in students.
3. Formation of teamwork habits and development of students' communication skills.
4. Formation of creative skills and habits, formation of the idea of languages as a spiritual value, as a form of expression of national culture.
5. Improvement of students' knowledge and skills in English and Russian.
6. Increasing students' motivation to participate in the learning process and in school life and becoming active participants in the learning process.

The innovative approach and non-traditional working methods were expected to help the students to be more motivated and active participants in the learning process and realize the meaning and importance of learning new languages.

### Way(s) of implementation



This pedagogical tool was implemented first with students from the riskiest group of students: 8-9th grade students with low motivation to learn, low self-esteem and being passive participants in the learning process. The practice was carried out in three stages - research, making presentations and holding a competition. All stages were taken as extracurricular activities related to language learning to support students' work in English and Russian language classes.

The implementation of the idea went through several stages:

1. **Motivation** - motivating students to join a linguistic competition and to participate in extracurricular activities after compulsory school hours.
2. **Group selection** - The initiative for holding this competition lies with the English and Russian teachers of the high school. Three Grade 10 students, who possess a thorough and extensive knowledge of English and Russian, also joined the group to assist and motivate the other participants.
3. **Determine the format and regulations of the competition.**
4. **Forming the working groups** - dividing the participants into three pairs and setting tasks for them to complete before the competition. All presentations had to be presented in Bulgarian, English and Russian as one of the tasks in the competition.
5. During the competition, the participants had to complete four tasks: introduce themselves, show the presentations they had prepared in the themes they were given, arrange certain words into sentences in both languages in a given time and complete a crossword puzzle in English and Russian on a tablet.

Participants were awarded a certain number of points for completing each task - for speed and correct solutions. Throughout the competition, a provisional ranking by team was displayed on an interactive screen in tabular form, which in turn further motivated the participants and created a spirit. At the end of the competition a group of students from grades 11 and 12 presented a short recital in both English and Russian.

## Results

Results achieved:

- Stimulated student interest in learning foreign languages and increased activity in Russian and English classes.
- Formation of positive motivation and cognitive interests, positive attitude to learning and mental work.
- Stimulated independent thinking, creative imagination and creativity.
- Increased personal self-esteem and confidence in one's abilities.
- Formed teamwork skills and developed social and communication skills.



- Making the school a desirable territory.

The use of a non-traditional form of language learning and placing students as active participants in it is a prerequisite for increased interest in the foreign language. Incorporating playfulness and competitiveness are advantages in language learning, thus stimulating and motivating students to participate more actively in the lessons and this generates in them a desire to learn language learning. The use of new technologies (touch screen and tablets) and the internet in language learning is an advantage. The wide range and variety of exercises included in the linguistic competition make it possible to apply this practice in other schools where foreign languages are taught.

The knowledge and skills acquired during the preparation and running of the linguistic competition are of a lasting and sustainable nature, as they can be used and applied in lessons throughout the school year. Students work eagerly in class and show greater interest in learning a foreign language. The presence of an interactive screen and tablets in the school's foreign languages room facilitates the application of various good practices and innovative teaching and learning methods during lessons.

### Case Study 3

#### General Information

**Country:** Bulgaria

**Name of the school:** "Vasil Levski" Primary School, village of. Karadzovo, municipality. Sadovo

**Level(s) of education:** Primary School

**Capacity of the school (number of children, staff, buildings, etc.):** In the school there are 180 students and 26 teachers and staff. They have 1 building they use with 8 classrooms, which they share is not enough.

**Description of the community in which the facility is located (village, town, small city, segregated / developed area, concentration of specific social groups, etc.):** The school is located in the small village of Karadjovo and is the main school for 3 villages in the area: Karadjovo, Kochevo & Mominsko. The ethnicity of the students is a combination of Bulgarians, Romani and Turkish children. In addition, the school shares that each year the number of students is lower than the previous year.

