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Equal Access to Quality Education For Roma

Bulgaria

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Monitoring report

2007

Equal access to quality education for
Roma

Bulgaria

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

BHC	Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
BSELE	“Basic Schools with Enforced Labour Education” (<i>Основни училища със засилено трудово обучение</i>)
CEMCC	Central Expert Medical Consultative Commission (<i>Централна експертна лекарска консултативна комисия</i>)
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
MES	Ministry of Education and Science (<i>Министерство на образованието и науката</i>)

NCEDI	National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (<i>Национален съвет по етническите и демографските въпроси</i>)
NSI	National Statistical Institute (<i>Национален статистически институт</i>)
REF	Roma Education Fund
REI	Roma Education Initiative
REMCC	Regional Expert Medical Consultative Commissions (<i>Районни експертни лекарски консултативни комисии</i>)
RIE	Regional Inspectorate of Education (<i>Регионален инспекторат по образованието</i>)
SACP	State Agency for Child Protection (<i>Държавна агенция за защита на детето</i>)
TCPA	Team for Complex Pedagogical Assessment (<i>Екип за комплексна педагогическа оценка</i>)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Executive summary

Bulgaria has one of the largest Roma populations in Europe, estimated at as much as eight per cent of the population. However, all available indicators demonstrate that Roma children are often denied equal access to quality education. The Government has adopted policies and programmes aimed at improving the situation of Roma generally, but more must be done to address aspects of educational policy most relevant to Roma. The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 is an important platform for the realisation of essential improvements to the education system in Bulgaria, to enable all children to study in schools that meet their needs, reflect their identity, and prepare them for participation in the wider society.

While Bulgarian law permits the collection of personal data with appropriate safeguards, official statistics on education are unreliable, as they rely on schools to report data and there are incentives for schools to inflate their enrolment figures. The Government should take steps to establish other mechanisms for collecting data on education, particularly regarding education for Roma.

In particular, current statistics do not reflect the high number of pupils, especially Roma, who are formally enrolled but rarely attend classes. Local and international researchers have gathered data demonstrating that Roma also attend pre-school at significantly lower rates than the majority population. While the number of Roma who have never attended school appears to be on the decline, Roma are still far more likely to drop out of school, with the proportion of Roma students plunging in higher grades.

Segregation has a long history in Bulgaria; geographical segregation has led to the establishment of segregated “Roma schools” in neighbourhoods and villages where Roma are the majority. Roma are also overrepresented in the special school networks, both in schools for children with intellectual disabilities (“special schools”) and in boarding schools for children with behavioural challenges. With such well-documented evidence of segregation as an ongoing trend, in all levels and branches of the education system, it is clear that the Government must be more active in integrating schools and communities.

The Government of Bulgaria has adopted both programmes aimed at improving the situation of Roma that include a section on education, and programmes targeting education that contain measures aimed at minority groups including Roma, but with very little evidence of impact or implementation on the local level. The *National Programme for the Development of School Education and Pre-School Upbringing and Instruction*, adopted in June 2006, retreats from earlier commitments made towards desegregation, and does not address many of the specific problems identified in the Government’s own Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 (*Decade*

Action Plan) in 2005. This divergence should be resolved through the adoption of a comprehensive policy for Roma education, supported by appropriate legislative and financial measures. Earlier Government programmes to eliminate segregation in education have not been implemented, even as NGO-led desegregation initiatives have been expanding at the local level and could serve as useful models for a more comprehensive Government approach. A clear vision and concrete instruments for implementation, including appropriate financial resources, is needed, along with specific monitoring instruments to assess longer-term success rates.

Despite need and confirmed benefits demonstrated at the local level, just over 100 Roma teaching assistants have been appointed to work as classroom facilitators throughout the country. Many municipalities, however, do not have the resources to hire such assistants. Likewise, there are very few teachers of Romanes working in schools at present. While Roma traditions and culture are presented in some textbooks, stereotypical or even biased material about Roma still appears in classroom materials. Measures must be enacted to right this situation. A variety of training opportunities are available for teachers in areas relevant to Roma education, but the impact of such courses is not clear. Better monitoring of these important areas would provide the Government with a better basis for ongoing policy development.

Some of the obstacles blocking access to education for Roma are straightforward: for example, there are not enough pre-school places to ensure that every child will be able to enrol, a problem that current Government policy fails to address. Pre-school costs are also a significant barrier for Roma families, many of whom cannot afford the fees set by the municipalities, and the free meals and travel subsidies offered by special schools may encourage disadvantaged families to enrol their children in such schools. Financing structures need to be reconsidered in order to counteract these constraints.

Geographical segregation is widespread in Bulgaria, both in urban and rural areas, giving rise to “Roma schools” in predominantly Roma neighbourhoods. Although parents can choose to send their children to schools outside the area, few Roma parents do so outside an organised desegregation programme. Even where desegregation programmes are running successfully, many children are left behind. The number of Roma children enrolling in special schools continues to increase, as all schools seek ways to keep enrolment numbers up. The Ministry of Education and Science has promulgated instructions aimed at improving assessment procedures, but research at the local level indicates that these directives have not successfully counteracted incentives to place children in special schools. Better overseeing of the assessment committees is clearly needed to ensure that each child’s individual potential is appropriately evaluated.

Many Roma children in Bulgaria speak another language at home, making access to pre-school even more important as a means to improve their Bulgarian language skills before entering school. However, the number of teachers proficient in Romanes is very small, placing Roma children at a disadvantage from their first days of school. More

Roma teachers and teaching assistants, as well as training in bilingual education techniques, are needed at the earliest level of education.

In every way, schools with a high level of Roma students are inferior to those with lower numbers of Roma enrolled. Many Roma schools are in poor physical condition and lack the facilities necessary to educate students adequately, such as computers and laboratories; in the special school networks, even the most basic equipment, such as desks, textbooks and teaching materials, is inadequate or altogether lacking. With such conditions, these schools cannot attract the most highly qualified and motivated teachers, although the lack of vacant teaching positions throughout Bulgaria limits staff turnover in all schools. As the school system adjusts to reflect the lower birth rate and consequent smaller numbers of students, the Government must take steps to ensure that all children attend an integrated school with adequate facilities and appropriate resources.

Recent NGO-conducted research demonstrates that Roma students in segregated schools perform worse on tests in mathematics and Bulgarian language than do their counterparts in integrated schools. Literacy rates for Roma are below those for the majority population; in particular, Roma who have attended segregated schools have much lower literacy rates, possibly because attendance at such schools is poorly monitored, the quality of education is low, and students can pass from grade to grade without meeting basic standards. Indeed, for children attending special schools for children with intellectual disabilities (remedial schools), and other types of special schools, there are no set standards at all – further ensuring that these students will be unable to go on to further education or reasonable expectations of employment.

Teaching in Bulgaria still relies heavily on older methods, and while professional development courses are available, many are offered by NGOs and are not part of recognised teacher training. The Ministry of Education and Science could offer certificates for these courses, which would encourage teachers to take part and advance professionally. Many teachers acknowledge that they have lower expectations for Roma students, despite efforts to improve inter-cultural awareness; this is a reflection of Bulgarian society in general, which still opposes integrating education. Research suggests that once the desegregation process moves ahead, communities are more receptive, further indicating that concerted Government action is needed to take integration forward. In particular, the Government could empower the network of Regional Inspectorates of Education (RIE) to do more with regard to segregation: first to recognise it, and then to work with local authorities to reverse the process and ensure equal access to quality education for all children.

1.2 Recommendations

1.2.1 Recommendations on monitoring and evaluation

Data collection

The Bulgarian Government should do the following:

1. Take steps to improve the overall collection of data related to education, disaggregated according to ethnic group, including Roma and other ethnic minorities, with adequate safeguards for protecting sensitive information and the identity and privacy of individuals.

The Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional Inspectorates of Education should do the following:

2. Develop data collection procedures and mechanisms for education, to ensure that data on education disaggregated on the basis of ethnicity and gender are made publicly available.

Evaluation

The Ministry of Education and Science, the Regional Inspectorates of Education and the Centre for Control and Assessment of Quality in Education should do the following:

3. Ensure that when the national assessment instruments in Bulgarian language and mathematics are implemented, there is an assessment of the outcomes for Roma children specifically, in comparison with national averages.

1.2.1 Recommendations for improving access to education

Structural constraints, legal and administrative requirements, costs

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

4. Ensure that all children have access to full-day two-year pre-school, by:
 - covering any fees for disadvantaged children;
 - ensuring that adequate space is available to accommodate all children, through construction of new classrooms, revision in class scheduling, or reviewing the requirements for the number of children per class; and
 - providing free full-day educational programmes for disadvantaged children.
5. Ensure that mainstream primary schools can offer the same benefits to disadvantaged children as special schools (for example free school meals and school materials, including textbooks) do, so that these incentives do not encourage disadvantaged families to send their children to special schools.

6. Provide full-day educational programmes in primary schools for disadvantaged children, including tutoring and mentoring and catch-up classes, to ensure that these children can succeed in mainstream integrated schools.
7. Further expand the system of providing necessary educational materials (in particular textbooks and exercise books) free of charge to disadvantaged children in primary schools.
8. Provide certificates for primary school attendance (for the purposes of receiving social welfare benefits) periodically throughout the school year, rather than at the beginning of the year, to ensure the actual attendance of children.

Residential segregation/geographical isolation

The Government of Bulgaria should do the following:

9. Fulfil the goals on desegregation detailed in point 1.2 of the *Decade Action Plan*¹ on “Desegregation of Schools and Kindergartens in the Detached Roma Quarters”.
10. Ensure that necessary financial resources are made available at the national and local levels, to ensure the full implementation of all the Government’s adopted commitments and policies on the desegregation of Roma education, and in particular the *Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society*.²
11. Ensure that respected Roma organisations and activists are fully involved in, and consulted, in the process of desegregation of Roma education, to help build Roma communities’ confidence.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

12. Elaborate and submit to Parliament a comprehensive nationwide desegregation programme, based on the best practices in desegregation elaborated by Roma NGOs in local projects. Desegregation should also focus on eliminating the placement of Roma in special schools, and on responsible transfer of misdiagnosed Roma children into the mainstream classes and schools.
13. Where possible, instruct segregated Roma schools (that is, mainstream schools where at least 50 per cent of the children are Roma) to adopt a “zero enrolment” policy, where such a policy would not prohibit Roma children from effective enrolment in school.

¹ *National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005–2015* (Национален план за действие по Децетилетие на ромското включване 2005–2015 г.).

² *Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society* (Рамкова програма за равноправно интегриране на ромите в българското общество).

14. Finance research and studies on the process of desegregation of Roma education and the training of educators willing to work in this field.

The Regional Inspectorates of Education and municipal education authorities should do the following:

15. Make desegregation of Roma education one of the focuses of their activity, and monitor and support the process, including through regular school inspections.
16. Ensure that in all integrating primary schools (that is, schools that are receiving Roma children from segregated schools or areas) the following obtain:
 - free transport of all children to the host schools is available as needed, including within city boundaries; and
 - full assistance is provided to the integrating primary schools, for the process of desegregation.

School and class placement procedures

The Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Health Care should do the following:

17. Cooperate to improve overseeing of the Teams for Complex Pedagogical Assessment, to help to eliminate arbitrariness and ensure that parents give their informed consent to such placement.

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

18. Demonstrate commitment to, and progress in, the improvement of diagnostic and assessment tools/instruments used in the assessment of children with special educational needs.
19. In accordance with the *National Plan for the Integration of Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Chronic Diseases in the National Education System*,³ develop standards, methodologies and financing mechanisms for the inclusion of children from special schools in mainstream classes, ensuring that mainstream schools offer all of the support and resources necessary for inclusive education.
20. Require special schools to offer preparatory courses and other support for students taking the exam allowing them to transfer to mainstream schools, and allocate funding to support the implementation of this requirement.

³ *National Plan for the Integration of Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Chronic Diseases in the National Education System* (Национален план за интегриране на деца със специални образователни потребности и/или с хронични заболявания в системата на народната просвета).

21. Dismantle the separate education system for children with behavioural challenges, as it serves no educational or correctional purposes in its present form.
22. Integrate special schools for children with intellectual disabilities into the mainstream education system, with resource teachers appointed in the mainstream schools.

Language

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

23. Fulfil the goals set out in the *Decade Action Plan* with regard to point 2, on “Preservation and Development of the Cultural Identity of the Children and Pupils from the Roma Ethnic Minority”.
24. Develop a clear and coherent national education policy and strategy to ensure that students have access to studying Romanes as a mother tongue or as a second language in practice. In particular, ensure the following:
 - suitable teaching materials are developed and provided to schools;
 - space is made for this in the national curricula; and
 - the required number of students who can form a group for the study of their mother tongue is reduced from 11 to 5.
25. Develop and improve pre-school programmes that strengthen readiness for school among Roma children, placing particular emphasis on language acquisition.

The Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional Inspectorates of Education should do the following:

26. Provide incentives and support for the education of teachers who would like to teach Romanes as a mother tongue.
27. Support and foster in-service and pre-service teacher training courses covering language acquisition and methodologies for bilingual education.
28. Ensure that teacher training institutions have the proper curriculum and courses to prepare teachers of the Romanes.

1.2.3 Recommendations on improving quality of education

School facilities and human resources

The Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional Inspectorates of Education should do the following:

29. Fund and support teachers from special schools who qualify, to be employed as resource teachers in integrating schools, to help with the transition of children from special school environments to mainstream educational environments.
30. Redirect funds from segregated schools in Roma neighbourhoods as they become obsolete, to mainstream, integrating schools. These funds should be used as incentives for the improvement of the schools' infrastructure, and as a means to pay salaries of integrated teachers.

