

Progress report for 2012 on the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration /2012-2020/ and the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015"

Education Priority

Work on educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities is a process that will continue in the coming years as the emphasis will be placed on providing quality education as well as on the implementation of multicultural education.

The present legislation creates conditions for equal access to education for all children and students, regardless of their ethnicity. In 2012, the draft for a Law on Pre-school and School Education was developed in which education is designated as a national priority by implementing the principles of equality and non-discrimination and preservation of ethno-cultural diversity. It provides that from 2016-2017, four-year-old children will attend compulsory kindergarten; it creates a new kind of school - a united one (from I to X grade) for those whose families are in financial difficulties or are highly conservative in terms of continuing education of girls in another settlement. Each school shall adopt a program for prevention of early leaving of school. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Science in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, social partners and others develop a State Educational Standard for civic, intercultural and health education.

From the 2010/2011 school year, gradual introduction of the measure **"Gradual Introduction of All Day Organization of the School Day until the Seventh Grade Including"** was started. In the 2010/2011 school year, the gradual introduction of all day organization of the school day for children in the 1 and 2 grades began and in the 2012/2013 school year, the measure continues for the 3 grade. For this organization, over 69 million BGN were disbursed in 2012 as the compulsory classes were combined with forms of self-study, activities by interests and organized recreation.

For **"Preparation of Children in Early Childhood (3-6 years) for Future Full Inclusion in the Educational Process, Particularly of Children from Minority Ethnic Groups, and Extracurricular Activities with Children in Kindergartens for Whom Bulgarian Language Is Not the Mother Tongue"**, additional training to learn Bulgarian language is provided. The programming systems for compulsory preparatory group include a module for training of these children. Individual plans for studying their mother tongue are also applied.

The implementation of the **National Program "With Care for Every Student"** provides opportunities for further training of both children with outstanding abilities and children who have trouble in the learning process.

For **"Creation of Conditions for Successful Socialization of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities and Formation of Appropriate Social and Psychological Climate Contributing to the Realization of the Strategy"** (Objective 3), the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities funded 23 projects totalling 513,500 BGN in 2012, which are in the process of implementation. The anticipated effects of the implementation of the measure are related to education in the spirit of tolerance and non-discrimination in kindergartens and schools through preserving and developing the cultural identity of children and students of Roma origin.

"Provision of Appropriate Educational Environment for the Inclusion of Children from Kindergartens Segregated According to an Ethnic Principle through Phased Intake in Kindergartens outside the Roma Neighbourhoods in Multi-ethnic Groups" is implemented through project activities.

In 2012, 118 projects under the operation "Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities" were implemented under the Operational Programme Human Resources

Development, the budget of which was increased in 2012 from 6 million BGN to 16,838,193 BGN so that 6,700 children and students can participate in activities for integration into the educational system and 1,600 parents can participate in activities in support of integration.

"Inclusion of Knowledge about the Culture of Ethnic Minorities in the Development of New Curricula": introduction to the culture of ethnic minorities and major holidays of the folklore / traditional calendar is provided in the curriculum for different grades. The subjects from the cultural and educational field "Humanities, civic education and religion" are the leading ones. In the curriculum of Bulgarian language and literature for the V grade, it is provided that the student "shall know the major festivals of the folklore / traditional calendar", including Passover (Pesach) and Eid al-Adha (Kurban Bajram). The curriculum includes: a Roma legend, a Turkish folktale and a Bessarabian folktale. The thematic unit "Ethnic National Community" is included in the curriculum for VII grade, the expected results of which are related to the distinction between the core values and norms of the community as well as a comparison and evaluation of the meanings of the core values and norms in the respective socio-cultural context.

For **"Extension of the Scope of the optional Elective Subject "Mother Tongue", the Elective Subject "Cultures of Ethnic Groups " (Ethnology) and Other Forms of Elective Training Contributing to the Preservation and Development of Cultural Identity through Compliance with Legal Regulation"**, extracurricular activities were organized to keep the cultural identity of children and students from ethnic minorities: 360 groups for studying of "Roma Folklore - Culture of Ethnic Groups" were organized in over 240 schools. They are involved about 5,400 students and about 360 teachers.