**Source of the case study (reference):** <http://karadjovo.com/>

#### Project information

**The challenge addressed**



In this school there are a lot of ethnic differences. The teaching staff strives to find the most direct and effective ways to tackle the problems in regards to students education - problems related to lack of motivation, social deficits, societal attitudes, problems with learning our national language, reduced parental involvement in the process and the big dropout percentage. Much to the teachers' regret, for a significant number of their students, it is more important to grapple with their families' life adversities caused by unemployment and crime than to think in terms of their education.

### **The project developed**

In search of ways to find the right path to help their students stay and be motivated in school, the school's staff takes part in various projects to increase as much as possible the time students spend in school. But as good as this idea was, it wasn't providing the results they needed.

In 2007 this school came up with the idea to start a project that summarizes to the fullest extent the results of the efforts made during the school year. The project they developed is named "Charity evening of the school" and aims to show the successes of the school students to become visible to the community and provide incentive and motivation for students, teachers and parents to work together to address success in general. In addition, they decided to create this evening event in "Vasil Levski" Primary School to stimulate the community, parents and ever more students to spend time there. In this way, they were aiming at increasing the motivation of both students and parents and showing the school in desired light.

### **Way(s) of implementation**

In 2007, the staff of Vasil Levski Primary School decided for the first time to address parents and the public directly and initiated the creation of a School Board of Trustees to stand beside the school team with all its authority and concern. This board wanted to take care of the different problems the school was facing. After a few meetings discussing the current situation, they decided to unite everything that is done so far in the school in a single big event that shows the variety of talents and success stories in school. Step by step the project was implemented by:

- Deciding the format of the event - to be at school always and the big hall they have, including the different floors to provide space for students to show their talents;
- Deciding a date that suits the different ethnic groups and is suitable for everyone;
- Everyone is invited, but also inviting special guests from the community;
- Choosing the talents they want to show every year;
- Motivating the students to continue participating and learning new skills so that they can have a reward;



- Deciding to put on the school walls appraisals to the different students (with time from the different years) to ever increase their motivation to participate and learn.

The areas in which students find their strengths are: applied arts, theater, music, folklore and sport. Applied arts and sport are like magnets for attracting and retaining quality students in school.

The preparation begins at the beginning of each school year and ends with a unique exhibition and concert under the open sky. Thus the end of one sets the beginning of the next and finds even more followers in the name of success.

**Results**

This event takes place every year since its creation and has showed amazing results in the involvement and active participation of the students and their parents. The school managed to involve in the schools life and processes:

- the school board,
- the established Parents' Club,
- volunteers - former students of the school,
- companies with which the school has relations during the year,
- the institutions at local, municipal and national level,
- the entire school team, together with their families

Everyone sees it as a celebration of the school community. Students spend more time together, engage in useful and enjoyable activities, learn literate Bulgarian language, make lasting friendships, gain satisfaction from successes and have the desire for more

Case Study 4

**General Information**

**Country:** Bulgaria

**Name of the school:** "Hristo Botev" Primary School

**Level(s) of education:** Primary School

**Capacity of the school (number of children, staff, buildings, etc.):** The school has 115 students with 12 teachers and staff. The building of the school has 8 classrooms, computer cabinet, music room, health cabinet.





**Description of the community in which the facility is located:** The schools is located in Botevo village, municipality "Tundzha", Yambol region which is an economically poor region with a huge unemployment percentage and a big Romani population

**Source of the case study (reference):** 14\_OU\_Botevo\_Jambol

## Project information

### The challenge addressed

In this specific region of our country there is a huge percentage of unemployment and a big percentage of it is from the Romani community. This leads to problems like depopulation (because the parents seek jobs outside the region or outside Bulgaria). In addition, parents refuse to be involved in the education of their children and put no priority in it, which leads to a big percentage of dropouts and problems with the educational processes in the classes.