Curricular standards

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

31. Fulfil the goals that it set out in the *Decade Action Plan* with regard to point 4, "Transformation of the Cultural Diversity into a Source of and a Factor for Knowledge of Each Other and Spiritual Development of the Young People. Establishment of an Atmosphere of Mutual Respect, Tolerance and Understanding", and point 5, "Formation of Appropriate Social-Psychological Climate, Favourable for the Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from the Roma Minority".
32. Revise curricula and produce learning materials to take into account Roma history, culture and values, using materials developed by NGOs as models.
33. Further revise the criteria for textbook creation and selection, to bring them into conformity with the principles of multicultural education.
34. Allow for the provision of curriculum development at the school level that takes into account the local Roma community.

Classroom practice and pedagogy

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

35. Explicitly define *quality education*, in collaboration with Roma minority and education experts, using a set of recognised indicators that can be tracked and assessed.
36. Use these indicators for regular monitoring of segregated Roma educational settings, as well as for host integrating schools, at the pre-school, primary and secondary levels of education.

Regional and local pedagogical authorities, inspectorates, and pre-service and in-service training institutions should do the following:

37. Provide training for teachers and administrators in pre-service and in-service training institutions, in child-centred pedagogy, anti-bias education,

methodologies for second language learning, multicultural education, and effective ways of involving parents and communities.

38. Provide support for the in-service teacher training institutions (linked to the inspectorates), to encourage new models and practices of school-based leadership and management, student-centred instruction and parent and community involvement.
39. Support teachers' pre-service and in-service training institutions to include school improvement theory and practice in their official curriculum.

School–community relations

The Ministry of Education and Science should do the following:

40. Increase the number of Roma working in schools, by recruiting and training more Roma as teachers and teaching assistants.

Local education authorities should do the following:

41. Work closely with NGOs and community groups to ensure that efforts to improve education for Roma are coordinated, and that the school is truly responsive to community needs and interests.

Discriminatory attitudes

The Bulgarian Government should do the following:

42. Strengthen anti-discrimination and anti-bias measures, including both legislation and social policies, to reduce discrimination against Roma in all spheres and improve public perception.
43. Provide training to the Protection against Discrimination Commission in order to enhance its capacity to deal with discrimination in education.

The Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional Inspectorates of Education should do the following:

44. Create effective mechanisms for preventing and counteracting racism, particularly inside Bulgarian schools that integrate Roma pupils, by designing and financially supporting programmes promoting interethnic tolerance and cooperation, and combating bias and prejudice, in education.

Universities, and pre-service and in-service teacher training institutions should do the following:

45. Introduce in their teacher training courses specific training modules on inter-cultural, anti-bias and anti-racism training. These courses should take into account the specific facets of Roma discrimination in the Bulgarian education system.

School inspections

The Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional Inspectorates of Education should do the following:

46. Ensure that all schools, including special schools and segregated Roma schools, are inspected regularly and held to the standards defined by law.
47. Specifically include reporting on segregation as a responsibility for inspectors, and require inspectors to take action in line with adopted desegregation policy.
48. Draft standards to be used in the inspection of schools that discourage the overrepresentation of Roma children in schools (over 50 per cent).
49. Create units at the Regional Inspectorates of Education with a specific task to monitor discrimination in education, including segregation.

2. BASIC EDUCATION INDICATORS

While Bulgarian law permits the collection of personal data with appropriate safeguards, official statistics on education are unreliable, as they rely on schools to report data and there are incentives for schools to inflate their enrolment figures. The Government should take steps to establish other mechanisms for collecting data on education, particularly regarding education for Roma.

In particular, current statistics do not reflect the high number of pupils, especially Roma, who are formally enrolled but rarely attend classes. Local and international researchers have gathered data demonstrating that Roma also attend pre-school at significantly lower rates than the majority population. While the number of Roma who have never attended school appears to be on the decline, Roma are still far more likely to drop out of school, with the proportion of Roma students plunging in higher grades.

Segregation has a long history in Bulgaria; geographical segregation has led to the establishment of segregated “Roma schools” in neighbourhoods and villages where Roma are the majority. Roma are also overrepresented in the special school networks, both in schools for children with intellectual disabilities (“special schools”) and in boarding schools for children with behavioural challenges. With such well-documented evidence of segregation as an ongoing trend, in all levels and branches of the education system, it is clear that the Government must be more active in integrating schools and communities.

2.1 Data collection

Due to the social stigma attached to Roma identity, data on the number of Roma, and specifically on the school-age Roma population, collected by official bodies tend to be unreliable. A general demographic decrease in the population of Bulgaria over the past decades, which has led to a steady decline in the number of students and sometimes threatened even the very existence of certain schools, has made a great deal of the statistical data collected on the basis of educational authorities’ reports highly unreliable.⁴ Children whose births are not registered (almost all of them Roma) are non-existent as far as educational statistics, and the education system for that matter, are concerned. On the other hand, children who have dropped out of school or temporarily departed from the region or the country may sometimes be present in school registers and may even pass from one grade to another. Collection of data by private research institutions follows different methodologies, a fact that often renders it inconsistent.

The Bulgarian Law for the Protection of Personal Data, from January 2002, stipulates that collection of personal data may take place only “for concrete purposes, strictly defined by law, and cannot be processed additionally in a manner that is incompatible with these goals”.⁵ It does not prohibit collection of ethnic data but prohibits any

⁴ For example, drop-out rates are based on official deregistration of the student from the school and do not take into account school absenteeism.

⁵ Law for the Protection of Personal Data, *Official Gazette*, No. 1, 4 January 2002, as last amended 10 November 2006 (hereafter, *Law for the Protection of Personal Data*), Art. 2, para. 2, pt. 2.

processing of such data that “reveals racial or ethnic origin”.⁶ This prohibition, however, is subject to numerous exemptions, among which are the consent of the person concerned, stipulations of other laws, and data collection for the specific aims of some NGO, as well as journalistic and literary activity.⁷

The Law on Statistics, from June 1999, stipulates that ordinary citizens are required to provide information to the statistical bodies only during the census. They cannot, however, be obliged to provide data about their “race, nationality, ethnic belonging, religion, health status, personal life, political party affiliation, committed offences, philosophical and political opinions”.⁸ Every census in Bulgaria is regulated by a separate law. The last Law on the Census of Population, Housing and Agricultural Enterprises in the Republic of Bulgaria in 2001, from February 2000, provides for the collection of data on ethnic appartenance, religion and mother tongue of the population.⁹ All these data were collected on the basis of free self-determination from the respondents during the census. Many private research institutions routinely collect ethnic data in the course of sociological surveys. No issue related to possible violations of the law has ever been discussed in Bulgaria with regard to these activities.

2.2 Enrolment data and trends

The total population of Bulgaria on 31 December 2004 was 7,761,049, and has been decreasing over the past decade.¹⁰ The number of Roma, according to the last census from March 2001, was 370,908, or 4.7 per cent of the total population. As elsewhere, in Bulgaria many people who are identified as Roma by the surrounding population do not identify themselves as such for a variety of reasons, including the social stigma associated with belonging to this ethnic group. Expert opinions put the number of Roma in Bulgaria at between 600,000 and 800,000.¹¹

In line with the general decline of the population, the number of children in Bulgaria, including children of school age, has been constantly decreasing over the past decade. However, because of the higher birth rate and lower life expectancy, the demographic structure of the Roma population differs significantly from the national average.

⁶ Law for the Protection of Personal Data, Art. 5, para. 1, pt. 1.

⁷ Law for the Protection of Personal Data, Art. 5, para. 2, pts. 2, 4 and 7.

⁸ Law on Statistics, *Official Gazette*, No. 57, 25 June 1999, the last amendment from 4 November 2005, Art. 21, para. 1 and 2.

⁹ Law on the Census of Population, Housing and Agricultural Enterprises in the Republic of Bulgaria in 2001, *Official Gazette*, No. 16, 25 February 2000, Art. 5, para. 1.

¹⁰ National Statistical Institute, *Population and Demographic Processes – 2004*, Sofia: NSI, 2005, p. 8.

¹¹ Cf. E. Marushiakova and V. Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*, Frankfurt aM: Peter Lang, 1997 (hereafter, Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*), pp. 43–44; Jean-Pierre Liegeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Press, 1994, p. 34; Ilona Tomova, *Циганите в преходния период* (Gypsies in the Period of Transition), Sofia: ICMSIR, 1995, p. 13.

According to census data, just 5.4 per cent of the Roma population are between 60 and 100 years of age, while the national average was 22.3 per cent.¹²

Table 1 below shows these differences in the pre-school- and school-age population according to the groupings made up by the National Statistical Institute (NSI), for presentation of the data from the March 2001 census:

Table 1: Population structure for children – breakdown by age group, for Roma and national populations (March 2001)

Age group (years)	Share of overall population (per cent)	
	For total population	For Roma population
0–4	4.07	10.37
5–9	4.86	10.74
10–14	6.42	11.67
15–19	6.78	10.70

Source: NSI¹³

Bulgarian official education statistics calculate net enrolment rates by level of education on two bases – as group net enrolment rates by levels of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED – 97)¹⁴ and as net enrolment rates in the education system by age groups.¹⁵ The respective trends over the past five school years were as follows:

¹² National Statistical Institute, *Census of the Population, Buildings and Agricultural Enterprises in 2001, Vol. 1-Population, Book 1 – Demographic and Social Characteristics of the Population*, Sofia: NSI, 2004 (hereafter, NSI, *Census of the Population – Demographic and Social Characteristics of the Population*), p. 182.

¹³ Calculations based on NSI, *Census of the Population – Demographic and Social Characteristics of the Population*, p. 182.

¹⁴ Calculated as percentages of the number of enrolments by educational levels in certain age groups to the number of population in the same age groups.

¹⁵ Calculated as percentages of the number of enrolments in corresponding age groups irrespective of the educational level to the number of population in the same age groups.

Table 2: Net enrolment rates – breakdown by educational level (2000–2005)

Educational level (ISCED – 97)	Net enrolment rate (per cent) – by school year					
	2000– 2001	2001– 2002	2002– 2003	2003– 2004	2004– 2005	2005– 2006
Pre-primary education	66.8	73.6	74.2	74.6	73.6	73.7
Primary education	96.3	98.5	99.8	100.3	99.7	99.5
Lower secondary education	82.4	83.1	83.9	84.2	84.2	84.9
Upper secondary education	64.7	68.3	74.9	77.1	77.3	78.0

Source: NSI¹⁶**Table 3: Net enrolment rates – breakdown by age group (2000–2005)**

Age group (years)	Net enrolment rate (per cent) – by school year					
	2000–2001	2001–2002	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006
3–6	70.1	77.2	78.5	78.0	76.3	75.7
7–10	98.4	101.2	102.3	102.2	101.6	101.4
11–14	97.0	97.7	98.0	98.1	98.2	98.3
15–18	71.9	75.2	81.0	82.8	82.9	83.4

Source: NSI¹⁷

There are high quotients for participation and enrolment, with some percentage points above 100 per cent. Two types of enrolment are tracked: net by degree and by age group, where the net quotient is the ratio between the number of children enrolled and the number of children in the respective age group. Due to demographic decline, this ratio can exceed 100 per cent. Enrolment is calculated at the beginning of the school year, based on documents that schools submit in October, which account for how many children are enrolled. However, children in a particular school group or age group are actually counted at the end of the year. This also creates enrolment rates over 100 per cent.

¹⁶ National Statistical Institute, *Education in the Republic of Bulgaria – 2005*, Sofia: NSI, 2005 (hereafter, NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2005*), p. 116, and National Statistical Institute, *Education in the Republic of Bulgaria – 2006*, Sofia: NSI, 2006 (hereafter, NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2006*), p. 100.

¹⁷ NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2005*, and NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2006*.

According to official data sources, the net enrolment rates show that the overall tendency of enrolment over the past five school years at the pre-school level, where enrolment is influenced by a number of socio-economic factors, is somewhat uncertain, peaking in the 2002–2003 school year, only to decrease again by the 2005–2006 school year. Such an uncertain trend is also visible for primary education. The tendency towards higher enrolment over the period is more clearly expressed for lower and upper secondary school, however.

Official statistics do not collect information on net enrolment rates by ethnic groups. The bases of the calculation of the net enrolment rates are the school records. They take into account formal enrolment but are inaccurate with regard to actual attendance, as there are situations, especially in Roma communities, where children are enrolled at the beginning of the school year but rarely show up during the year.

According to a 2003 survey of the International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (IMIR), 35 per cent of Roma children and about 16 per cent of Turkish children had not attended pre-school at all.¹⁸ For comparison, just 6.8 per cent of Bulgarian children, according to the IMIR survey, had not attended pre-school. Muslim Roma girls were overrepresented compared with the Roma boys among those who had never attended pre-school (38.1 per cent versus 31 per cent). Since then this gap may have narrowed somewhat, due to Government support for one obligatory year of pre-school for all children from the 2003–2004 school year (see Annex 1). However, the trends in the overall net enrolment rates suggest that even if this narrowing took place, it is not of real significance. A small number of Roma children may enrol at an older age, especially when the families are pressured by the social security authorities to present a certificate for attendance, but no data are available on the precise number.