"Inclusion of Activities by Interests, Contributing to the Preservation and Development of the Ethnic and Cultural Identity of Roma Children as well as of the children from other ethnic communities within the All Day Organization of the Educational Process and the Class Hour": In 2012, 91 projects in the amount of 800 thousand BGN have been implemented under the module "Support for an all day organization of training at the early stage". Such organization of training at the early stage is especially useful for students from minorities whose mother tongue is different from Bulgarian and its mastering, thanks to the all day stay in a Bulgarian language environment, leads to improved quality of education.

The implementation of the project "Improvement of the Quality of Education in Community Schools by the Introduction of an All Day Organization of the Educational Process" which started in 2011 also continues. The all-day organization includes the full cycle of education for achievement of generally accessible basic knowledge: compulsory training, compulsory elective training, elective training, self-study, recreation and games, food.

By inclusion of students at risk of dropping out and / or acts of aggression in activities in "School of Self-affirmation and Training to European Horizons", conditions to give meaning to their free time are created.

Regarding **"Establishment of the Main Factors Leading to Non-entering School and Premature Dropout, Development and Piloting of a Methodology for Monitoring at National, Regional and Local Level"**, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science actively uses the possibilities of program funding. The activities for the implementation of the programs are instrument through which students in school are covered and kept by working to improve the quality of their education.

The national program "At School without Absences" (measure "No Absences") aims to reduce the number of free classes, reduce the proportion of absences, motivate students for regular attendance and active work during the lesson. This program is related to the need to strengthen the mechanisms for accountability, monitoring and control of recording absences of students.

The measure "No Free Classes" is associated with the policy to keep children in school by optimization of the internal structure. Additional funds are provided for payment of actually taken classes by teachers and educators who replace absent from work teachers or educators. The budget of the measure for 2012 was 1 million BGN, as 399 schools in the country have benefited from the funds.

Since 2011, each Regional Education Inspectorate (RIE) performs its own measures to reduce absences. Since 2012, the National program for support of schools that implement their own strategy to reduce the number of absences and to address early school leaving has been active. There is also a component "working with parents" within it.

The national program "Optimization of the School Network" aims to create conditions for: access to qualitatively commensurable education for every child and student; development of an effective and optimal network of schools meeting the interests and capabilities of children and students and the socio-economic profile of the region. Activities to be funded under the module are aimed at improvement of the existing material and technical equipment, creation of conditions for canteens, buying school bus to provide transport for the travelling students and others. A component "working with parents" is also included. The total budget of the module is up to 2,260,000 BGN.

The community schools in the country are 793 and the protected schools are 127. Over 25 million BGN were provided for free transport to students under 16 years of age who travel daily.

Since 2011/2012 school year, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science has been funding a National mobile group of psychologists to assist schools in their work with children and students at risk.

"Research on the Effectiveness of Policy Instruments Aimed at Improvement of the Access to Education and Reduction in the Number of Not Covered Children and Students and Early Leavers". As a result of the measures taken for prevention of dropout and early leaving of the educational system, there is a decrease in **the number of dropouts - from 6,680 in 2009/2010 school year to 5,615 in the 2010/2011 school year /National Statistical Institute (NSI) data/**. According to Eurostat data, there is a decrease in the number of early school leavers - **persons between 18 and 24 with education lower than secondary, who are not included in any form of education - from 14.7% in 2009 to 13.9% in 2010 and 12.8% respectively for 2011**. A national strategy for reduction of the share of early school leaving / 2013-2020 / is in the process of preparation, where specific policies and key measures for prevention of early school leaving, development of a mechanism for improvement of the control on all sectorial policies related to the provision of the scope and retaining children and students in school until completion of education are planned.

"Educational Integration and Reintegration":

For projects for "Reintegration of Dropouts in the Education System", 19 contracts in the amount of 2,955,271.97 BGN were signed between September and November 2012. Activities under the projects will start this year.

Within the project "Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities", actions are provided for development of plans / programs and conduction of additional activities with children from ethnic minorities at risk of dropping out of school, depending on their degree of integration in the training process and the education system. By the end of 2013, 741 dropouts are expected to re-integrate into the education system.

"Literacy for Adult Roma". Under the project "New Chance for Success", 3694 adults are currently educated and 1862 other adults are given the opportunity to learn the curriculum of subjects prescribed for grade (5, 6 and 7 grade) of lower secondary education. The project is still not completed and the data are valid for 2012.

"Organization of Courses for Acquisition of Qualification for a Part of a Profession through Modular Training". In vocational schools and vocational secondary schools, equal access to vocational education and training is granted for all students and vocational training for first, second and third level of professional qualification is provided. With the adoption of the Law for Amendment and Supplement of the Law on Vocational Education and Training, the framework programs will be developed, incl. opportunities for vocational training for a part of a profession for students with deficits in learning and for the purpose of reintegration of dropouts from schools.

