

# BULGARIA

## Country Fiche

### Assessment of the progress in the NRSF implementation between 1 June 2023 and 30 March 2025

<b>APPROACH OF THE NATIONAL ROMA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (NRSF)</b>	On 5 May 2022, the Council of Ministers adopted, through its Decision, the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation of the Roma 2022-2030 (National Roma Strategic Framework, NRSF). It is a modest step forward in several directions when compared to the previous National Roma Integration Strategy 2012-2020 (NRIS): It contains a stronger analytical part; the problems of Roma women, children, and youth are partly included in the analysis and in some of the priorities. A specific chapter titled 'Empowerment of Roma Woman' is introduced (although poorly developed).
<b>ESTIMATED ROMA POPULATION</b>	According to CoE estimations and expert estimations <sup>1</sup> – 750,000. According to the last Census (2021) – 266,720 p. or 4.4% from the Bulgarian population. <sup>2</sup> It is well recognised that many Roma prefer to not identify themselves in ethnic terms or identify as Bulgarians, Turks, etc.
<b>National Roma Contact Point (NRCP)</b>	Secretariat of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues. At present - "Department for Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence, Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues, and Interaction with Civil Society" (DPCEI).

## HORIZONTAL OBJECTIVES

### 1. FIGHT AND PREVENT ANTIGYPSYISM AND DISCRIMINATION

<b>PROGRESS MADE</b>	<b>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Bulgaria there is still no official state document acknowledging that anti-Roma attitudes and manifestations are a specific form of racism. The state continues to refer more generally to "discrimination" and "negative attitudes towards Roma." The current National Roma Strategic Framework (NRSF) acknowledges the challenges related to anti-Roma attitudes and discrimination. The main goal stated in the strategy is to reduce social isolation and</li> </ul>	<p>Anti-Roma attitudes and discrimination<sup>4</sup> remain widespread and insufficiently addressed. Many Roma civil society organisations have expressed concern that the measures and activities aimed at countering anti-Roma attitudes and discrimination are not given sufficient priority within the NRSF. There is a need to strengthen actions for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducting national and local awareness-raising campaigns in Roma communities</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe, *Estimates on Roma population in European countries*, Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/publications>

<sup>2</sup> National Statistical Institute, *Ethno-cultural characteristics of the population as of September 7, 2021*, Available at: <https://www.nsi.bg/en/press-release/ethno-cultural-characteristics-of-the-population-as-of-september-7-2021-6833>

<sup>4</sup> Roma continue to be subjected to acts of racism and discrimination by officials of public institutions, unequal treatment in healthcare and educational settings, hate speech in media publications, and inflammatory or inappropriate statements by political figures.

<p>discrimination against Roma, but no concrete and adequate measures have been envisaged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The main institution responsible for combating discrimination is the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD). Although its powers are limited, its recommendations and administrative sanctions have achieved good results<sup>3</sup>. In the past two years, however, the CPD remained relatively passive, as its mandate had expired. A new composition of the CPD was elected by Parliament on 8 May 2025.</li> <li>• During the reporting period, no developments were observed in the core Bulgarian anti-discrimination legislation.</li> </ul>	<p>about their rights and the available protection mechanisms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing mandatory training for staff in the administration, police, judiciary, and educational institutions on recognising and countering anti-Roma attitudes.</li> <li>• Taking clear political commitments and making high-level public statements against discrimination and hate speech.</li> <li>• Strengthening the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) by providing additional resources and expanding its powers to enforce its decisions.</li> <li>• Establishing sustainable mechanisms for the participation of Roma and pro-Roma NGOs in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of anti-discrimination policies.</li> <li>• Improving coordination between institutions and transparency in the funding of anti-discrimination measures.</li> </ul>
<h2>2. REDUCE POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION</h2>	
<p><b>PROGRESS MADE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2023, amendments to the Social Assistance Act<sup>5</sup> and its implementing regulations were adopted, introducing a new method of calculating social assistance – based on 30% of the poverty line (PL) instead of the previous guaranteed minimum income (GMI).</li> <li>• The amount of monthly assistance to families approximately doubled, providing at least enough to cover basic food and heating during the winter.</li> <li>• The requirement for registration with the Employment Office was eased by reducing the minimum registration period before applying for assistance.</li> </ul>	<p><b>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite an increase, social benefits remain below the poverty line and fail to reduce extreme, multidimensional poverty among Roma families.</li> <li>• The three-month Employment Office registration requirement denies support at critical moments.</li> <li>• The social assistance<sup>7</sup> is more punitive: if a child skips 5 school hours, the family's benefit is cut by 70%, with no reintegration support, leaving children at risk of hunger.</li> <li>• Assessments based on registered address exclude families without registration; the law should allow assessments where families actually live.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> In the period 2023–2025, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) issued two decisions on proven discrimination — one concerning workplace discrimination, reflected in the 2023 annual report [OTЧЕТ-КЗЛ-2023-КЪМ-28.03.pdf](#) and another supporting Roma students through a scholarship. Unfortunately, in the latter case, based on Bulgarian law, the Supreme Administrative Court overturned the CPD's decision on the grounds that it violated the principles of equal treatment.