Data collected as part of a multi-country study on poverty and ethnicity in 2000 (the “Yale dataset”),¹⁹ however, disaggregated enrolment rates by ethnicity. In Bulgaria the Yale data show a significant difference in enrolment levels for children of basic school age (6–14, from the first to the eighth grade). Roma enrolment rates were 33 per cent lower, at 60 per cent, than for the majority population, at approximately 90 per cent.

¹⁸ МЦПМКВ (IMIR), *Окончателен доклад по проект: Оценка на съществуващите образователни политики и практики за предоставяне на равен достъп до обучение на деца от малцинствата и за разработване на препоръки за устойчиво решение на образователните проблеми на малцинствата* (Final Report on the Project: Evaluation of the Existing Policies and Practices for Ensuring Equal Access to Education of Children from Minorities and for Developing Recommendations for a Sustainable Solution of the Educational Problems of the Minorities), Sofia: IMIR, 2004, p. 10, available also at <http://www.ncedi.government.bg> (accessed on 14 January 2006) (hereafter, IMIR, *Final Report on Minority Education*).

¹⁹ Yale dataset; Revenga *et al.* 2002, in World Bank, *Roma in an Expanding Europe, Breaking the Poverty Cycle*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2005, p. 42, available at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/roma_in_expanding_europe.pdf (accessed on 20 February 2007).

Representative household surveys on actual attendance at the different educational levels show a somewhat different picture of trends of attendance, and indicate clear differences in attendance by ethnic groups. Table 4 presents the results of one such survey, reported by the Ministry of Finance. School attendance is calculated as the share of children in the respective age group attending school.

Table 4: School attendance rates – breakdown by educational level (1995–2001)

Ethnic group	School attendance (per cent) – by educational level and year								
	Pre-school			Basic (first to eighth grade)			Secondary		
	1995	1997	2001	1995	1997	2001	1995	1997	2001
National	44	14	22	87	88	90	47	55	46
Bulgarian	44	15	26	90	93	94	55	66	56
Turks	53	10	19	88	93	90	10	30	34
Roma	25	5	16	55	58	71	3	5	6

Source: Ministry of Finance²⁰

While the overall attendance at the school level increased over the reported period, the trends at the pre-school level were on the decline, with attendance estimated as being as low as 16 per cent in 2001. Another study reports only 12 per cent of Roma children attending pre-schools by 2002. Attendance rates among Roma at the end of 2002 were 28.3 per cent lower than the national at the pre-school level, 21.3 per cent lower than the national at the basic level and as much as 87 per cent lower than the national at the secondary level.²¹

The 2005 UNDP survey, *Vulnerable Groups in Central and South-Eastern Europe*, has the following data with regard to enrolments for Roma.

²⁰ Ministry of Finance, *Review of the Public Spending: Education – State, Problems and Possibilities*, 2004, p. 39, available at <http://www.minfin.government.bg/docs/EDUpercent20reportpercent2020041.pdf> (accessed on 20 February 2007).

²¹ Попа Томова, “Проблеми на образованието на уязвимите малцинствени общности в България” (Problems with the Education of Vulnerable Minority Communities in Bulgaria) (hereafter, Томова, “Education of Vulnerable Minority Communities”), in Hristo Kyuchukov (ed.), *Десеграция или интеркултурна интеграция* (Desegregation or Inter-Cultural Integration), Veliko Turnovo: Faber, 2005 (hereafter, Kyuchukov (ed.), *Desegregation or Inter-Cultural Integration*), p. 197.

Table 5: Enrolment rates (2005)

Education Level	Enrolment rate (per cent)	
	Majority population in close proximity to Roma	Roma
Primary (7–15)	99	77
Secondary (16–19)	81	12

Source: UNDP²²

According to the UNDP survey the enrolment data for Roma indicate a 77 per cent enrolment rate for primary education and a 12 per cent enrolment rate for secondary education, figures that are only slightly higher than the 71 and 6 per cent respectively for attendance reported by the Government in 2001 (see Table 4).

Academic research from 1999–2000 reports that as many as 15 per cent of Roma children have never been enrolled in school.²³ This source does not indicate its methodology, however, and its data might be somewhat inconsistent with the official statistics on net enrolment rates by age groups. This is, however, the only source reporting the percentage of Roma children never having been enrolled in school. Since the year 2000 the overall net enrolment rates have increased, and, consequently, the proportion of Roma children who have never been enrolled in school now is probably lower.

Some NGOs and individuals in Roma neighbourhoods operate “informal” pre-schools, but neither the number of these or their enrolment rates is known. This makes it even more difficult to assess the real and current situation regarding enrolment data and trends.

2.3 Retention and completion

There is no systematic collection of statistical data by the Government on drop-out rates by ethnicity. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, the total number of drop-outs during the 2004–2005 school year was 19,193 students, out of a total of 963,051 enrolled in the entire national education system (including secondary

²² UNDP, *Vulnerable Groups in Central and South-Eastern Europe*, 2005, available at <http://vulnerability.undp.sk/> (accessed on 20 February 2007) (hereafter, UNDP, *Vulnerable Groups*).

²³ Petar-Emil Mitev, “Динамика на бедността” (Dynamics of Poverty) (hereafter, Mitev, “Dynamics of Poverty”), in Ivan Szelenyi (ed.), *Бедността при посткомунизма* (Poverty under Post-Communism), Sofia: Istok-Zhapad, 2002 (hereafter, Szelenyi (ed.), *Poverty under Post-Communism*), p. 42.

education), or some 0.12 per cent.²⁴ These data are provided by the Regional Inspectorates of Education and there are no indications about the methodology for their collection. Officially, students are considered to be drop-outs if they withdraw or their parents formally withdraw them from a school. In many cases, however, especially in segregated Roma schools, the student is formally enrolled and even passes from one grade to another but rarely, if ever, shows up in class.²⁵

Experts suggest that it is common to register children as enrolled even if some attend only occasionally or not at all.²⁶ Segregated schools also reportedly allow students to continue to the next grade without meeting basic standards, thereby reducing grade repetition and dropping out.²⁷

Material collected for this report in 2006 at the local level illustrates this phenomenon of absenteeism that is not reflected in official statistics. In Vidin Municipality, for example, there were 502 Roma children enrolled in the official records of the Roma segregated school at the beginning of the 2005–2006 school year.²⁸ At the end of the first school term of the 2005–2006 school year, 21 Roma children dropped out.²⁹ The data, however, do not correspond to the actual number of students that regularly attend the segregated school as compared to the mainstream schools. A micro-study by the NGO Organisation Drom conducted on 30 March 2006 found that a total of 126 Roma children entered the segregated school premises to attend classes on that day, representing only a quarter of all enrolled pupils. This makes the segregated school the least effective and the most expensive school in Vidin Municipality, because it receives a subsidy for 100 per cent attendance but, in fact, educates 25 per cent of the students.

An expert has noted that official records may be even more inaccurate for pre-school attendance, alleging that children may attend for a short time and then never return, which is not revealed by inspection.³⁰

As the available data on drop-out rates and the proportion of Roma students of the total number of students by grades clearly demonstrate, the average number of years spent by Roma children in school is much lower than the national average. The available data from non-governmental sociological research indicate that the drop-out

²⁴ *National Programme for the Development of School Education and Pre-School Upbringing and Instruction*, IV.3, available at <http://www.minedu.government.bg> (accessed on 1 April 2006).

²⁵ Cf. IMIR, *Final Report on Minority Education*, p. 7.

²⁶ OSI Roundtable, Sofia, June 2006. Explanatory note: the OSI held a roundtable meeting in Bulgaria in June 2006 to invite critiques of the present report in draft form. Experts present included representatives of the Government, parents and non-governmental organisations.

²⁷ OSI Roundtable Bulgaria, Sofia, 20 June 2006.

²⁸ Case study Vidin, Data provided by the Regional Inspectorate of Education. Explanatory note: three case studies were conducted for this report, in Vidin, Veliko Turnovo, and Nikolaevo. More information on each site can be found in Annexes 1–3.

²⁹ Case study Vidin, Data provided by the Regional Inspectorate of Education.

³⁰ OSI Roundtable Bulgaria, Sofia, 20 June 2006.

rates among Roma are significantly higher than the drop-out rates among the rest of the population.

As revealed by Table 6 below, the relative proportions of Roma students to the total number of students in Bulgaria decrease, especially after the eighth grade.

Table 6: Proportion of Roma students in grades 1–10 (2004)

Grade	Roma students as a proportion of total students (per cent)
1	20.6
2	19.1
3	17.4
4	14.5
5	12.8
6	10.1
7	8.8
8	7.2
9	2.6
10	1.7

Source: REF³¹

Further evidence of significant disparities between Roma, Bulgarians and Turks in drop-out rates is provided by survey data on self-reported drop-out rates by ethnicity, presented by the IMIR from 2003. According to this survey, the overall drop-out rates by ethnicity in 2003 were as shown in Table 7.

³¹ Roma Education Fund, *Needs Assessment Study for the Roma Education Fund, Background Paper – Bulgaria*, December 2004, Annex 1, available at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTROMA/Resources/NAREportBulgariaAnnex1FINAL.pdf> (accessed on 11 February 2006) (hereafter, REF, *Needs Assessment Study – Bulgaria*). This paper suggests that these figures are relevant as of February 2002, although it does not indicate a source. It appears that they have been taken from a 2001 Ministry of Education and Science Survey through the Regional Inspectorates of Education from 2001. See, for example, Yosif Nunev, *Ромите и процесът на десеграция в образованието* (Roma and the Process of Desegregation in Education), Sofia: Kuna Editorial House, 2006 (hereafter, Nunev, *Roma and the Process of Desegregation*), p. 65.

Table 7: Self-reported school drop-out rates – breakdown by ethnicity and religion (2003)

Ethnic group	Religious sub-group	School drop-out rates (per cent)	
		Overall	For 15–19 year age group
Bulgarian	–	2.0	3.9
Turkish	–	8.3	21
Roma	–	–	42.8
Roma	Christian	12.8	–
Roma	Muslim	8.1	–

Source: IMIR³²

The same source indicates that drop-out rates are higher among rural Muslim Roma (25.6 per cent), as well as among Muslim Roma girls nationwide (21.2 per cent). By age group the drop-out rates are the highest for all ethnic groups (including Roma) in the age group 15–19 years.

The data above are consistent with the observations of the researchers who conducted the survey of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) of the former “Basic Schools with Enforced Labour Education” (BSELE).³³ At present these are among the biggest segregated Roma schools in Bulgaria, located, with few exceptions, in the cities. The survey included 28 such schools. In the course of visits to these schools, BHC researchers found a systematic discrepancy between the enrolment and the attendance. Overall in this system not more than 70 per cent of the students attend school regularly. High non-attendance usually correlated with high drop-out rates. In some schools BHC researchers were able to come up with concrete figures and estimates. Thus in the Ivan Vazov Lower Secondary School in Kyustendil, according to the school director, the drop-out rate was 5–6 per cent of the entire student body each year.

The BHC researcher estimated that it might be even higher. In the Georgi Sava Rakovski Lower Secondary School in Berkovitsa the real attendance was normally 70 per cent of the enrolled students. Sometimes (for example, around holidays), however, there were no more than two to six students in a classroom. In the Hristo Botev Lower Secondary School in Lom around 400–420 students attended regularly, out of 596 enrolled, making 70 per cent. In the same school 45 students a year dropped out on average (for the most part from the sixth to the eighth grade). In the Dobri Voinikov

³² IMIR, *Final Report on Minority Education*, p. 6.

³³ Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *Report on the 2004 Survey of Former Basic Schools with Enforced Labor Education (BSELE)*, not published, available in the BHC archive (hereafter, BHC, 2004 *Report on Former BSELE*).

Lower Secondary School in the village of Kamenar, Varna region, 60–70 per cent of the students attended regularly. The drop-out rate in the Dr. Petar Beron Lower Secondary School in Yambol was 10–15 per cent a year, according to the school director. There were former BSELE where the attendance was lower and the drop-out rates even higher. For example, in the SS. Cyril and Methodius Lower Secondary School in Straldzha only 40–60 per cent of the students attended. According to the director of that school, from around 40 students enrolled in the first grade, a little more than ten graduate from the eighth grade.

According to an interview with the Regional Inspectorate of Education, Veliko Turnovo, dropping out in this region is highest among children from socially disadvantaged families with unemployed parents, children of divorced parents, and Roma children. Child labour also contributes to the early drop-out rate of Roma children. The proportion of children dropping out due to travel abroad is also high, and is also common among Roma families. The percentage of social, family and foreign travel reasons is higher for primary and lower secondary education than it is for secondary education. Otherwise, the general drop-out rate is higher for secondary education in Veliko Turnovo.³⁴

There is some evidence from research that the drop-out rates in segregated urban Roma neighbourhoods are higher than those in non-segregated urban settings. During the evaluation study of ongoing desegregation projects conducted by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science in six Bulgarian cities in May 2005, standardised Bulgarian language and mathematics tests were administered to Roma students in the fourth grade in segregated and integrated schools.³⁵ Attendance at the tests, as well as during the school year, was studied in addition to the test results. The results from five cities³⁶ are summarised in Table 8.

³⁴ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

³⁵ The results of the evaluation were published in Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *Five Years Later: Non-Governmental Projects for Desegregation of Roma Education in Bulgaria*, Sofia: BHC, 2005 (hereafter, BHC, *Five Years Later*).

³⁶ The results from Haskovo were discarded because the tests were not conducted and monitored as planned, due to manipulations of the administration of the local segregated school.