"Activity for recruitment of qualified and certified assistant instructors and teaching assistants for work in a multicultural environment". Through the inclusion of assistant instructors with a third degree of professional qualification in the system of pre-primary education, a significant step has been made for the social inclusion of Roma in the education system. An assistant of a teacher at an early stage of the primary education degree shall be appointed at the discretion of the employer.

"Organization of career guidance activities and counselling students on career choices, in transitions within the educational system or from education to employment". Under the project "System for Career Guidance in School Education", 28 community centres for career counselling with headquarters in all district cities of the country were built. **"Provision of training under easily accessible and free programs for providing a second chance for people aged 16 and over"**. Under the project "New Chance for Success", 30 adapted curricula for the training of adults for learning the curricula of primary and early secondary school were developed.

"Exercising control over kindergartens and schools in order to prevent groups and classes separated according to ethnic principle". Measures have been taken by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, RIE and municipalities for the implementation of control of the admittance in special schools for avoidance of admittance of children without disabilities in them; control of kindergartens and schools to prevent groups and classes separated according to ethnic principle.

"Qualification of teachers, principals and other educational professionals to work in a multicultural environment". 4,500 educational professionals have been trained to work in a multicultural environment. The National Program "Qualification" is supplemented with the operation "Qualification of educational professionals" under OP Human Resources Development. In 2011 and 2012, intensified qualification activities were organized which were focused on increasing the results of the educational process and the approaches for work in multicultural environment.

State Agency for Child Protection (SACP)

The government policy on child protection in the country is coordinated and managed by the SACP. As the body, which develops and participates in the implementation of the state policy in the field of child protection, the Agency identifies the dimensions of child poverty reflecting the state of children in several areas – *education, health and social services in the community of vulnerable groups of children and families*.

In 2012, by decree of the Minister of Health, a working group was set up to evaluate the epidemiology of HIV-positive persons in Orlandovtsi R.A., Sofia city and to prepare an urgent action plan. The group includes representatives of the Ministry of Health, the State Agency for Child Protection, UNICEF, Metropolitan Municipality, the territorial departments of the Agency for Social Assistance, non-governmental organizations, the State Psychiatric Hospital - Suhodol, National Centre for Addictions, representatives of Roma organizations and non-governmental organizations. This study became a reason for the development of a follow-up action plan aimed at the study of the health and social situation of the population from all high-risk communities living on the territory of Sofia city, as well as for the adoption of all follow-up preventive health and social actions. By the end of November 2012, the Action Plan was agreed to by the mayors of 10

target areas of Sofia Municipality, namely: Poduyane, Vazrazhdane, Slatina, Ilinden, Studentski grad, Lyulin, Ovcha kupel, Krasna polyana, Mladost and Vitosha. Extensive social and health study of the population from independent areas with risk communities was made in all regions. A summarized analytical report with main results, identified problems and suggestions for follow-up actions and policies at municipal level was prepared. The most urgent and immediate measures and actions were identified, as well as those, which must be planned in the long term.

In 2012, SACP continued the check-ups for compliance with the criteria and standards for provision of social services to children and ensuring the quality and effectiveness of the services.

The number of functioning Centres for public support on the territory of the country is 98. The total capacity of the Centres for public support in 2012 was 4,621 users, and the total number of users benefitting from the service for the period was 10,065.

The State Agency for Child Protection will continue in 2012 to support initiatives, which contribute to the social inclusion of children from vulnerable groups through projects for the establishment of children's consultative structures on a local and national level; programs to support children and their families, etc.

Health Priority

Activities within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health (MoH), carried out in 2012, financed by the budget of the Ministry of Health.

Gynaecological examinations in mobile offices/units operating in settlements with compact Roma population.

In 2012, the four gynaecological offices/units made a total of 2,666 examinations of Roma women in the districts of Burgas, Sliven, Shumen and Sofia Region as 365 diseases were diagnosed.

Conducting discussions with adolescents and young people and their parents on how to prevent unwanted and early pregnancy, on the dangers of early pregnancy for the mother and the baby, on the risk of having children with congenital anomalies and hereditary diseases and on the ways of prophylactics.

Discussions were conducted by experts from the regional Health Inspectorates (RHI) and health mediators.