### The project developed

As a solution to such a big problem, teachers decided that they need to think of a way to show the classes and the knowledge one can receive to the parents and were thinking of ways to do it. They came up with the idea of "Open Doors Lessons" and with time made it a tradition to the school.

### Way(s) of implementation

This idea started with one open lesson held for which the school invited the mothers and fathers of the children, their grandparents, the principal of the school but also the mayor, public figures, teachers and educators. After the great interest and big success of it, it became a tradition which brings the entire community of the village together.

Open lessons are held 1-2 times a year and are in the subjects Bulgarian language and literature, Mathematics and English in the different classes of the primary education. With time, parents started to attend these classes ever more willingly. Children of Roma origin in standard classes are sometimes missing during the school year or missing something for the class - a notebook, a textbook or a pen. But all students always attend these "open door lessons" and are always quite accurately prepared **by their parents** for the lessons. In addition, parents' attendance - can neither be compared with the attendance of parent meetings (whether general or by class) nor with their attendance at celebrations.

Children as the main participants in the lesson - they are not bothered by the presence of outside people, they are used to their work being conducted in front of visitors. They participate actively, even see the lesson as a celebration, not as a lesson in which they learn new knowledge, or summarize and discuss. There is transparency in the teaching



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which everyone appreciates and helps the community understand the meaning of attending classes regularly.

### **Results**

Pupils are taught, educated, cared for and socialized at school. For them this is particularly important because there are many children from ethnic minorities. For them, school is the only model of behavior, value system source and criteria. In the school there are also students with learning difficulties and insecure children as well as diversity in every classroom. This practice of open door classes helped the school to become a likable and appreciated place for the community of Botevo village. With time, parents started understanding better what happens in school and in every class, started seeing the meaning of education and felt proud of their children, which made them more included in the school life overall. For the few years that this practice is taking place, the percentage of dropouts is slowly lowering.





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## CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSIONS

Bulgaria has a great number of official regulations already implemented for roma children and communities in regards to inclusive education, access education, children's rights, good practices against aggression, prevention of violence and bullying, practices for inclusion, equality and non-discrimination, child social security and preventive child insurance, non-discrimination of children with "problem behaviour" and so on.

The research done on the situation in our country, Bulgaria for the current policies, regulations, national strategies and directives in the educational system has led us to believe that although a number of problems are still existing and a very big challenge, there are a lot of things happening, even in rural areas. We were happy to discover that what is already done on the subject shows awareness of the many benefits of working for prevention of drop-outs and from the combined actions of schools, institutions and society.

It is ever more clear for the policy makers, school principals and teachers that suspension, penalties and expulsion shall be considered disciplinary practices as they restrict access or completely exclude children from school as a punitive measure in response to/as a consequence of a violation of school/classroom rules or expectations. This method of teaching and learning creates an environment that discourages learning and development which for ethnic minority children is especially non desired as it only increases the early school leaving, low performance and dropout rates of Roma children.

We were able to identify and describe some of the official regulations, laws and strategies developed to prevent early school leaving and low performance of students. We have shared a number of researches and relevant data that shows a great increase in the last 10+ years in the number of Roma children that attend and remain in the educational system.

One of the clear needs that still have to be addressed is in regards to the teachers working with ethnic minority children. There is a need to increase their intercultural competences, as well as to develop specific personal qualities and characteristics. A great number of practical and innovative tools have to be developed so that teachers whose aim is to change the school environment, to identify positive attitudes towards diversity and greater participation of all members of society, can be supported. Most of the reports we have investigated highlight the advantage of continuing teacher education. To teach their students effectively, general education teachers need to have a greater understanding and acknowledgement of Roma culture, behavior and differences. As clear from the case studies as well, the more the teacher is able to involve the Roma community in the educational process, the greater results students have. Changing the narrative in this regard will lead to an increase in the percentage of Roma children that stay and continue their education even in higher institutions and of course long term will include them better in our society.