Table 8: Drop-out rates of fourth-grade Roma students (May 2005)

Type of school	Drop out rate – calculated as the share of Roma students absent from tests (per cent)	
	For the mathematics test	For the Bulgarian language test
Integrated	23.7	22.0
Segregated	27.4	28.4

Source: BHC³⁷

In the cities with desegregation projects that are proceeding relatively well the proportion of student absences from integrated schools is even lower: 20 per cent in Vidin, 7.7 per cent in Montana and 8.1 per cent in Sliven. The data in Sliven are of special note, as the Roma children attending integrated schools are of a significantly lower socio-economic status than the Roma children attending the segregated school. According to the observations of the BHC researchers who attended the tests, the absences in all schools reflected long-term tendencies of non-attendance of the Roma students in the schools concerned.

There are both official and unofficial sources of data on school attainment and completion by ethnicity in Bulgaria. Governmental sources collected such data during the March 2001 population census. Ethnic data collected for the census were based on self-declaration. This may have led to some inaccuracies, as Roma who are more educated tend to designate themselves as belonging to the majority ethnic group rather than designating themselves as Roma.³⁸ Several non-governmental surveys were conducted subsequently, which change and supplement the picture.

According to the 2001 census, the comparative (national and Roma) educational attainment of the population aged 20 and over appears as follows:

³⁷ BHC, *Five Years Later*.

³⁸ Cf. Janos Ladanyi and Ivan Szelenyi, “Социалната структура на ромския етнос в България, Румъния и Унгария по време на прехода към пазарна икономика” (The Social Structure of Roma Ethnicity in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary during the Transition to a Market Economy), in Szelenyi (ed.), *Poverty under Post-Communism*, p. 109.

Table 9: Educational attainment (population aged 20 and over) – breakdown by population group (2001)

Population group	Share (per cent) of the population group attaining the following educational levels:						
	Higher (including college)	Secondary overall	Basic	Primary	Incomplete Primary	Illiterate ³⁹	DK/NA
National (total)	17.01	43.74	27.28	8.7	1.19	1.76	0.31
Roma (total)	0.24	6.46	41.83	28.28	8.3	14.88	–
National (women)	18.79	40.54	26	10.59	1.46	2.29	0.32
Roma (women)	0.24	4.23	36.9	30.49	9.32	18.83	–
National (rural)	4.45	28.57	43.36	17.88	2.3	3.18	0.26
Roma (rural)	0.17	5.56	39.25	31.49	9.06	14.47	–
National (rural women)	4.96	24.63	41.18	21.8	2.87	4.26	0.29
Roma (rural women)	0.16	3.44	33.91	33.71	10.16	18.61	–

Source: NSI⁴⁰

While most Roma have a basic education or lower, most non-Roma have a basic education or higher. The Yale dataset also illustrates lower educational attainment for Roma than for the majority population. According to that source, from 2000, 89 per cent of Roma had primary education or less, while only 10 per cent had some secondary education.

Table 10: Educational attainment by ethnicity (2000)

School level attained	Proportion (per cent)	
	Roma	Non-Roma
Primary or below	89.6	32.7
Some secondary	9.6	53.8

Sources: Yale dataset; Revenga *et al.* 2002⁴¹

³⁹ The category “illiterate” as an element of the methodology of the NSI is somewhat unclear and inconsistent with the other categories.

⁴⁰ Calculation based on NSI, *Census of the Population – Demographic and Social Characteristics of the Population, 2001*, pp. 204–212.

More recent NSI statistics provide the following structure of educational attainment of the national population:

Table 11: Educational attainment of the national population (2000)

Educational attainment level	Share of national population, aged 25–64 (per cent)
Basic and lower education	28
Secondary education	51
Higher education (including college)	22

Source: NSI⁴²

Non-governmental surveys based on determining Roma ethnicity by interviewers report a somewhat better educational attainment of Roma. A representative survey of Gallup International/the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee from May 2005 found the following structure of Roma educational attainment for the population aged 18 and over: while 88.3 per cent of Roma reported having primary or lower educational qualifications, the percentage reporting secondary qualifications dropped to 10.6 per cent, and just 1.1 per cent have a higher education degree.⁴³

Yet another data source, from UNDP, has differing information on retention during the first five years of schooling, as shown below in Table 12.

⁴¹ Yale dataset; Revenga *et al.* 2002 in World Bank, *Roma in an Expanding Europe, Breaking the Poverty Cycle*, p. 42, 2005.

⁴² NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2006*, p. 34. The NSI does not collect ethnic data for its annual surveys on education.

⁴³ Gallup International/Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *Bulgarians and Roma: Interethnic Attitudes, Social Distances and Value Orientations*, Sofia: BHC, May 2005 (hereafter, Gallup International/BHC, *Bulgarians and Roma: Interethnic Attitudes, Social Distances and Value Orientations*). The survey was based on two nationally representative samples – Bulgarian (1,112 persons interviewed) and Roma (1,104 persons interviewed). In both cases ethnicity was determined by the interviewer. For other, older, surveys, cf. REF, *Needs Assessment Study – Bulgaria*. They all report a somewhat (although not much) better educational attainment of Roma as compared to the census data.

Table 12: Pupils starting the first grade who complete the fifth grade (2005)

Educational attainment level ⁴⁴	Share of people aged 12 and over (per cent)		
	Majority population in close proximity to Roma	Roma	National average
At least incomplete secondary education	72	10	–
Spent more than 4 years in school	92	63	93.8

Source: UNDP⁴⁵

Despite various methodologies and approaches, all the available data, both official and non-governmental, reveal a large gap between the educational attainment of Roma and that of the rest of the population in Bulgaria. It is particularly low among Roma women. Roma are the only large ethnic group in Bulgaria in which women have a lower educational attainment than men.

2.4 Types and extent of segregation

Segregated schooling for ethnic minorities has a long history in Bulgaria,⁴⁶ and at present segregated neighbourhood schools are the most widespread type of educational institutions where Roma are schooled. They are typical in the cities, and most of them were intentionally built in or near the major Roma ghettos during the period of Communism to serve the educational needs of their residents. As a result of urbanisation, many village schools that were ethnically mixed became Roma-only and were influenced by the additional negative effects of rural poverty. Because of the isolation, poor infrastructure and lack of financial and human resources in rural municipalities, desegregation in these settings would be extremely difficult. In 2005 the Regional Inspectorates of Education identified 90 urban schools and pre-schools where “desegregation as a solution” can be applied. There were 30,421 children and students enrolled in them, of whom 27,957 were primary to secondary school students, while the rest were enrolled in pre-schools.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ The first dataset shows the people who completed the fifth grade as a share of those aged 12 (of those who should have completed it). The second dataset shows the people who completed the fifth grade as a share of all those aged 12 and over. The difference between the two datasets indicates the incidence of repeaters.

⁴⁵ UNDP, *Vulnerable Groups*.

⁴⁶ Cf. Elena Sachkova, “Политики относно образованието на малцинствата в България (1878–2000)” (Minority Education Policies in Bulgaria 1878–2000), *Стратегии на образователната и научната политика* (Strategies for Policy in Science and Education), No. 3, 2000.

⁴⁷ Nunev, *Roma and the Process of Desegregation*, pp. 65–66.

Under Communism, most segregated schools were intended to cultivate basic manual skills in a population that was officially branded as being “of a low living standards and culture”.⁴⁸ Special programmes were adopted in 31 of these schools, stressing vocational training and developing labour skills from the first grade. They were officially called “basic schools with enforced labour education” (BSELE) and were assigned production plans in addition to education. In at least one case (Kliment Timiryazev 131 Secondary School in Sofia) around 50 Roma students from one of Sofia’s mostly Bulgarian neighbourhoods were separated from the Bulgarian children and were placed under the “enforced labour” curriculum.

According to the last information, before their formal transformation into mainstream schools in the 1990–1991 school year, the BSELE system included 17,880 students, and the production plan was for 317,415 levs.⁴⁹ The BSELE became the target of severe criticism by Roma activists at the beginning of the democratisation process in the early 1990s.⁵⁰ Although their transformation took place soon after the fall of Communism, they continued to operate informally as schools with enforced labour education through the mid-1990s.⁵¹ Today these schools are ordinary neighbourhood “Roma” schools, although most of the staff are the same. According to Yosif Nunev, State expert at the Ministry of Education and Science, there are still cases of enforced labour education at the expense of Bulgarian language and mathematics in some of the former BSELE.⁵²

Estimates of the extent of educational segregation of Roma education vary in different publications, from almost 70 per cent to as little as 44 per cent, depending on the different definitions of segregation, different sample methodologies, and various interpretations of how to define who is Roma. According to an official paper of the Secretariat of the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCEDI) from 2003, the share of Roma children attending segregated “Roma” neighbourhood schools is 70 per cent of their total number.⁵³ This is also the figure provided for Bulgaria by the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) 2005 report on Roma education in

⁴⁸ Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*, p. 38.

⁴⁹ Ministry of National Education, *Справка №1 за ОУЗТО в страната за 1990–1991 учебна година* (Information Bulletin No. 1 for the BSELE in the Country for the School Year 1990–1991), available in the BHC archive.

⁵⁰ Nunev, *Roma and the Process of Desegregation*, p. 42.

⁵¹ BHC, *2004 Report on Former BSELE*.

⁵² Interview with Yosif Nunev, State expert at the Ministry of Education and Science, Sofia, 28 June 2006.

⁵³ Government of Bulgaria, “Information on the Policy of the Bulgarian Government for the Improvement of the Situation of the Roma Population in Bulgaria,” report for the conference *Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future*, Budapest 30 June 2003–1 July 2003, available at <http://www.ncedi.government.bg/8.Doklad-Budapest-1.07.03.htm> (accessed on 7 January 2006).

Eastern Europe.⁵⁴ Other research gives lower figures for the share of Roma educated in such schools. The UNDP 2002 Roma report estimate is 49 per cent.⁵⁵ The IMIR 2003 report on minority education estimates is 54.9 per cent for Christian Roma and 44.5 per cent for Muslim Roma.⁵⁶ Because of the supposed large increase in residential segregation in Bulgaria, some experts do not consider the lower figure for those studying in “Roma” schools, 44 per cent, to be reliable.⁵⁷

Numbers may also be skewed due to the practice of stopping integration after a certain time period. In Vidin Municipality, shockingly, a regular practice of village schools is to enrol Roma children at the beginning of the school year, to transport them for a month or so from distant neighbourhoods to the village schools, and then when the school files the appropriate documentation and receives the school subsidy, to immediately stop transport of the children, who are later reported as drop-outs. There is no State or municipality mechanism that would require the school authorities to monitor the presence of their students regularly.⁵⁸

Recent data for 2005 from the Ministry of Education and Science put the figure of Roma students educated in pre-schools and schools with more than 50 per cent Roma children and students in the towns of 22 regions at 30,421.⁵⁹ Of these, 2,464 are in pre-schools and 27,957 are in schools. This figure, as well as all official governmental enrolment data for the schools, is based on the official enrolment records of the schools, not on the number of students actually attending.

Starting in 2001, the Open Society Foundation, Sofia (OSF-Sofia), has conducted research on segregated schools touching on different aspects – their number,

⁵⁴ European Roma Rights Center, *Stigmata: Segregated Schooling of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, a Survey of Patterns of Segregated Education of Roma in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia*, Budapest: ERRC, 2005 (hereafter, ERRC, *Stigmata*), p. 22. The ERRC report cites a 2001 publication of Yosif Nunev, “Анализ на състоянието на училищата, в които се обучават ромски деца” (Analysis of the Current Status of Schools with Roma Enrolment), *Стратегии на образователната политика* (Strategies for Policy in Science and Education), MES, special issue, 2002, p. 117 (hereafter, Nunev, “Analysis of the Current Status of Schools with Roma Enrolment”). Nunev’s estimate is based on data from the Regional Inspectorates of Education of the Ministry of Education and Science. This is probably the source for the NCEDI estimate as well.

⁵⁵ UNDP, *Avoiding the Dependency Trap: the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe*, Bratislava: UNDP, 2002 (hereafter, UNDP, *Avoiding the Dependency Trap*), p. 55.

⁵⁶ IMIR, *Final Report on Minority Education*, p. 14.

⁵⁷ OSI Roundtable, Sofia, June 2006.

⁵⁸ Case study Vidin.

⁵⁹ Information provided by Yosif Nunev, State expert at the Ministry of Education and Science, in February 2006, based on data from the Regional Inspectorates of Education of the Ministry of Education and Science. Roma ethnicity was determined by the inspectorates. See Nunev, *Analysis of the Roma Schools*, unpublished document, provided by Yosif Nunev to EUMAP, November 2006.

distribution by regions, relationships to the Roma ghettos, and material conditions.⁶⁰ In the course of this study, OSI-Bulgaria researchers interviewed school directors and teachers, municipal officials and officials at the Regional Inspectorates of Education. According to the most recent report, out of the total 2,657 schools of general education and 127 special schools in Bulgaria, the total number of schools with more than 50 per cent Roma students in 2005 was 554 (or almost 20 per cent of the total number of schools).⁶¹ There were 960 schools with more than 30 per cent Roma students (35 per cent of the total number of schools).⁶² One of the observations of the report was that a school that has more than 30 per cent Roma students tends to be quickly transformed into a “Roma school” because of “white flight”, where non-Roma parents withdraw their children from the school. Research on school desegregation in several Bulgarian cities supported this observation.⁶³ There were 960 schools (out of a total of 2,657 schools of general education and 127 special schools) with more than 30 per cent Roma students in 2005.⁶⁴

An example of this phenomenon is the P. R. Slaveykov Primary School in Pavlikeni (Pavlikeni Municipality, Veliko Turnovo district), which has been gradually become segregated over the last six years. The school is situated between the Roma and the Bulgarian neighbourhoods, and six years ago children of both areas used to study in school together. At present, however, all the Bulgarian children are enrolled in a more distant school with predominantly Bulgarian pupils.⁶⁵ These children go on foot to the other school, which is further away than the P. R. Slaveykov Primary School, although still within walking distance.