Total: Trainings – 46, covering more than 250 persons; discussions and lectures – 121, covering more than 952 persons; presentations - 6; workshops - 3;

Conduction of discussions and conversations with young mothers on the importance of immunizations and motivating them for their regular implementation in accordance with the National Immunization Schedule.

Discussions were conducted by experts from the RHI and health mediators.

Total: discussions and conversations - 258 covering 716 persons; trainings - 2;

Immunizations with mobile units with mobile teams in settlements without general practitioners.

In 2012, a total of 1,273 immunizations of children with incomplete immunization status were made in the five mobile offices for preventive examinations in the districts of Varna, Dobrich, Montana, Sliven and Sofia Region;

Conduction of discussions and dissemination of information materials, organization of trainings of women engaged in rearing young children.

Discussions on this topic have been conducted by both the mediators and experts from all RHI who were granted a mobile unit. (Burgas, Varna, Dobrich, Montana, Pazardzhik, Sliven, Sofia Region, Shumen and Yambol).

Conduction of preventive examinations with mobile paediatric offices in neighbourhoods with predominantly Roma population and in remote settlements.

In 2012, a total of 2,390 examinations were made in the four paediatric offices in the areas of Burgas, Sliven, Shumen and Sofia Region as 656 diseases were diagnosed.

Conduction of awareness programs on the need for vaccination of population with the required immunizations under the National Immunization Schedule.

Awareness programs were conducted by the experts of RHI with the help of health mediators.

For the reporting period, RHI conducted a total of 23 campaigns covering 1,691 persons, 2,434 pieces of health education materials (HEM) were disseminated and 4 presentations on the problems of immunization in the country were made.

Performing early diagnostics and screening with mobile mammography to prevent breast cancer.

In 2012, the two mobile mammographs made a total of 1,085 examinations in Montana and Yambol and 330 diseases were diagnosed. In Montana District, examinations were carried out in the Berkovitsa Municipality as the total number of examinations was 530 and 148 persons were diagnosed diseases. In Yambol District, examinations were performed in the town of Yambol, the municipalities Straldzha, Tundza and Bolyarovo, the total number of examinations was 566 and 302 persons were diagnosed diseases.

Performing early diagnostics and screening for arterial hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, lung diseases, diabetes mellitus and dyslipidaemia with mobile fluorography and echography equipment and laboratories.

In 2012, the two mobile fluorographs (for early detection and timely treatment of tuberculosis) conducted a total of 1,086 tests in the districts Montana and Sliven, 234 diseases were diagnosed.

In 2012, three mobile echo graphs conducted a total of 1,584 tests in the districts: Dobrich, Pazardzhik and Sofia District; 494 diseases were diagnosed.

In 2012, three mobile clinical laboratories conducted a total of 1,641 tests in the districts: Dobrich, Pazardzhik and Sofia District; 529 diseases were diagnosed.

Conducting awareness campaigns on the importance of medical examinations among the Roma population.

Awareness campaigns were conducted by the experts from RHI and by the mediators. Total: campaigns – 33, 2,650 persons covered; discussions – 12; seminars – 4; training – 1;

Organizing and conducting awareness campaigns about how to handle the most common infectious, oncological, cardiovascular and hereditary diseases.

Awareness campaigns about how to handle the most common infectious and non-infectious diseases were conducted by both medical professionals from RHI and by the mediators. Total: Awareness campaigns – 47, more than 1,000 persons covered; discussions – 56, 873 persons covered; trainings – 20; seminars – 2; HEM – 950;

Increasing the number of health programs on the radio and television that were mainly prevention orientated and on issues of health insurance:

Experts from the RHI Stara Zagora have a total of: radio broadcasts – 23; TV broadcasts – 21; internet publications – 108; press releases – 19; press publications – 30;

Development and broadcasting of video and audio clips on health issues aimed at the Roma population. Total: 61;

Periodical conduction of discussions by health specialists and mediators on the damage from the most common risk factors – smoking, alcohol abuse, drug use, hypertension and on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle:

Such discussions were held both from the health mediators and from the RHI experts.

Total: Awareness campaign – 5; discussions and lectures – 1,692, more than 4,000 persons

covered; trainings – 64; seminars – 3; video screenings – 38; talks – 4; campaigns – 3; consultations – 24;

Introduction of interactive sessions on health and sex education in schools with predominantly Roma population as part of the compulsory curriculum. Total: Trainings – 55, more than 500 persons covered; discussions and lectures – 163, 881 persons covered; presentations – 2; campaigns – 2; movie screenings – 5;

Informing members of the Roma community about their health insurance rights and obligations and their rights as patients: The information on these issues is at the core of every meeting with Bulgarian citizens of Roma origin and is performed by both medical professionals from RHI and the mediators. Total: seminars – 3; research – 148; work meetings – 3 with 67 persons; talks – 2, 42 persons covered.