<sup>5</sup> The Social Assistance Act [https://www.ciela.net/svobodna-zona-darijaven-vestnik/document/-13038592/issue/6958?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.ciela.net/svobodna-zona-darijaven-vestnik/document/-13038592/issue/6958?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>7</sup> Article 9, paragraph 6 of the Implementing Regulations of the Social Assistance Act, <https://asp.government.bg/uploaded/files/5877-PRAVILNIKzaprilaganenaZakonazasocialnopodpomagane-.pdf>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In August 2024, the National Map of Social Services<sup>6</sup> was adopted, covering all state-funded social and health-social services at the local level and setting maximum numbers of beneficiaries.</li> <li>• Under the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Child Guarantee, measures were implemented to support young children, including some Roma children in need of early intervention.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roma are not prioritised in the SSA, and no service standards address their specific needs.</li> <li>• Social services remain passive, failing to proactively reach marginalised Roma communities.</li> <li>• The National Map of Social Services ignores the extreme poverty of Roma in its planning.</li> <li>• The most marginalised remain beyond reach; individual needs assessments must combine with empowering social work</li> <li>• Roma children face severe housing poverty and lack systematic access to education, early childhood development, and healthcare; the Child Guarantee must include large-scale, targeted measures to reach them.</li> </ul>
<b>3. PROMOTE PARTICIPATION THROUGH EMPOWERMENT, COOPERATION AND TRUST</b>	
<b>PROGRESS MADE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roma and pro-Roma NGOs participate equally in Monitoring Committees of key national programmes (Education, HRDP, Regional and Rural Development), elected via competitive procedures. In Education and HRDP, they influenced key decisions, including targeted calls for Roma-related proposals. Calls have increased, with NGOs acting as coordinators or partners.</li> <li>• However, national-level barriers exist misuse of de minimis, lack of pre-payment (only after bank guarantee), etc.</li> <li>• There were troubling attempts to limit NGO roles, e.g. the 2024 Public Education Act amendment (“anti-LGBTQ”)<sup>8</sup>, and the proposed “Foreign Agents” law. Public discourse worsened, but this eased in 2025 when Parliament rejected the latter.</li> <li>• A reform of the Roma National Contact Point created DPCEI, but Roma NGO input was overlooked. Roma participation in</li> </ul>	<b>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reform of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues to reflect the proposals of Roma organisations. The Council should gain real powers by introducing clearer criteria for membership and requiring mandatory consultation of executive acts on ethnic and integration issues. A good option is to structure it on two levels - expert and political. A concerted effort should be made to re-include Roma organisations.</li> <li>• Removing barriers to CSO participation in projects funded by EU Shared Responsibility Funds: providing advances, overcoming demi mimes, etc. Including the possibility to develop the institutional capacity of NGOs in projects funded by the Education Programme and the Human Resources Development Programme.</li> <li>• Support for the Civil Society Development Council, the preparation and approval of a Civil Society Development Strategy and a</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> National Map of Social Services <https://lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2137244730>

The National Map of Social Services enables better planning and allocation of services where they are most needed, including in Roma communities. It can serve as an advocacy tool to establish services that support integration and reduce social exclusion.