A 2001 study by the Ministry of Education and Science provided comprehensive data on the distribution of residentially segregated Roma schools with close to 100 per cent Roma enrolment by regions, a picture that remains valid (see Table 13).

⁶⁰ To date OSF-Sofia has published three reports: *Roma Schools in Bulgaria – 2001*, *Roma Schools in Bulgaria – 2002–2003* and *Roma Schools in Bulgaria – 2005*. The first of these reports exists in English; the other two are available only in Bulgarian. They are available at <http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei/romaschools.bg.osf/bg/objectives.html> (accessed on 20 February 2007).

⁶¹ OSF-Sofia, *Roma Schools in Bulgaria – 2005*, p. 6. Roma ethnicity is determined by the officials interviewed.

⁶² OSF-Sofia, *Roma Schools in Bulgaria – 2005*, p. 6.

⁶³ Krassimir Kanev, *The First Steps: An Evaluation of the Nongovernmental Desegregation Project in Six Bulgarian Cities*, Sofia, Budapest: OSI, 2003, pp. 15 and 22.

⁶⁴ OSF-Sofia, *Roma Schools in Bulgaria – 2005*, p. 6.

⁶⁵ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

Table 13: Distribution of Roma children and of schools with close to 100 per cent Roma enrolment – breakdown by region (2001)

Region	Total number of children in school and of pre-school age			Total number of schools and pre-schools with 100 per cent Roma enrolment
	Total population	Roma children		
		Total	As a share of total population (per cent)	
Blagoevgrad	51,604	2,344	4.5	2
Bourgas	57,581	6,246	10.8	4
Dobrich	29,968	1,131	3.7	5
Gabrovo	17,274	1,386	8.0	3
Haskovo	23,628	4,871	21.0	5
Kurdjali	25,221	1,524	6.0	4
Kyustendil	21,505	1,606	7.0	3
Lovech	21,517	1,003	4.6	0
Montana	23,185	6,231	27.0	6
Pazardjik	36,736	6,930	19.0	10
Pernik	19,006	1,524	12.5	0
Pleven	40,199	5,060	12.5	4
Plovdiv	77,129	10,315	13.4	5
Razgrad	21,776	2,068	9.5	0
Rousse	34,147	3,113	9.0	2
Shumen	29,008	4,063	14.0	5
Silistra	17,076	1,922	11.3	5
Sliven	29,492	5,645	19.0	5
Smolian	22,443	231	1.0	0
Sofia – city	146,526	2,405	1.7	6
Sofia – region	31,290	5,192	16.6	6
Stara Zagora	50,209	7,228	14.4	6
Turgovishte	19,099	3,122	16.0	6
Varna	59,691	7,259	12.0	4
Veliko Turnovo	37,620	3,238	8.6	3
Vidin	15,154	2,735	18.0	2
Vratsa	29,248	4,802	16.4	1
Yambol	20,212	2,972	15.0	4
TOTAL	1,007,544	106,166	10.5	106

Source: Nunev⁶⁶⁶⁶ Nunev, "Analysis of the Current Status of Schools with Roma Enrolment," pp. 110–144.

According to a 2002 Bulgarian Helsinki Committee research project into schools for children with intellectual disabilities, Roma represented at least 51 per cent of their total student body.⁶⁷ A more recent evaluation of the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) put the number of ethnic Bulgarian children in special schools⁶⁸ at 42.5 per cent of such schools' total student body as of 31 December 2004. The rest were minority (Roma, Turkish and other), plus 1.9 per cent undecided).⁶⁹ In some schools the share of Roma students reaches 90–100 per cent.

The past five years saw some reduction of the number of special schools for children with intellectual disabilities, as well as a reduction of the number of children enrolled in them, as seen in Table 14.

Table 14: Children enrolled in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities (2000–2005)

School year	Total no. of special schools	Total no. of children enrolled
2000–2001	76	9,581
2001–2002	76	9,489
2002–2003	75	9,193
2003–2004	73	8,655
2004–2005	72	7,996

Source: NSI⁷⁰

There is good reason to believe that the decrease shown in the tables above is a result more of the recent demographic trend of general decrease of the population in Bulgaria and less of some planned governmental policy.⁷¹ Over a period of 15 years after 1989 the overall population in Bulgaria decreased by 1.2 million. It was 8,987,000 in 1988,

⁶⁷ Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *Помощните училища в България* (Remedial Schools in Bulgaria), Sofia: ВНС, 2002 (hereafter, ВНС, *Remedial Schools in Bulgaria*), p. 7.

⁶⁸ Remedial schools are one type of special schools. The other types include schools for delinquent children, hospital schools, and so on. Remedial schools are the most numerous in the special school system.

⁶⁹ State Agency for Child Protection, “Право на образование за децата със специални образователни потребности” (Right to Education for Children with Special Educational Needs), *Бюлетин на ДАЗД* (Newsletter of the SACP), No. 2/2005 (hereafter, SACP, “Right to Education for Children with Special Educational Needs”), p. 81.

⁷⁰ NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2005*, p. 47.

⁷¹ OSI Roundtable, Sofia, June 2006.

7,929,000 around 1 March 2001 (at the time of the census), and dropped further to 7,801,000 at the end of 2003.⁷²

As shown below in Table 15, over the last five years there has been a general trend of a reduction in the total number of children in grades one to eight, for both general schools and for special schools for children with intellectual disabilities (remedial schools).⁷³ This reduction has been similar for both general schools and special schools – as compared to 2000–2001, there was a reduction of 81.4 per cent in general schools and 83.5 per cent in special schools.

Table 15: Enrolment trends in grades 1–8 in general and special schools (2000–2005)

School Year	Reduction (per cent) as compared to 2000–2001	
	General schools	Special schools
2000–2001	100	100
2001–2002	95.6	99.0
2002–2003	92.0	96.0
2003–2004	87.1	90.3
2004–2005	81.4	83.5

Source: NSI⁷⁴

The boarding schools for children with behavioural challenges in Bulgaria can be considered as a distinct system of segregated Roma education. Formally, according to

⁷² Ivan Balev and Sergei Cvetarski, “Демографски процеси и бъдещи тенденции в развитието на населението на България” (Demographic Processes and Future Tendencies in the Population Development in Bulgaria), in Mihail Ivanov and Atanas Atanasov (eds.), *Демографско развитие на Република България* (Demographic Development of the Republic of Bulgaria), Sofia: NCCEDI etc., 2005 (hereafter, Ivanov and Atanasov (eds.), *Demographic Development of the Republic of Bulgaria*), p. 11.

⁷³ Calculation based on NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2005*, p. 47, and NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2006*, p. 101. Tendencies are presented as shares from the general number of students and the number of those enrolled in remedial schools by years, the 2000–2001 school year being the 100 per cent basis.

⁷⁴ NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2005*, p. 47.

the Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act, these are institutions for children with “deviant behaviour”.⁷⁵

There are two types: social-pedagogical boarding schools and correctional boarding schools. The major difference between the two types is in the regime, which tends to be stricter in the latter. According to a 2001 BHC study, minority (mainly Roma) children in these boarding schools represent between 60 and 70 per cent of the entire student body and reach 95 per cent in some of them.⁷⁶ This research, as well as a subsequent BHC study, revealed serious flaws in placement, education and rehabilitation of children in these institutions, as well as a variety of human rights abuses, including physical violence.⁷⁷ In some of these, mostly village schools, local Roma children are enrolled and classified as juvenile delinquents solely because this is the only school in the locality.⁷⁸

According to some, these places are, in fact, for the deprivation of liberty for the purposes of compulsory educational supervision. Some parents perceive these types of boarding schools as a way of removing Roma children from their own parents’ care.⁷⁹ The institutionalisation of Roma children in these “delinquent schools” has also been characterised as an illegal procedure for which school headmasters should be made liable.⁸⁰

In the 2004–2005 school year there were 24 such schools in Bulgaria. While placement in these schools was subject to reform on two occasions in the last ten years, no attempts at comprehensive re-evaluation of the policy regarding the existence and the purpose of these schools have ever been made. The *National Programme for Child Protection 2006* talks about “restructuring and reforming” these institutions through individualising the work with the students placed there, training the staff and re-evaluation of the placement of children placed there for social reasons.⁸¹ Their curriculum is the same as in the

⁷⁵ Ministry of Education and Science, Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act, *Official Gazette*, No. 68, 30 July 1999, with many amendments, the latest one from 24 February 2004 (hereafter, *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*), Art. 66, para. 1, section 6.

⁷⁶ Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *Социално-педагогически и възпитателни училища-интернати* (Social-Pedagogical Boarding Schools and Correctional Boarding Schools), Sofia: BHC, 2001 (hereafter, BHC, *Social-Pedagogical Boarding Schools and Correctional Boarding Schools*), pp. 391–392.

⁷⁷ Cf. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *В името на институцията: поправителните училища в България* (In the Name of the Institution: Schools for Delinquent Children in Bulgaria), Sofia: BHC, 2005 (hereafter, BHC, *In the Name of the Institution*).

⁷⁸ BHC, *Social-Pedagogical Boarding Schools and Correctional Boarding Schools*, p. 19.

⁷⁹ OSI Roundtable, Sofia, June 2006.

⁸⁰ OSI Roundtable, Sofia, June 2006.

⁸¹ State Agency for Child Protection, *Национална програма за закрила на детето за 2006 г.* (The National Programme for Child Protection for 2006), available at http://www.stopech.sacp.government.bg/?sid=professional_bg&pid=0000000074 (accessed on 20 February 2007).

schools of general education. The quality of teaching, however, is very poor, and, given the overall educational and social conditions in which these children are placed, their chances for meaningful integration in society are very poor.

Trends in enrolment in boarding schools for children with behavioural challenges for the past five years indicate some decrease (see Table 16).

Table 16: Children enrolled in boarding schools for children with behavioural challenges (2000–2005)

School year	Total no. of students
2000–2001	3,054
2001–2002	2,749
2002–2003	2,522
2003–2004	2,264
2004–2005	1,963
2005–2006	1,340

Source: NSI⁸²

Thus the 2005–2006 school year enrolment in the schools for children with behavioural challenges was 43.9 per cent of the 2000–2001 school year enrolment. The decrease is probably due to the difficulties in complying with the reformed procedure, which better safeguards against arbitrariness.

⁸² Calculation based on NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2005*, p. 47, and NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2005*, p. 45.

3. GOVERNMENT EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

The Government of Bulgaria has adopted both programmes aimed at improving the situation of Roma that include a section on education, and programmes targeting education that contain measures aimed at minority groups including Roma, with very little evidence of impact or implementation on the local level. The National Programme for the Development of School Education and Pre-School Upbringing and Instruction, adopted in June 2006, retreats from earlier commitments made towards desegregation, and does not address many of the specific problems identified in the Government's own Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 (Decade Action Plan) in 2005. This divergence should be resolved through the adoption of a comprehensive policy for Roma education, supported by appropriate legislative and financial measures. Earlier Government programmes to eliminate segregation in education have not been implemented, even as NGO-led desegregation initiatives have been expanding at the local level and could serve as useful models for a more comprehensive Government approach. A clear vision and concrete instruments for implementation, including appropriate financial resources, is needed, along with specific monitoring instruments to assess longer-term success rates.

Despite need and confirmed benefits demonstrated at the local level, just over 100 Roma teaching assistants have been appointed to work as classroom facilitators throughout the country. Many municipalities, however, do not have the resources to hire such assistants. Likewise, there are very few teachers of Romani language working in schools at present. While Roma traditions and culture are presented in some textbooks, stereotypical or even biased material about Roma still appears in classroom materials. Measures must be enacted to right this situation. A variety of training opportunities are available for teachers in areas relevant to Roma education, but the impact of such courses is not clear. Better monitoring of these important areas would provide the Government with a better basis for ongoing policy development.

3.1 Main Government policy documents

The main document that defines Government policies towards Roma is the *Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society*⁸³ (hereafter, *Framework Programme*), which was adopted by the Council of Ministers in April 1999.⁸⁴ In the education section, the *Framework Programme* outlines four major problems with Roma education:

⁸³ Government of Bulgaria, *Рамкова програма за равноправно интегриране на ромите в българското общество* (Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society) (hereafter, *Framework Programme*). Although adopted as an official Government document, the *Framework Programme* has never been published in the *Official Gazette*. Only as late as 2004 was it placed on the website of the National Council of Ethnic and Demographic Issues at <http://www.ncedi.government.bg/> (accessed on 20 February 2007).

⁸⁴ EUMAP prepared a full-length report analysing the content and implementation of the *Framework Programme* in 2002. EUMAP, *Minority Protection in Bulgaria*, Budapest: OSI, 2002, available at http://www.eumap.org/reports/2002/minority/international/sections/bulgaria/2002_m_bulgaria.pdf (accessed on 20 February 2007) (hereafter, EUMAP, *Minority Protection in Bulgaria – 2002*).

- Territorial segregation of Roma schools;
- Arbitrary placement of Roma students in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities;
- Lack of mother-tongue instruction;
- Low educational status of the adult Roma population.