Conducting targeted prophylactic activities among the Roma as a high-risk group in the national and regional prophylactic programs

In the regular annual Instructions, the Ministry gives for the activity of the RHI it was stated that activities that take place on a regional level under national and regional programs should be directed primarily towards Bulgarian citizens of Roma origin.

Total: discussions and lectures – 54, 532 persons covered; research – 472, 1,661 persons covered; campaigns – 18, 1,044 persons covered; HEM – 1,062; consultations – 55; training – 1; seminars – 4; Talks held – 23; poll – 1, 24 persons covered;

Epidemiological studies: Total: 2,074;

Organizing and conducting information events in neighbourhoods with predominantly Roma population on specific health problems: There were both medical professionals from RHI and health mediators. Total: Awareness campaign – 15; health information events – 351, discussions, meetings and lectures – 15, 120 persons covered; press conferences – 2; HEM – 9,443.

Performing purposeful sociological studies in neighbourhoods populated by Roma population: Experts from RHI Pazardzhik conducted a poll of the understanding of the HIV / AIDS subject of students from "D. Gachev" Secondary Comprehensive School – Pazardzhik, and a survey entitled "What do I know about AIDS? – Republika qu. – town of Haskovo.

Conducting qualitative research with focus groups. Total: 5 studies, more than 250 persons covered. Also carried out: 2 – conducted surveys with 100 persons covered; work meetings, trainings and seminars – 52; HEM – more than 7000; discussion – 7; studies – 434; screening – 1; participation in committees – 7.

Total examinations with mobile units: 11,502; Total for all RHI: Trainings – 235, more than 7,000 persons covered; discussions and lectures – 2,389, more than 6,000 persons covered; presentations – 12; work meetings – 6, 67 persons covered; campaigns – 157, more than 8,000 persons covered; screenings of movies and video clips – 190; HEM – 22,000; parent meetings – 21; epidemiological studies – 2,074; seminars – 68; studies – 1,122; consultations – 79; discussions – 27; health information events – 351; press conferences – 2; participation in commissions – 7; radio broadcasts – 23; TV broadcasts – 21; internet publications – 108; press releases – 19; press publications – 30; qualitative studies – 5, more than 250 persons covered.

For 2011, the mobile units helped to perform a total of 10,311 preventive examinations; trainings – 106; discussions – 771, lectures – 45; talks – 5; handed out condoms and HEM – 17,220; handed out immunization calendars – 330; awareness campaigns – 96; publications – 43; 25 conducted surveys; 17 work meetings; conducted epidemiological studies – 297; health programs – 79.

When we compare the data from 2011 and 2012, it clearly shows that a lot more trainings, lectures and discussions were held on health topics, a larger number of health education materials were handed out and there were 1,191 preventive examinations were made among the Roma population.

In pursuance of the objectives of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration (2012-2020) in the field of "Health", the National Network of Mediators and the

National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues, with the support from the Ministry of Health held the campaign in the period 15.11.2012 – 10.12.2012 in the following districts: Burgas, Varna, Vratsa Dobrich, Montana, Pazardzhik, Pernik, Plovdiv, Razgrad, Ruse, Sliven, Sofia Region, Sofia city, Shumen and Yambol.

The 15 RHI performed a total of 1,988 examinations and tests and 157 immunizations with the obstetrics-gynaecology office, the four paediatric and the five mobile general-practice units. During the tests, the following were established: 1,010 persons without diseases and 978 persons with diagnosed diseases.

Housing priority

Activities within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW) carried out in 2012, were funded under the Operational Program "Regional Development" 2007-2013 (OPRD) and the budget of MRDPW.

Activities / projects funded under the Operational Program "Regional Development" 2007-2013 (OPRD) carried out in 2012:

Scheme for providing grant assistance BG161PO001/1.2-02/2011 "Provision of housing for vulnerable, minority and low-income groups of the population and other disadvantaged groups" under Priority Axis 1 "Sustainable and integrated urban development "Operation 1.2. "Housing" of the OPRD.