<sup>8</sup> National Parliament, *Law for Amendment of the Public Education Act*, Available at: <https://www.parliament.bg/bg/desision/ID/165582>

<p>National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues remains limited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Civil Society Council was re-established in 2025, including Roma organisation Amalipe.<sup>9</sup></li> <li>• Civil society funding came mainly via EEA, Swiss, and EU mechanisms. Important support was also provided by the European Commission, CERV, through components that are delegated to Bulgarian civil society organisations (Open Society Institute, Bulgarian Women's Fund, others). These organisations play the role of operators who redistribute funds to other CSOs under simplified procedures. This practice has proved to be extremely successful.</li> </ul>	<p>mechanism for allocating funds from the state budget for capacity building of CSOs. Significant increase and actual provision of state budget funds for NGO capacity development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing and expanding the partnership between the main ministries involved in Roma integration and Roma organisations working in the field. An example of such a partnership is that between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Amalipe Centre. This partnership should be deepened through a mechanism for joint decision-making, information provision and the implementation of joint initiatives.</li> <li>• During the period 2023-2025, the state budget does not finance projects of civil society organisations. Funds for civil society development are also not provided by the programmes co-financed by the European Social Fund managed by Bulgaria. The latter provide opportunities for the implementation of projects by civil society organisations, but not for institutional capacity building.</li> </ul>
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SECTORAL OBJECTIVES	
4. INCREASE EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY INCLUSIVE MAINSTREAM EDUCATION	
<p><b>PROGRESS MADE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational mediators are now financed by the state budget after strong advocacy by Roma NGOs, schools, and mediators. Following the end of ESF projects in 2022, a National Programme for Supporting Educational Mediators<sup>10</sup> (2022–2023) and later changes to the Financing Decree (July 2023) secured long-term funding for 1,260 mediators, assistants, and social workers in vulnerable schools (~5M EUR/year).</li> </ul>	<p><b>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant acceleration of policies for desegregation and prevention of secondary segregation is needed, including changes in the Pre-school and School Education Act, reduction of enrolment in segregated schools / closure of segregated schools, limitation of years of stay in segregated educational environment, incentives for enrolling Roma children in ethnically mixed schools: according to estimations of Centre Amalipe and Ministry of Education more than 120 general schools</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> Council of Ministers, *Platform for election of members of Council for Civil Society Development*, Available at: <https://voting.government.bg/publicLists/ranking>

<sup>10</sup> Portal for Public Consultations, *National programme for Supporting Educational Mediators (2022-2023)*, Available at: <https://strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=1599>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The profession was officially recognised in August 2024, with training planned.<sup>11</sup></li> <li>• In 2024–2025, ESF+ funded operations for intercultural education and desegregation were launched (with budget of app. 15 million EUR every of them), but NGO participation is limited due to lack of pre-payment and misuse of de minimis.<sup>12</sup></li> <li>• Since September 2024, secondary school textbooks are free of charge (based on 2023 law), reducing barriers for Roma students.</li> <li>• Pre-school education has been free of charge (without taxes) and mandatory from age 4 since 2022, boosting attendance.</li> <li>• Early school leavers dropped from 13.9% in 2019 to 8.2% in 2024—below the EU 2030 goal of 9%—making Bulgaria a leader, due to joint efforts of government, mediators, and NGOs. Although there is no specific data by ethnicity, it is considered that ESL are overrepresented in Roma community.</li> </ul>	<p>in cities and towns all over Bulgaria are segregated, while 64 others are in process of segregation. In addition, 78 professional gymnasiums are segregated and 72 are in process of segregation.<sup>13</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in the Public Education Act are necessary: for introducing obligatory desegregation in the urban centres, for strengthening educational integration, support for children with poor command in Bulgaria, etc.</li> <li>• Support for introducing intercultural education that preserves the identity of Roma and other minority children and forms tolerance and anti-discrimination.</li> <li>• Facilitating the enrolment of vulnerable students in the universities: including trough free education (without fees), scholarship programmes and other measures.</li> <li>• Removing all barriers before the participation of NGOs in Education Programme operations: e.g. providing pre-payment, overcoming improper use of de minimis and others.</li> <li>• Changes in the educational structure of school education: removing 8 grades back to primary education (with possible extension to primary education even to 9 grade) complemented with measures for strengthening rural areas primary schools as well as strengthening the quality of education in the vocational gymnasiums.</li> </ul>
<b>5. INCREASE EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT</b>	
<b>PROGRESS MADE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trend of increasing employment among Roma. Although Bulgaria does not collect ethnically disaggregated employment data,</li> </ul>	<b>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</b> <p>Progress in Roma employment between 2023–2025 has been insufficient.<sup>17</sup> Deeper structural reforms and sustainable solutions are needed:</p>