The *Framework Programme* develops six strategic objectives:

- Desegregation of Roma education;
- Termination of the practice of arbitrary placement of Roma children in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities;
- Combating racism in the classroom;
- Introduction of mother-tongue education;
- Support of Roma university education;
- Adult education.

In addition to its limited implementation, the *Framework Programme* is also now regarded as outdated,⁸⁵ and its section on education has largely been supplanted by a specialised Government programme on education (see section 3.2). This new policy does not specifically target Roma, however.

The Government advanced its own Action Plan for the “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015”⁸⁶ (*Decade Action Plan*). This consists of a table of goals, targets, and activities, with a timeframe, financing and indicators for implementation.⁸⁷ The *Decade Action Plan* makes education its first priority, and includes the following as specific targets:

⁸⁵ OSI Roundtable, Sofia, June 2006.

⁸⁶ The “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015”, an initiative supported by the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the World Bank, is an unprecedented international effort to combat discrimination and ensure that Roma have equal access to education, housing, employment and health care. Launched in February 2005 and endorsed by nine Central and Eastern European countries, the Decade is also supported by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Program. For further details, see the Decade website (www.romadecade.org).

⁸⁷ Government of Bulgaria, *National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005–2015* (hereafter, *Decade Action Plan*). Available in English alongside those of the eight other countries on the website of the Decade at <http://www.romadecade.org/action.htm> (accessed on 20 February 2007).

- Ensuring legal guarantees for equal integration and an institutional mechanism for the adequate integration of Roma children through amendments to the legal framework;
- Creating conditions for equality and adaptation of Roma children within the new educational environment;
- Desegregating schools and pre-schools in Roma settlements;
- Reducing drop-outs, and reintegrating children who have already dropped out;
- Promoting Roma culture and traditions;
- Improving attitudes towards Roma in the school community.

Since the adoption of the *Decade Action Plan*, the Government has released a number of documents that were supposed to constitute its implementation, none of which addressed the sphere of education.⁸⁸

The *Needs Assessment Report*⁸⁹ created for the Roma Education Fund (REF) outlined several actions that the Government should take to improve the situation for Roma education. These actions fall into three groups:

- Desegregation of Roma or prevalingly Roma schools, and improving the quality of education in village schools with high numbers of Roma students;
- Improving the preparation of Roma children prior to enrolment in the first grade;
- Transferring Roma without disabilities from special schools for children with intellectual disabilities to other schools.

Though not apparent from the overarching goals of the *Decade Action Plan*, there is consistency between the actions outlined in the *Needs Assessment Report*, and the targets and actions that were subsequently developed in the *Decade Action Plan*. Those, specifically, address desegregation in many ways. In terms of “improving the

⁸⁸ For example, Ministry of Health, *Здравна стратегия за лица в неравностойно положение, принадлежащи към етнически малцинства* (Health Strategy for Persons in Unequal Social Status, Belonging to Ethnic Minorities), available at <http://www.nccedi.government.bg> (accessed on 20 February 2007), and *Национална програма за подобряване жилищните условия на ромите в Република България за периода 2005–2015 г.* (National Programme for the Improvement of the Housing Conditions of Roma in the Republic of Bulgaria for the Period 2005–2015), available at <http://www.mrrb.government.bg> (accessed on 20 February 2007);

⁸⁹ REF, *Needs Assessment Study for the REF Background Paper, 2004*, available at http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2006/02/28/000090341_20060228103723/Rendered/PDF/352030BU0NARreport.pdf (accessed on 20 February 2007).

preparation of Roma children for enrolment into grade 1”, the Plan addresses the training of teaching assistants, and the desegregation of Roma pre-schools.

3.2 Government education policies

On 7 June 2006, Parliament adopted the *National Programme for the Development of School Education and Pre-School Upbringing and Instruction*⁹⁰ (hereafter, *National Programme*). This envisages the introduction of systems of internal and external evaluation in the entire education system, differential remuneration of teachers depending on their achievement, and decentralisation of management. It stipulates that all children should have an “equal start” and that there should be “special care” for “children who do not speak Bulgarian well”, as well as for “children with special educational needs”.⁹¹ This programme has no binding legal force and is to be implemented by passing the necessary regulations.

The *National Programme* is much less progressive on school desegregation than the *Framework Programme* or the 2004 *Strategy for the Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities*,⁹² and is in general a step back from the commitments already undertaken by the Government. Although it proposes placing minority children in an “integrating environment”, it deals with transport of children only in the context of the “optimising of the school network and developing of the system of hub schools”. On the integration of children with disabilities the *National Programme* envisages the “creating of a supporting environment” and the “supplying of special textbooks and school materials”, but does not deal with the integration of children with intellectual disabilities, into mainstream schools. There is nothing in the programme on mother-tongue education and none of the other strategic objectives envisaged by the *Framework Programme* (combating racism, providing adult education, and so on) are dealt with in the *National Programme*. The goals of the *Decade Action Plan* have also not been taken into consideration by this newest programme. As for the

⁹⁰ Ministry of Education and Science, *Национална програма за развитие на училищното образование и предучилищното възпитание и подготовка 2006–2015* (National Programme for the Development of School Education and Pre-School Upbringing and Instruction), adopted by Parliament on 7 June 2006, available on the MES website at http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/documents/frontpage/MON_Programa_образование.pdf (accessed on 20 February 2007) (hereafter, *National Programme for the Development of School Education and Pre-School Upbringing and Instruction*).

⁹¹ *National Programme for the Development of School Education and Pre-School Upbringing and Instruction*, Section I.

⁹² Ministry of Education and Science, *Стратегия за образователна интеграция на децата и учениците от етническите малцинства, Одобрена от министъра на образованието и науката на 11 юни 2004 г.* (Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities), adopted by the MES on 11 June 2004, available on the MES website at http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/strategies/s_trategy_integration.pdf (accessed on 20 February 2007) (hereafter, MES, *Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities*).

pedagogical practices, they presumably should be an integral part of the “supporting environment”. However, the Government has passed no regulations regarding the State educational standards in that regard.

On 29 June 2006, the Council of Ministers adopted an *Action Plan for Implementing the Framework Programme*.⁹³ The section on education in this document stresses measures to prevent dropping out, qualification of pedagogical personnel, study of a mother tongue, reduction of special schools and professional education. In line with the *National Programme*, however, it again does not mention desegregation and does not envisage measures in that regard.

The Government has also introduced three types of measures to reduce dropping out of the education system for children from low-income families:

- Progressive offering of free textbooks. All students from the one-year obligatory pre-school and grades one to four are at present eligible to receive free manuals.⁹⁴
- Covering transport costs and providing boarding. All children who do not have schools in their place of residence are eligible to have their costs for transport covered to the “hub” school where they are enrolled. Alternatively, they should be provided with boarding at that school.⁹⁵ These provisions, however, do not envisage covering the transport costs of students when they enrol in mainstream schools in the city, but only cover the costs for travel between cities and villages.
- Offering social security benefits to cover pre-school taxes, food in the schools and school supplies.⁹⁶

On 25 February 2005, Parliament adopted the *National Programme for Broadening the Participation of Children of Compulsory Age in School*.⁹⁷ It envisages three modules:

⁹³ Government of Bulgaria, *План за действие за изпълнение на Рамковата програма за равноправно интегриране на ромите в българското общество за 2006 г.* (Action Plan for the Implementation of the Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society), adopted on 29 June 2006, available at <http://www.nccedi.government.bg> (accessed on 23 February 2007).

⁹⁴ The measure has been fully in effect since April 2005 with the amendments of Decree No. 104 of the Council of Ministers for the adoption of an Ordinance for the Textbooks and School Manuals, *Official Gazette*, No. 34, 19 April 2005.

⁹⁵ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 37, para. 7. The measure has been in effect since March 2003.

⁹⁶ Council of Ministers, *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the Social Assistance Act*, *Official Gazette*, No. 133, 11 November 1998, with many amendments, the last one from 23 December 2005.

⁹⁷ National Assembly, *Национална програма за обхващане на учениците в задължителна училищна възраст* (National Programme for Broadening the Participation of Children of Compulsory Age in School), adopted by Parliament on 25 February 2005.

ensuring free textbooks and school supplies for students from the first to the fourth grade, reducing the network of schools by closing existing schools in small villages and offering bussing for students up to 16 years of age to “hub” schools, and supplying one free meal for all the students from the first to the fourth grade. In May 2006 Parliament updated this plan. According to a report by the Ministry of Education and Science from 2 September 2005, by that date the State budget had secured 15,390,000 levs (€7,892,307) to implement that programme. This money was used to buy 219 school buses to provide transport to “hub” schools. According to the Ministry, however, there is a need for at least twice as many.⁹⁸ According to a later report of the Ministry, the buses served 13,140 students from 134 municipalities and 219 schools.⁹⁹

Another important policy document for Bulgaria that recognises school segregation of Roma is the *Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities*,¹⁰⁰ adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science on 11 June 2004 (see section 3.3).

Since its inception in 2005 the Roma Education Fund has financed several projects in Bulgaria, many of which are co-funded and implemented by the Government. These projects are mentioned in the relevant sections below to which they pertain.

Bulgarian legislation on the study and the use of minority language is restrictive and discriminatory in two important aspects. It guarantees the right to study one’s mother tongue, but not the right to receive education in it. In addition, minority students (many of them Roma) in remedial schools for children with intellectual disabilities and schools for children with behavioural challenges are denied the possibility to study their own language, in a clearly unconstitutional and discriminatory way.

Council of Minister’s Decree No. 183/1994 provides for a mother tongue to be studied as a “free elective subject” within the general curriculum for the basic school (first to eighth grades).¹⁰¹ This means that the students do not receive any grades and the subject does not contribute to the cumulative assessment for completion of the basic educational level. Another problem with this decree is that it restricts the right of secondary students to study their mother tongue, in contradiction to the National Education Act, which guarantees this right to all the students. In 1999, with the adoption of the Law for the Degree of Education, the General Education Minimum and the Education Plan, study of the mother tongue became an “obligatory elective”

⁹⁸ The report is available in Bulgarian at <http://kei.parliament.bg/?page=plSt&lng=bg&SType=show&id=8> (accessed on 14 March 2006).

⁹⁹ Minutes of the meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Education and Science from 10 May 2006, adopted on 11 June 2004, available at <http://www.parliament.bg>.

¹⁰⁰ MES, *Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities*.

¹⁰¹ Council of Ministers, Decree No.183 on the Study of Mother Tongue in the Municipal Schools in Bulgaria from 5 September 1994, *Official Gazette*, No.73, 9 September 1994.

subject,¹⁰² which is offered in addition to the compulsory curriculum on students' or parents' choices, within regular school hours, and students receive grades on it both during and at the end of the year. The grade contributes to the students' annual cumulative assessment.¹⁰³ Making mother-tongue study an obligatory elective subject allowed secondary school students to study it as well. The 1999 law repeals the provision of Decree 183/1994 for free elective mother-tongue study by requiring that it becomes "obligatory elective". Decree 183/1994, however, was not repealed entirely, as it has some provisions that are still in force.

Romanes has been recognised as a mother tongue, one that can be taught as such in the municipal basic schools, since the adoption of the National Education Act in 1991. At present Romanes as a mother tongue in Bulgaria can be studied as an "obligatory elective" subject in the national education system if there are 11 students to form a group for three hours per week in the first grade and between the fifth and the eighth grade, and for two hours per week between the second and the fourth grade (groups can be from one class or mixed, from different classes).¹⁰⁴ Its teaching, however, has never been organised to reach a significant share of the Roma population, and has declined in recent years.

There have been no evaluations of any governmental programmes with regard to their effect on Roma specifically. Case studies at the local level indicate that awareness of these programmes is good, but their impact has been limited. Local journalists in Vidin, for example, are aware of the *Strategy for the Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities*, and the *Decade Action Plan*, but do not know of any specific governmental and local public policies for direct involvement in the desegregation of Roma education. School directors also confirmed that there are no such programmes functioning at the school level. There are a few examples of national programmes that have been introduced to schools in Vidin, but these do not have a direct linkage to the development of an integrated school environment. The opening of a new study for informatics under the programme "e-class" or courses for computer literacy were mentioned as examples by two school directors, as was the transport of Roma children to schools from one village to another village, mentioned by the deputy mayor of Vidin Municipality.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Law for the Degree of Education, the General Education Minimum, and the Education Plan, *Official Gazette*, No.67, 27 July 1999, the latest amendment from 14 May 2004, Art. 15, para. 3 (hereafter, *Law for the Degree of Education, the General Education Minimum, and the Education Plan*).

¹⁰³ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art.111, para.1.

¹⁰⁴ Ministry of Education and Science, Ordinance No.7 on the Number of Students and Children in School and Kindergarten Classes, *Official Gazette*, No.4 , 12 January 2001, the latest amendment from 3 October 2003, Art.26.

¹⁰⁵ Case study Vidin.

These research findings on the local level suggest a very loose connection between national documents and policies, on the one hand, and local concrete measures taken by the school staff or local authorities under the aegis of national or international initiatives in which Bulgaria takes part, on the other. One weak point of the governmental programmes aiming to improve the education of Roma is the lack of any elaborated mechanism for monitoring and evaluation. This structural weakness of governmental educational policies raises, in turn, serious questions about the efficiency of these programmes as well as about their potential for development and replication. Delays in implementation after policy documents have been elaborated and disseminated risk further decreasing Government credibility in the field of education for Roma.

3.3 Desegregation

The *Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society* from April 1999 acknowledges school segregation as one of the major problems of Roma education. It treats segregation as a form of discrimination and requires that the Government adopt concrete measures for desegregation. The *Strategy for the Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities* requires “full integration of the Roma children and students through desegregation of pre-schools and schools in segregated Roma neighbourhoods”.