The main objective of the scheme is to contribute to the social inclusion of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups by raising their standard of living and improving the quality of housing in urban communities. Financial resources of the scheme – 15,659,106.46 BGN.

Specific objectives are: to provide modern social housing for vulnerable, minority and low-income groups of the population and other disadvantaged groups; to ensure social inclusion, spatial integration and equal access to adequate housing conditions for the disabled people and the people in a vulnerable position.

Designated pilot municipalities perform integrated projects for sustainable social housing, including a mandatory combination of an investment component (construction of social housing or repair / renovation of existing social housing, energy efficiency measures, etc.) funded under the scheme BG161PO001/1.2-02/2011 of the OPRD and activities to provide education, employment, health, social inclusion of the target group financed by the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development".

On 30 August 2011 started the scheme BG161PO001/1.2-02/2011 through a procedure for direct grant provision to certain specific beneficiaries Burgas, Vidin, Devnya and Dupnitsa Municipality, as well as spare beneficiaries in the event of a release of sufficient financial resources: 1. Varna, 2. Peshtera and Tundzha.

In 2012 by Decision №ПД-02-14-1504/07.06.2012 as amended by Decision ПД-02-14-1658/29.06.2012 and Decision ПД-02-14 -2472/04.10.2012 of the Head of the OPRD Managing Authority, 3 project proposals were approved with a total amount of the grants of 10.3 million BGN: Vidin Municipality – 3,992,592.19 BGN, Devnya Municipality – 1,406,112.76, Dupnitsa Municipality – 4,905,947.82 BGN, Burgas Municipality – letter with reg. № 99-00-6-2988/12.04.2012 of the mayor of Burgas Municipality on the withdrawal of the project proposal.

On 28.06.2012, contracts for the provision of grants were signed with the pilot municipalities Vidin and Dupnitsa.

The project of Vidin Municipality is aimed at the reconstruction of 50 existing homes in 9 one-storey blocks and the construction of 30 new homes in 4 two-storey semi-detached buildings for 280 representatives of disadvantaged groups, including the Roma.

The project of Dupnitsa Municipality is aimed at the building of 150 new homes in 15 single-family and multi-family residential buildings for 460 representatives of disadvantaged groups, including the Roma.

At present, projects are in progress.

Within OPRD under Priority Axis 1 "Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development" priority axis 4 "Local Development and Cooperation", problems are being solved related to the provision of infrastructure appropriate and adequate to the needs of the Roma population.

Through specific criteria for project selection, the Operational Programme encourages infrastructure initiatives oriented towards the educational and social problems of the Roma minorities, supports investment measures for the conservation of the Roma cultural identity, it creates conditions for the integration of disadvantaged groups by improving the natural and living environment.

In 2012, under schemes for providing grants under the OPRD aimed at financing infrastructural activities with direct or indirect impact on the Roma population, related with repairs, reconstruction and renovation of the educational, social, cultural infrastructure, the following number of projects were completed and the following results were achieved:

For construction / reconstruction of objects of educational infrastructure - 32 projects with a total value of the verified expenses 60,461,352.10 BGN were completed, with which were reconstructed a total of 127 sites and 36,707 people benefitted, 6,948 of whom were Roma.

For construction / reconstruction of objects of social infrastructure - 18 projects with a total value of the verified expenses 18,827,519.00 BGN were completed, with which were reconstructed a total of 60 sites and 157,829 people benefitted, 23,992 of whom were Roma.

Activities financed by the budget of the MRDPW:

The Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works implements a policy to improve the quality of the living environment of the Bulgarian citizens through development of the settlements. This policy includes the program "Improving the living conditions of the Roma population in Bulgaria". The strategic objective is the social integration of socially disadvantaged persons by the Roma community by improving the housing conditions.

In 2012, due to the financial and economic crisis, budget funds in the total amount of 1,140,807 BGN for a final transfer to 10 of the agreements for transfer of budget funds to a total of 27 municipalities entered into in 2009 for the implementation of development projects under the Programme 12 were not covered.

In 2012, the implementation of Phase II of the Project "Construction of social houses for Roma families in need", which was co-funded by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEDB) through a government investment loan and by national co-funding from the budget of the MRDPW, remains «frozen» but was not discontinued.

In 2012, the cadastral map and the cadastral registers (CMCR) for the land of the village of Bratsigovo, Bratsigovo Municipality, Pazardzhik District were approved for an area of 2,909 ha, including 224 ha of urbanized areas to the total amount of 59,999 BGN.