<sup>11</sup> Amalipe, *A new profession, “Educational Mediation,” has been approved for inclusion in the List of Professions for Vocational Education and Training*. Available at: <https://amalipe.bg/en/a-new-profession-educational-mediation-has-been-approved-for-inclusion-in-the-list-of-professions/>

<sup>12</sup> Amalipe, *Following the first competitive project selection in the current programme period: what is hindering the participation of NGOs?*, Available at: <https://amalipe.bg/en/ngo-barriers-eng-analysis/>

<sup>13</sup> Zahariev, B. and D. Kolev, *Karta na uchilistnata segregacia v Bulgaria (Map of school segregation in Bulgaria)*, Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Jt8xeVMeZg6pZ3wiNTHFfwWtJ82UmLgm/view>

<sup>17</sup> The challenges faced by Roma on the labour market remain significant — many Roma lack the necessary education and qualifications; there are discriminatory attitudes among employers; mistrust of institutions and low motivation among Roma to participate in the measures offered;



<p>unofficial information from NGOs indicates a certain increase in the share of employed Roma. This is the result of the economic recovery following the Covid pandemic and the expansion of subsidised employment through national programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of sustainable Roma employment in the public sector through the growth of the mediator network: By the end of 2024, the number of mediators exceeded<sup>14</sup> 400. This contributed to improving the connection between Roma communities and institutions. This success was made possible thanks to the institutionalisation of the mediator profession, targeted funding under the Human Resources Development Operational Programme<sup>15</sup> (2021–2027), and the active facilitation of Roma NGOs.</li> <li>• Growing role of Roma and pro-Roma organisations in selecting, training, and supporting health mediators, motivating Roma candidates to participate in training and employment programmes, and monitoring for discriminatory practices.</li> <li>• Municipal participation in partially covering the costs of mediators to ensure the sustainability of mediator positions.<sup>16</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversify employment and develop vocational training programmes and skills validation for Roma, targeting professions with higher qualifications and greater stability.</li> <li>• Increase the participation of women and youth in the labour market. Create flexible forms of employment, part-time jobs, and incentives for employers to hire Roma women and young people, combined with the provision of accompanying services such as childcare and transport.</li> <li>• Encourage employers to hire Roma by introducing employer incentives.</li> <li>• Develop integrated employment programmes with a clear time horizon and targeted indicators, going beyond short-term schemes and ensuring the lasting labour market integration of Roma.</li> <li>• Include Roma and pro-Roma organisations as partners in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of employment policies, by establishing consultative councils at local and national levels.</li> <li>• Improve the transparency and targeting of funding to ensure that funding effectively reaches the target group.</li> </ul>
<b>6. IMPROVE ROMA HEALTH AND EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES</b>	
<p><b>PROGRESS MADE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of Roma doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, as well as medical students.<sup>18</sup> In recent years, Roma youth have received support through the Mentorship Support for Roma Students in</li> </ul>	<p><b>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite the progress achieved, significant problems remain with the health status of the Roma community and unequal access</li> </ul>

lack of access to services — transportation, kindergartens, and social support for working parents; employment in the informal sector, and others.

<sup>14</sup> According to data from the National Network of Health Mediators and the School Network.

<sup>15</sup> Human Resources Development Operational Programme (2021–2027) Available at: <https://esf.bg/wps/portal/program-hrd/procedures/ophrd-2021-2027/procedure1>

<sup>16</sup> The municipalities receive funds for paying the mediators' salaries through state programmes, but they also allocate resources for the training of mediators, as well as for administrative support and logistics — offices, transportation, and more.

<sup>18</sup> In the period 2023–2025, under the Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria programme, more than 90 Roma youth were supported to pursue education as doctors, nurses, and medical professionals. The programme has been implemented since 2018. For the same period, according to unofficial data, around 80 Roma students have graduated thanks to the scholarships received.