In September 2002, the Ministry of Education and Science issued its annual instructions on the organisation and regulation of school activities, including a new annex entitled “Guidelines for the Integration of Children and Students from Minorities”.¹⁰⁶ These instructions direct municipalities to create their own programmes for the gradual integration of Roma with their peers from schools outside segregated settlements. The closure of Roma schools is not advised until local communities have been adequately prepared for integration. However, the instructions do not have a binding power on the municipal authorities, which are the only ones that can organise desegregation and close down segregated schools. Thus the instruction, just like the other documents adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science, has remained a piece of paper.

The structures dealing with the desegregation of Roma schools are the municipal governments. They are responsible for opening and closing of the schools of general education and kindergartens on the territory of their municipality. They are expected to ensure a significant share in the financing of the school and pre-school networks. The Regional Inspectorates of Education of the Ministry of Education and Science can also have a role in developing desegregation policies.

¹⁰⁶ Ministry of Education and Science, *Organisation and Management of the Activities in the School of General Education, Professional and Special Schools during the 2002–2003 Year*, Annex 10: “Guidelines for the Integration of Children and Students from Minorities”, Sofia: MES, 2002.

There were two programmes for dismantling segregation developed by the Bulgarian Government, both not implemented. First, in September 2003, the Government developed an *Action Plan for the Implementation of the Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society for the Period 2003–2004*.¹⁰⁷ It envisaged identifying integrated schools for the purposes of school desegregation by January 2004 and developing models for enrolling Roma students in them. The municipalities were obliged to ensure transport of Roma children where needed. None of these measures was implemented.

The second programme was developed in February 2005 on the eve of the opening of the Decade of Roma Inclusion; the Government's *Decade Action Plan* has much in terms of desegregation, with many targets dealing specifically with it, from a legal and an implementation perspective. The *Decade Action Plan* targets physical desegregation of children from segregated geographical settings as well as actions for handling desegregation from special schools.¹⁰⁸ It envisaged the creation of a centre for the educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities within the Ministry of Education and Science as a special governmental fund, supposed to finance projects for school desegregation. The plan envisaged 1,000,000 levs (€500,000) for 2005 as seed money. The plan also envisaged developing municipal programmes and plans with concrete schedules for closing segregated schools and pre-schools and ensuring the necessary transport. The plan, however, did not secure any funds for the implementation of these activities. A law for the establishment of this centre for the educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities was rejected by Parliament in October 2004 already at the first reading. In response, the Government established it by a decree of the Council of Ministers in January 2005.¹⁰⁹ After a long delay, in May 2006 the Council of Ministers adopted the Rules and Regulations for the Structure, Activities and the Organisation of the Centre for the Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities.¹¹⁰

Since 1999 three governments of Bulgaria have failed to deliver on their commitments to desegregate Roma education. Soon after the adoption of the *Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society*, several NGOs started

¹⁰⁷ Government of Bulgaria, *Action Plan for the Implementation of the Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society for the Period 2003–2004*, September 2003, available at <http://ethnos.bg/index.php?TPL=2&MID=89&SID=276> (accessed on 23 February 2007).

¹⁰⁸ *Decade Action Plan*, targets 1.1.1 through 1.2. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Council of Ministers, Decree No. 4 on the Establishment of a Centre for the Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, *Official Gazette*, No. 7, 19 January 2005.

¹¹⁰ Council of Ministers, Decree No. 108 from 8 May 2006 on the Adoption of the Rules and Regulations for the Structure, Activities and the Organisation of the Centre for Educational Integration of the Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, *Official Gazette*, No. 40, 16 May 2006.

implementing desegregation projects funded by the OSI's Roma Participation Programme and later by the Roma Education Fund. They enrol children from the Roma neighbourhoods in mainstream schools in eight Bulgarian cities: Vidin, Pleven, Montana, Stara Zagora, Sliven, Haskovo, Sofia and Plovdiv. More than 2,000 students successfully participated in these programmes during the 2004–2005 school year. In addition to organising their transport to the mainstream schools the projects ensure additional educational support and supervision of the Roma students, as well as extracurricular activities. The May 2005 evaluation of the projects showed that Roma students from integrated classes perform better at school even when they come from families with lower socio-economic status.¹¹¹

In one of these projects in the town of Vidin, as of April 2006, there were 633 Roma children (around 56 per cent of the students in Vidin Municipality). These children are transferred to the integrated mainstream schooling system with the support of the NGO Organisation Drom, which started desegregating the school in the Roma neighbourhood in 2000. Interviews with local authorities, school directors and NGO leaders indicate that the local measures for desegregation in Vidin are the sole responsibility of Organisation Drom, which involves all Vidin upper secondary schools as partners. The rest of the students in the municipality still study in segregated schools or classes.¹¹²

Close observation of several schools in Vidin Municipality showed that the school infrastructure (running water, indoor toilets and central heating) and school facilities (sport halls, equipped laboratories and libraries) are much better in the mainstream schools than those in the segregated schools, despite the fact that all schools receive subsidies according to the same criteria (see Annex 2).

In addition, a new Resource Centre for children with special educational needs was registered in the Regional Court of Vidin on 20 September 2006. Based in Vidin, it was created and is funded by the Ministry of Education and Science. The director of this new centre explained that the role of this new State agency will be to work for the integration of children with special needs and Roma pupils within the mainstream school environment in the Vidin region.¹¹³ The centre claims that there are 36 children with special educational needs, of whom 27 have intellectual disabilities, who were registered by the centre as being able to study in mainstream schools for the 2006–2007 school year. None of these children, however, came from the special school.

Other localities, where there are no NGO-led desegregation efforts, have been slow to take action against segregation. The Regional Inspectorate of Education in Veliko Turnovo lists the P. R. Slaveykov Primary School in Pavlikeni as the only segregated school in the district. For several years discussions have been ongoing between the

¹¹¹ BHC, *Five Years Later*.

¹¹² Case study Vidin.

¹¹³ Interview with Asia Petrova, director of the Resource Centre, Vidin, 27 September 2006, Vidin.

Regional Inspectorate of Education, Pavlikeni Municipality, the segregated school and the Bulgarian-majority school in close proximity to it for merging the two schools. However, no activities have been undertaken for changing the ratio between minority and majority children in the Hristo Botev School in Veliko Turnovo, which for 2005–2006 is 75.6 per cent Roma, or for addressing several Roma-majority schools in the district's villages.¹¹⁴

A successful practice has been established in Gorna Oriahovitza, a neighbouring municipality. In 2003 the primary school in the Roma neighbourhood was closed after a series of discussions with the NGO, the Amalipe Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance, and all the children integrated into a predominantly Bulgarian school near the neighbourhood. At the beginning the Roma parents were reluctant to let their children study outside the neighbourhood, all the more so as they had to travel via a railway station. To overcome this difficulty, the school director has provided daily transport for 97 students from the Roma neighbourhood.¹¹⁵ Subsequently, the municipality assumed the responsibility for providing the transport of the children to the St. Paisij Hilendarski Primary School, which is approximately 1.5–2 kilometres from the settlement.

In addition to initiatives aimed at desegregation on an ethnic basis, in September 2003 the Council of Ministers adopted a plan for reducing the number of children in specialised institutions.¹¹⁶ According to the *National Plan for the Integration of Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Chronic Diseases in the National Education System*,¹¹⁷ the first goal of the plan is “inclusion of children with special educational needs without regard to the degree of disability into the educational process in all types of schools and pre-schools”.

The 2005 report of the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP) on the right to education for children with special educational needs, however, estimates that this process is slow. For the entire year 2004, only 341 children were integrated in the mainstream schools, of whom fewer than one third were integrated due to the recommendations of diagnostic teams.¹¹⁸ The SACP has criticised the reluctance of the

¹¹⁴ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

¹¹⁵ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

¹¹⁶ Council of Ministers, Decision No. 602 from 2 September 2003, published in *Newsletter of the SACP*, No. 1/2005.

¹¹⁷ The Plan is envisaged by the National Education Act, *Национален план за интегриране на деца със специални образователни потребности и/или с хронични заболявания в системата на народната просвета* (The National Plan for the Integration of Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Chronic Diseases in the National Education System), adopted by the Council of Ministers on the recommendation of the Ministry of Education and Science. The last version is available on the MES website at http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/strategies/plan_spec_potrebnosti.pdf (accessed on 20 February 2007).

¹¹⁸ SACP, “Right to Education for Children with Special Educational Needs,” p. 41.

diagnostic teams to direct children from special schools to mainstream schools, but does not reveal that a conflict of interest may give the teams an incentive to keep children in special schools. Teachers from the special schools are members of the diagnostic teams. However, as their jobs depend on maintaining enrolment in the special schools, they may possibly have a motive for ensuring that students continue to be placed in such schools.

Besides the desegregation projects mentioned above, the Roma Education Fund is financing several other efforts. Those projects that particularly deal with desegregation are extensive, and can be found on the Roma Education Fund website.¹¹⁹ Many of them deal with the physical transfer of children from segregated geographical locations into integrated ones, with supports to integrating schools, while others focus on assisting municipalities to adopt concrete plans of action for implementing desegregation. These projects are seemingly in alignment with the objectives of the *Decade Action Plan*. However, most are implemented by NGOs, and their relationship to national efforts is not clear. As of October 2006, approximately 15 projects had been funded that target desegregation.

While Bulgaria has taken concrete steps towards reducing segregation, the process is slow and progress is halting. The lack of a clear vision and concrete instruments for implementation, including securing governmental financial resources, impedes it. There are no concrete monitoring instruments to assess longer-term success rates, or to ensure that a process of resegregation does not take hold.

3.4 Roma teaching assistants/school mediators

The need for introducing teaching assistants into the Bulgarian education system was specified in the *Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society*, Part V.I Desegregation of Roma Schools. The main objectives, duties, organisational relations and eligibility are described in the Ministerial Decree No. 5131, which specifies the job description of teaching assistants. It is also included as an activity in the *Decade Action Plan* under Goal 1, Activity 1.3.8, “Training and employment of assistant teachers in the receiving pre-schools and schools with the aim to ensure better adaptation of the children and pupils of Roma origin”.

Since the 2003–2004 school year some teaching assistants have been appointed in the municipal schools. In the 2005–2006 school year 107 Roma teaching assistants in 17 regions of the country were employed in public schools. Some are appointed by school principals, and municipalities pay their salaries; others work on different projects initiated by non-governmental organisations. The highest proportion of the teaching assistants are employed within the school desegregation projects. Table 17 below illustrates the respective shares by regions.

¹¹⁹ The website address for the Roma Education Fund is <http://www.romaeducationfund.org>.

**Table 17: Roma teaching assistants/school mediators
– breakdown by region (2005)**

Region	Number of Roma Teaching Assistants/School Mediators			
	Appointed by Municipalities on a Permanent Basis	Appointed by Municipalities on a Temporary Basis	Working on Projects of NGOs	Total
1. Sofia – city	7		8	15
2. Blagoevgrad	3			3
3. Pazardzhik	2			2
4. Lom		6	4	10
5. Burgas	1			1
6. Sofia – region	1			1
7. Pleven	1		5	6
8. Sliven	2	1	22	25
9. Kyustendil	3			3
10. Stara Zagora	2		9	11
11. Shumen	1			1
12. Yambol	2			2
13. Haskovo			4	4
14. Vidin			8	8
15. Plovdiv			6	6
16. Montana	2	1	5	8
17. Rakitovo	1			1
TOTAL	28	8	71	107

Source: Ministry of Education¹²⁰

According to the teaching assistants' model job description approved by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2003, some of the teaching assistants' responsibilities are as follows: assisting the teacher in preparing the children and the students for attaining proficiency in Bulgarian; acquiring skills for studying and for attracting children to school; facilitating the process of communication between the teacher and the students; assisting in the interaction with the parents; participating in the educational process and the out-of-school activities under the supervision of the teacher when needed;

¹²⁰ Information from Yosif Nunev, State expert at the Ministry of Education and Science, 20 March 2006.

assisting the teacher in choosing appropriate methods, approaches and materials for carrying out the educational process.¹²¹

The job description of the teaching assistants employed by NGOs is different. There they are usually called mediators or school coordinators/consultants, and the emphasis is more on the social than on the pedagogical functions. Monitoring segregation is not a responsibility of the teaching assistants, according to the model job description of the Ministry of Education and Science, but this is implied as a duty in the responsibilities of the teaching assistants appointed by NGOs.

Teaching assistants who are employed by the school director must comply with the requirements of the model job description. There is no such requirement for the teaching assistants employed by NGOs. Different NGOs have different criteria for appointment.

According to the legislation, the school director is the employer of teaching assistants and is responsible for the selection of any particular person chosen for such employment. All basic schools are municipal, and so the financing for teaching assistants should come from the municipal budget. The teaching assistants' labour remuneration is paid from the State budget through transfers to the municipal budgets. It is usually the minimum salary (160 levs or €80 at present), which is only a limited incentive.¹²² Based on the model job description, the employer works out a concrete job description giving an account of the specific problems.

The major requirements, according to the model job description, are as follows: secondary education and a certificate of the professional qualification of a "teaching assistant" issued by a university. Teaching assistants employed by NGOs do not need to abide by the requirements of the model job description. Some NGO projects employ supervisors or coordinators performing tasks similar to these requirements who have lower than secondary education. The additional requirements are as follows: knowledge of the mother tongue of the children and the students; knowledge of the national culture and the ethno-culture of the children and the students; knowledge of the normative regulations in the State education system and the UN Convention for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and the Law on the Child Protection in of Bulgaria. Teaching assistants who are employed by a school director must meet these criteria.