Employment Priority

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP)

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) pursues a consistent policy for social protection, social inclusion and promotion of employment of vulnerable groups, including representatives of ethnic minorities, including Roma, guided by the principles of non-discrimination, respect for human dignity and ensuring conditions for equal opportunities and equal treatment of all Bulgarian citizens regardless of their ethnicity.

In 2012, the **National Programme "From Social Assistance to Employment"** gives an opportunity for social integration and employment of persons on social assistance and long-term unemployed. For the period January-December 2012, 21,437 unemployed persons were included for the first time in employment. In 2012, 5,224 unemployed persons worked under the approved projects and 4,542 persons were employed in emergency operations.

MLSP is the Managing Authority of Operational Programme "Human Resources Development" 2007-2013. OP HRD funds interventions aimed at integration of the labour market,

improving access to education and training and measures to support the social inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Project BG051PO001-6.2.11 “Development of Comprehensive Measures for the Integration of the Most Marginalized Communities among the Ethnic Minorities, with a Focus on the Roma” is implemented within the HRD OP. MLSP is a beneficiary of the project supporting the efforts of the Ministry in the implementation of comprehensive measures to address the multidimensional challenges of integration of the most vulnerable group.

The project started in August 2011 and will be implemented by October 2013 on the territory of the country.

The project aims to support the strategic approach for integration of ethnic minorities by identifying the most needy among them based on territorial criteria (mapping) and specific problems in key areas of integration policy (health, education, employment, incomes and living standards, housing, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, etc.), formulating a set of targeted measures for their integration and increasing the powers of the responsible institutions at national and local level for their implementation.

In 2012, the following results were achieved: Analysis was made of the implemented program, measures and initiatives for the integration of ethnic minority groups; Good and working practices were identified on a local level for the integration of marginalized communities of the ethnic minorities; A Collection with 22 good practices in key areas was prepared for the integration of minorities – education, health, housing conditions, employment, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, culture; A draft methodology was developed for the identification of the most marginalized communities among ethnic minorities; Information (a brochure), print and advertising materials for the project were made and distributed; 6 public events under the project are carried out with the participation of over 300 representatives of the target group and stakeholders from the whole country.

Information about the project and the public events held was published on the official website of the MLSP – www.mlsp.government.bg.

National Employment Agency (NEA) reported:

The Employment Agency implemented schemes aimed at vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the labour market under the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development":

„Take Your Life in Your Hands” Scheme. The scheme provides for the identification, motivation and support of members of vulnerable groups. Involvement in training and apprenticeship with an employer for a period of 3 months. In 2012, the scheme reported 391 enrolled subjects.

„Development” Scheme. The scheme provides inclusion in training at employer requests. In 2012, 58,561 persons were involved in training. 57,276 persons successfully completed the training. 53,110 persons were included in employment after training. The funds paid for the implementation of the scheme at the end of 2012 were more than 111 million BGN.

“Increasing the quality of the provided by the Employment Agency services to citizens and business with a focus on the vulnerable groups on the labour market” Scheme. The Scheme provides for the selection and appointment in the labour offices of 350 labour mediators to work with representatives of disadvantaged groups in the labour market, 250 of them already being appointed in August 2011. The scheme also provides for the training of employees in the the "Labour Office" Directorate (LOD) to work with members of vulnerable groups and holding of 12 specialized labour exchanges aimed at the unemployed persons from the Roma community, people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups on the labour market by the end of 2013. The funds provided in the NEAP for the implementation of the scheme are 9.5 million BGN.

In 2012, a new scheme under OP “Human Resource Development” started – **“Support for employment”** Scheme in order to support employment for a period of 6 to 12 months and training of unemployed persons from the ethnic minorities, long-term unemployed persons and persons

with low professional qualification and shortage of skills. It provides training for the unemployed persons under the guidance of a mentor in a key competence necessary to adapt better to the new workplace. The successful implementation of the open procedure proves the fact that for the period July-October 2012, 9,010 unemployed persons started work, 975 of them being members of the ethnic minorities. The funds provided in the NEAP for the implementation of the scheme by the end of 2014 are 117,834,319 BGN.

Increasing the competitiveness of Roma in the labor market

The total number of persons involved in the various activities of the Action Plan of the NEA during the year was 21,663^[1] persons:

Improving the employability and qualification of unemployed Roma

10,059 persons were involved in activities for raising the employability and qualification as compared to the planned persons who were 5,300 (189,8%), as follows:

- in individual and group forms for vocational orientation and motivation for active behaviour on the labour market – 6,004 persons;
- in literacy training – 1,080 persons, all under the “New Chance for Success” project of the OP HRD implemented by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science;
- in training for acquiring professional qualification and key competences – 2,975 persons, 2,947 of them being under OP HRD.