<p>Medical Fields programme of the Trust for Social Achievement and the Active Citizens Fund Bulgaria.<sup>19</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The expansion of the health mediator network continued, remaining a key mechanism connecting Roma neighbourhoods with healthcare institutions. In 2024, the number of health mediators exceeded 320 nationwide.<sup>20</sup></li> <li>With amendments to Ordinance 26 in August 2022 and June 2024, the scope of medical services related to maternity care for uninsured women was expanded<sup>21</sup>. Under these amendments, regardless of health insurance status, the Ministry of Health guarantees screening of all newborns</li> <li>In seven municipalities the Roma health mediators are directly employed as hospital staff, enabling them to assist not only residents of a given neighbourhood but anyone in need of health mediation. Moreover, the 2024 graduating class of about 34 health mediators received special certification to work in maternity and paediatrics.<sup>22</sup></li> </ul>	<p>to health and social services<sup>23</sup>. It is necessary to take steps in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a mechanism to cover health insurance contributions for the most vulnerable Roma.</li> <li>Expand the competencies of health mediators, including work on the prevention of chronic diseases and provision of social support.</li> <li>Integrate health and social services at the local level through multidisciplinary teams.</li> <li>Conduct training for medical staff to overcome discriminatory attitudes.</li> <li>Motivate young doctors and social workers to work in vulnerable areas through financial and professional incentives.</li> <li>Ensure sustainable funding to expand the scope of health and social services, especially in remote and segregated neighbourhoods.</li> <li>Institutionalise the participation of Roma organisations in the planning and monitoring of health and social policies.</li> </ul>
<b>7. INCREASE EFFECTIVE EQUAL ACCESS TO ADEQUATE DESEGREGATED HOUSING AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES</b>	
<p><b>PROGRESS MADE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2024, Bulgaria amended the Civil Registration Act to introduce the possibility for individuals who cannot prove ownership or legal use of a property to register at a</li> </ul>	<p><b>AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure full implementation of the “service address” reform by obligating municipalities to handle official correspondence for residents registered</li> </ul>

<sup>19</sup> Medical Fields programme of the Trust for Social Achievement

[https://socialachievement.org/web/files/richeditor/dokumenti/Call%20for%20applications%2023-24\\_BG.pdf?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://socialachievement.org/web/files/richeditor/dokumenti/Call%20for%20applications%2023-24_BG.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>20</sup> National Network of Health Mediators, Medical news

[https://medicalnews.bg/2024/05/03/%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%B0%D0%B1%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B6%D0%B8%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B0-%D0%B2%D1%81%D1%8F%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B4%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BD/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://medicalnews.bg/2024/05/03/%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%B0%D0%B1%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B6%D0%B8%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B0-%D0%B2%D1%81%D1%8F%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B4%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BD/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>21</sup> Ordinance 26 of the Ministry of Health [https://www.ciela.net/index.php/svobodna-zona-darijaven-vestnik/document/2137243496/issue/7152/naredba-za-izmenenie-i-dopalnenie-na-naredba-%E2%84%96-26-ot-2007-g-za-predostavyane-na-akusherska-pomosht-na-zdravno-neosigureni-zheni-i-za-izvarshvane-na-izsledvaniya-izvan-obhvata-na-zadalzhitelnoto-zdravno-osiguryavane-na-detsa-i-bremenni-zheni-%28dv-br-51-ot-2007?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.ciela.net/index.php/svobodna-zona-darijaven-vestnik/document/2137243496/issue/7152/naredba-za-izmenenie-i-dopalnenie-na-naredba-%E2%84%96-26-ot-2007-g-za-predostavyane-na-akusherska-pomosht-na-zdravno-neosigureni-zheni-i-za-izvarshvane-na-izsledvaniya-izvan-obhvata-na-zadalzhitelnoto-zdravno-osiguryavane-na-detsa-i-bremenni-zheni-%28dv-br-51-ot-2007?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

[https://www.ciela.net/index.php/svobodna-zona-darijaven-vestnik/document/2137243496/issue/7152/naredba-za-izmenenie-i-dopalnenie-na-naredba-%E2%84%96-26-ot-2007-g-za-predostavyane-na-akusherska-pomosht-na-zdravno-neosigureni-zheni-i-za-izvarshvane-na-izsledvaniya-izvan-obhvata-na-zadalzhitelnoto-zdravno-osiguryavane-na-detsa-i-bremenni-zheni-%28dv-br-51-ot-2007?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.ciela.net/index.php/svobodna-zona-darijaven-vestnik/document/2137243496/issue/7152/naredba-za-izmenenie-i-dopalnenie-na-naredba-%E2%84%96-26-ot-2007-g-za-predostavyane-na-akusherska-pomosht-na-zdravno-neosigureni-zheni-i-za-izvarshvane-na-izsledvaniya-izvan-obhvata-na-zadalzhitelnoto-zdravno-osiguryavane-na-detsa-i-bremenni-zheni-%28dv-br-51-ot-2007?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>22</sup> Roma civil monitor 2025

<sup>23</sup> Key challenges for Roma in the field of healthcare and social services: Limited access to healthcare services due to lack of health insurance; discrimination, prejudice, and negative attitudes from institutional staff; insufficient coverage and capacity of social services; lack of information, bureaucratic barriers, and distrust in institutions.