Ensure employment of Roma

Employment was provided for 11,478 persons as compared to the planned persons who were 10,000 (114,8%), through their involvement in different programs projects, incentives for employment and in the primary labour market. The largest number is the number of persons who started working under the OP HRD – 4,095 persons, 3,529 persons were employed under "From Social Assistance to Employment" NP, 3,122 unemployed persons began work on the primary labour market, and 253 persons were employed under employment incentives.

Promoting entrepreneurship, starting and managing own business

To encourage entrepreneurship, 25 persons were involved in motivation training as compared to the planned 200 persons, and 101 persons were involved in training to start and manage their own business as compared to the planned 100 persons.

Fostering the social and civil dialogue on the support of employment opportunities of Roma Regarding the promotion of social and civil dialogue in support of the employment realization of Roma population, 134 meetings were held in 2012 as compared to the planned 120 meetings between LOD and Roma NGOs locally in search for their assistance and cooperation in the implementation of the various activities in the plan of the National Employment Agency.

Capacity Building for promoting the employment of Roma

In 2012, under the **National Program “Activating of Inactive Persons”**, which aims activating and inclusion on the labour market of inactive and discouraged persons most of whom being persons from the Roma community, 30 new mediators were selected on a competitive basis and employed. At the end of 2012, 82 mediators worked in 68 LODs in the country because some had quit for different reasons and 4 became full-time employees of the LOD. In 14 of the labour offices there are two mediators employed. Of all mediators, 55 are women and 22 have a higher education.

As a result of the implementation of the program and the activities of the mediators, 10,646 inactive and discouraged persons were registered in LOD in 2012. 2,218 of them are realized, 1,635 of

The number of the unemployed Roma covered in the different activities was consistent with the self-determination of the persons by ethnicity, and the indicators are part of the activities in the action plan of the National Employment Agency.

them were employed, 262 persons were included in literacy training and the remaining 321 persons were involved in vocational qualification trainings.

The activity of the Roma mediators under the National Program “Activating of Inactive Persons” proved to be a successful practice on the labour market.

The implementation of the activities in the plan of the Employment Agency for 2012 rose significantly compared to the implementation of the planned indicators in 2011, which are the same in both years. The total number of the persons covered by the different activities in the plan during 2011 was 16,929, while in 2012 this number was 21,663, or an increase of 31%. Based on the planned number of 5,300 persons in both years for improvement of employability and qualification, the persons covered in 2012 were 10,059 or 4,034 persons more than the ones in 2011, which is an increase of 77%. There is an increase of 6% in 2012 in the number of persons who were provided with employment.

In 2012, **2 specialized job fairs targeting the Roma Community were organized and carried out** – in Petrich and Sadovo. They were attended by 350 persons looking for work and 15 employers who announced 119 job vacancies. The number of persons who started work on the jobs announced at the labour exchanges was 57.

Registered unemployed Roma representatives were included in all other activities implemented by the Employment Agency - employment and training programs, projects under OP HRD and incentives oriented towards provision of employment for the long-term unemployed people, people with disabilities, young people, etc.

The different activities aimed at supporting the integration of the Roma community in 2012 were implemented with the funds from the budget of the Employment Agency for active policy on the labour market in 2012 and the schemes under OP HRD that the Employment Agency implemented.

In 2012, the **Agency for Social Assistance /ASA/** continued to annually perform trainings of employees from the territorial structures of the Agency for Social Assistance to increase their awareness and qualification when working with representatives of ethnic communities and as part of the policy to combat poverty and promotion of social inclusion of representatives of disadvantaged ethnic communities.

The Agency for Social Assistance and its territorial departments in 2012 were involved in the problems of children and persons mainly of Roma origin.

Actions were taken to identify and map all areas on the territory of the country populated mainly by persons of Roma origin /illegal formations - ghettos/.

Data obtained in the ASA as at 31 July 2012, which clarify, that in 34 settlements on the territory of the country were identified 65 illegal formations – ghettos inhabited mainly by persons of Roma origin. Upon detection of children at risk, the respective Social Assistance Directorate /Child Protection department took timely measures for the protection in accordance with the provisions of the applicable law.