<p>municipal “service address.”<sup>24</sup> This reform is especially relevant for Roma families living in informal housing, as it enables them to obtain identity documents and gain access to essential public services such as healthcare, education, and social support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the first time, rules for applying for municipal housing were changed to allow applications from persons without permanent address registration. Previously, this requirement had excluded many Roma families living in informal settlements. Now, individuals registered at a service address are also eligible to apply, making access to public housing more inclusive.</li> <li>• Bulgaria has made incremental progress in aligning with European human rights standards by linking national reforms with rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). This includes the development of action plans aimed at addressing issues such as forced evictions and lack of housing alternatives, particularly for vulnerable Roma communities.<sup>25</sup></li> </ul>	<p>there and actively inform affected individuals about this option: the amendment was done recently and there is no data about its implementation. Most probably many municipalities are still not aware about it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amend national housing legislation to explicitly recognise the right to housing, prevent forced evictions without alternatives, and introduce a proportionality assessment as recommended by international bodies.</li> <li>• Develop an integrated, desegregated housing policy with targeted measures for Roma living in informal or environmentally hazardous settlements, including access to essential services like water, electricity, and sanitation.</li> </ul>
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## PARTNERSHIPS AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

During the reporting period the National Roma Contact Point was partly reformed, as explained above. Initially this process did not include Roma and pro-Roma organisations, and it was planned that the new administrative unit would have the name „Protection of vulnerable groups and interaction with civil society”. In this way the new unit would not have any link to ethnic policies in its name. Several Roma organisations (Amalipe, World without borders, Future Rakitovo and Trust for social achievement) submitted their position and insisted the new unit to have „Ethnic and integration issues” in its name.<sup>26</sup> This position was taken into account.

The new National Action Plan for implementation of BGRSF was prepared without consultation with the Roma and pro-Roma organisations different from the general public consultation.

Roma and pro-Roma NGOs are not involved in the monitoring of NRSF. The most active organisations take part in RCM coalition; the last one is coordinated by two Roma NGOs.

As explained above, Roma NGOs have left the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues in 2013-2017, proposing changes in its structure. This is the main reason for the lack of real partnership in planning, implementing, M&E of the NRSF. It is necessary to have deep institutional reform in order to re-establish the partnership with Roma and pro-Roma civil society.

<sup>24</sup> 3eNews, *Amendments to the Ordinance Regulate the Registration of a Business Address*, Available at: <https://3e-news.net/en/a/view/58273/amendments-to-the-ordinance-regulate-the-registration-of-a-business-address>

<sup>25</sup> Council of Europe, *Fifth Opinion on Bulgaria – Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention*, Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/5th-op-bulgaria-en/1680b1c747>

<sup>26</sup> Amalipe, *Opinion on the draft decree on the adoption of regulations on the structure, organisation and activities of the National Council for Protection from Domestic Violence*, Available at: <https://amalipe.bg/stanovishte-postanovl/>



## PROMISING PRACTICES

### Financing The Educational Mediators: and their financing: from ESF to the State Budget

Educational mediators serve as a bridge between schools and vulnerable communities. In 2018, only a few were employed, but numbers grew through MoE encouragement and systemic ESF-funded projects (“Support for Success” and “Active Inclusion”). After these ended in 2022, many schools and NGOs, including Amalipe, advocated for continued funding. The MoE launched a National Programme (2022–2023), but it became clear state budget support was needed in more sustainable way. An advocacy campaign gained broad backing, leading to a sustainable solution: in July 2023, changes in the Financing Decree secured 5 million EUR annually from the state budget for 1,260 educational mediators, teaching assistants, and social workers in schools with vulnerable students.<sup>27</sup> Mediators were officially added to school staff roles (Dec 2023), gaining equal rights, and training opportunities were approved (Aug 2024). This marks a successful transition of a good practice from ESF to permanent national funding.

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<sup>27</sup> Council of Ministers, *Decree 98/14.07.2023*, Available at: <https://www.ciela.net/svobodna-zona-darjaven-vestnik/issue/6988/published>