It is entirely up to the discretion of the school director as to whether to hire a Roma teaching assistant. Every director has only a limited number of positions paid by the municipality, however, and must choose between hiring a teaching assistant and filling some other position. In Vidin, for example, there are no Roma teaching assistants

¹²¹ A full description of the job description in English is available on the Regional Inspectorate of Education website at http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei/RTAs_Bulgaria.html (accessed on 20 February 2007).

¹²² A teacher at the beginning of his/her career earns approximately €150 and a teacher with 25 years of teaching experience earns about €200 a month.

appointed in the mainstream schools. It is the NGO Organisation Drom that has employed supervisors since 2000, who are Roma between 19 and 30 years old. They facilitate the transfer of Roma pupils from the Nov Pat neighbourhood to the mainstream schools in town, and they are assigned to each integrated school to act as “watchdogs” (among other tasks) to prevent any conflicts in the school environment. Recently, the NGO has decided to replace the supervisors with school psychologists, who are employed by the school and receive additional training and funding from the NGO.¹²³

No Roma teaching assistants/mediators are employed in Veliko Turnovo Municipality or district either. At present a woman from the Roma community in the village of Vodoley is participating in a regional programme of the Employment Agency for training teaching assistants. The curriculum includes 300 classes, and at the end of the course the trained teaching assistant should be employed for two years in the Hristo Smirnenski Primary School of Vodoley as part of the programme “Teachers for Out-of-School Activities”.¹²⁴ The programme “Teachers for Out-of-School Activities” was initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in 2006. One of the aims of the programme is “additional work with children from ethnic groups to support their integration in the educational process”. It provides training and work for unemployed teachers and people with secondary education who are trained as teaching assistants. The requirements for the teaching assistants are secondary education, preferably Roma origin, and registration at the local labour office. The duties of the teaching assistants are to “provide a link between the community, the parents, and the teachers, to motivate the children in school and help their preparation for the classes”. If they have secondary education they should receive payment equal to the minimum salary of 160 levs (approximately €80) and 250 levs (€125) if they have university education.¹²⁵

In Nikolaevo, a municipality where close to 90 per cent of school-age children are Roma, both representatives of the Roma community and officials (municipal representatives and schoolteachers) have indicated that there is a need for teaching assistants or mediators.¹²⁶ These representatives reported that such a position would be necessary mainly in the first grade, because the first-grade Roma children have difficulties with the Bulgarian language. An assistant could also be effective in the fifth grade to help the children with their adjustment from primary to lower secondary education; at this point, children enter a higher educational phase, many of them in a

¹²³ Case study Vidin.

¹²⁴ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

¹²⁵ More information available in Bulgarian at http://www.az.government.bg/Projects/Prog/Uchiteli/Frame_Uchiteli.htm (accessed on 20 February 2007).

¹²⁶ Interview with Biliiana Belcheva, school principal of the SS. Cyril and Methodius Primary School of Nikolaevo, October 2006; interview with Ivan Minchev, informal Roma leader, Nikolaevo, 16 October 2006.

new school, as all the village schools go only as far as primary school.¹²⁷ The school directors have not been very enthusiastic and active about hiring teaching assistants, and therefore they have not been very insistent in requiring funding for their employment.

In 2005 two teaching assistants were trained and worked within a programme of the local labour office in Nikolaevo. Five Roma have been included in 2006 in the programme of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for training teaching assistance. The second component of the programme is employing the trained young Roma for a period of two years. Although the course has finished they have not yet been employed.¹²⁸

The employment of teaching assistants in the Bulgarian education system has clashed with the desegregation efforts of many Roma activists. Some educational experts, human rights activists and Roma parents have opposed their introduction, arguing that the integration of Roma children into mainstream education would not be achieved if a third person in the class were to translate the instruction from Bulgarian to Romanes. According to this perspective, such a measure puts Roma children in an inferior position in comparison to the non-Roma children.¹²⁹ Furthermore, many education experts and Roma activists agreed that the translation of instruction from Bulgarian to Romanes is not needed, because most Roma children have a sufficient knowledge of Bulgarian, even when they are bilingual.¹³⁰ Such concerns may stem from a misunderstanding of the role of a teaching assistant in the educational process. When used in a pedagogically appropriate way, teaching assistants neither translate nor interpret, but rather facilitate and bridge learning and understanding between two languages and cultures. The importance of this role in the pedagogical process and in having an impact on learning outcomes has already been established through research.¹³¹ Furthermore, the controversial role of the teaching assistants in the different types of schools and environments has been studied in depth in the research carried out by the Amalipe Centre on the results from the *PHARE BG 0104.01 "Roma Integration Population"*, where one of the key elements was the teaching assistants' training.¹³²

¹²⁷ Case Study Nikolaevo.

¹²⁸ Information from the Nikolaevo Labour Office, October 2006.

¹²⁹ Roma Education Initiative website, available at http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei/RTAs_Bulgaria.html#training (accessed on 20 February 2007).

¹³⁰ Roma Education Initiative website.

¹³¹ Roma Education Initiative (REI) and Proactive Information Services, *Transition of Students: Roma Special Schools Initiative Year 4 Evaluation Final Report*, New York: OSI, December 2004, p. 13, available at <http://www.osi.hu/esp/rei> (accessed on 20 February 2007).

¹³² Deyan Kolev, Teodora Krumova and Boian Zahariev, *Evaluation Report on the Implementation of PHARE BG 0104.01 "Roma Population Integration"*, Sofia: Amalipe, 2006.

3.5 Romanes teachers

Romanes has been recognised as a mother tongue, one that can be taught as such in the municipal basic schools, since the adoption of the National Education Act in 1991. Its teaching, however, has never been organised to reach a significant share of the Roma population, and has declined in recent years.

According to some reports, around the mid-1990s, at the peak of its teaching, Romanes was taught to around 4,000 students.¹³³ This education, however, was not systematically organised: no measures were taken to ensure the necessary teaching materials and to qualify Romanes teachers, let alone better fit these classes into the curriculum.¹³⁴ In the late 1990s the teaching of Romanes declined and gradually disappeared. It was revived during the 2003–2004 school year, but again on a declining scale. According to official statistics, the numbers of children studying Romanes as a mother tongue in general education and professional schools in Bulgaria plummeted from 1,329 in 2003–2004 to just 80 in 2005–2006.¹³⁵ This dramatic drop suggests that the figures from 2003–2004 may not have been accurate in the first place.

The Bulgarian *Decade Action Plan* has goals for education that call for ensuring appropriate conditions for Roma students to learn their mother tongue, and for ensuring the appropriate education and training of teachers in Romanes.¹³⁶

Currently, there are no schools in Bulgaria where the curriculum is bilingual, and nor are there any schools where the entire curriculum is taught in Romanes.

According to the school directors interviewed in Vidin, there are no teachers who are qualified to teach in Romanes, and the number of teachers who work with bilingual techniques is very limited in the entire school system of Vidin Municipality.¹³⁷

3.6 Educational materials and curriculum policy

The *Decade Action Plan* has goals for education that address issues related to the curriculum and other materials in goals two, four, and five; these points focus on the development of cultural identity among Roma and an awareness of diversity in the

¹³³ Yosif Nunev, *Ромското дете и неговата семейни среда* (The Roma Child and His/Her Family Environment), Sofia: IMIR, 1998, p. 40. This figure was contested as being too high by several observers subsequently.

¹³⁴ EUMAP, *Minority Protection in Bulgaria – 2002*, pp. 106–107.

¹³⁵ NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2005*, pp. 53 and 65; Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science to the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 13 February 2006. Despite these figures given by the MES in their letter, the official statistical publication, which appeared in August 2006, indicates 134 Roma students who studied their mother tongue in the 2005–2006 school year (NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2006*, p. 50).

¹³⁶ *Decade Action Plan*, point 2.2.

¹³⁷ Case study Vidin.

general school population. Only goals two and five, however, have a specific activity mentioned with regard to textbooks and curriculum, with goal five mentioning the creation of new ones in which Roma culture is presented. All other activities for goal five are rather with regard to activities outside the classroom, and sometimes target Roma only, rather than targeting all youth for integrated, mutual learning.

Until the 2004–2005 school year only the textbooks for the first grade were offered for free and could be retained by the students after the school year. Since 2005–2006 all textbooks for the primary grades (first to fourth) have been offered for free. Each year the Ministry of Education and Science publishes a list of “approved” textbooks, and it is up to teachers to choose which one they will use during the year. Ordinance No. 5 from 15 May 2003 regulates the procedure for evaluation and approval of textbooks and teaching materials. The regulation allows for the approval of no more than three textbooks for each subject in each grade.¹³⁸ Any publisher or author may suggest a proposal for a textbook. The evaluation procedure envisages both an evaluation by experts from the Ministry and input from teachers who will use them. The Council of Ministers’ Ordinance on the Textbooks and Teaching Materials from 10 May 2003 sets requirements with regard to their content. It refers to the State educational requirements as provided for by Article 16 of the National Education Act and, by implication, to the other acts that are supposed to regulate the curriculum.¹³⁹

Since 2001 a change in the curriculum has been under way in the Bulgarian education system, starting from the first grade and moving gradually onwards. The change was introduced with Regulation No. 2 of the Ministry of Education and Science from 18 May 2000.¹⁴⁰ It involved the inclusion of ethnic and religious diversity, conveying the values of tolerance, after the Ministry of Education and Science required the inclusion of these issues in the curriculum for certain subjects. Consequently there is a significant presence of these topics in the textbooks published in or after 2001 as compared to previous years. As the change in the curriculum moves from elementary to secondary education, minority issues are predominantly covered at present by primary school textbooks, although they appear also in some secondary education textbooks. In addition to history and literature textbooks, minority issues appear also in some music textbooks.

There are references to some national minorities, including Roma, in some textbooks approved for use in the Bulgarian schools by the Ministry of Education and Science.

¹³⁸ MES, Ordinance No. 5 from 15 May 2003 on the evaluation and approval of textbooks and teaching materials, *Official Gazette*, No. 49, 27 May 2003, with many amendments, the latest one from 16 June 2006, Art. 3, para. 1.

¹³⁹ Council of Ministers, Ordinance on the Textbooks and Teaching Materials, Adopted by Decree No. 104 from 10 May 2003, *Official Gazette*, No. 46 from 20 May 2003, the latest amendment from 3 November 2006, Art. 4, para. 2. Cf below A2.2.

¹⁴⁰ Ministry of Education and Science, Regulation No. 2 from 18 May 2000 on the Curriculum, *Official Gazette*, No. 48 from 13 June 2000, latest amendment from 18 July 2006.

For the purposes of the present research, around one hundred textbooks, teachers' books and student books were reviewed. These were literature and history textbooks¹⁴¹ from the first to the twelfth grade of public schools. All of them were taken from the list of approved textbooks of the Ministry of Education and Science.¹⁴² Most of the textbooks were published after 1999. There are a few that were published in the early 1990s and are still in use.

In the literature textbooks, Turkish, Roma, and Armenian stories are included in the chapter "Stories of Other Peoples", and are treated in the same way as African, Japanese and Scottish stories. Even the illustrations to the stories do not show the traditional Roma, Turkish or Armenian costumes. This gives the children the impression that representatives of the minorities in Bulgaria do not belong to the Bulgarian nation and Bulgarian national culture, and indeed rather increases distance and separation of ethnic minorities.¹⁴³ Only one textbook for the second grade¹⁴⁴ and one for the third grade¹⁴⁵ incorporate the theme of minority culture throughout the entire textbooks. Furthermore, additional information on Roma culture is provided in the teacher's book for the second grade to help in the lesson development: information about the author of the story, information on Roma customs, examples of a Roma song and Roma sayings that might be used to better reveal the values of Roma culture. The smooth integration of the idea that all ethnic groups in Bulgaria contribute to the richness of the Bulgarian culture and are composed of Bulgarian citizens is best illustrated in the lesson about the Bulgarian National Anthem. The picture accompanying the text of the song shows children dressed in the different traditional costumes: Bulgarian, Turkish, Roma, Armenian and Jewish.

At the same time, the fourth-grade textbooks already show a tradition in including minority issues in the school curriculum. Both approved reading books include Turkish and Roma folk tales with additional information and questions for discussion. Customs such as St. George's Day are presented as common customs of Bulgarians,

¹⁴¹ For primary education the literature textbooks are called "Chitanka" (*Reading Book*). History books are called "Roden kray" (*Homeland*, first grade), "Okolen sviat" (*Environment*, second grade), and "Chovekat i obstestvoto" (*The Man and Society*, third and fourth grade). There is no history subject for the twelfth grade. Instead the subject named "Sviat i lichnost" (*World and Personality*) is taught. It is designed to provide knowledge about society, national and international institutions, the EU and EU-related issues, ethnic minorities, and so on. Textbooks for this subject were also reviewed.

¹⁴² The list is available, in Bulgarian, on the MES website at http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/textbooks/uchebnici_2005-2006.pdf (accessed on 20 February 2007)

¹⁴³ This is a persistent tendency in the reading books for the different grades by Tatyana Borissova, for example (Bulvest publisher).

¹⁴⁴ G. Georgiev and V. Popov, *Читанка за 2 клас* (Reading Book for the Second Grade), Sofia: Prosveta, 2003.

¹⁴⁵ R. Tankova *et al.*, *Читанка за 2 клас* (Reading Book for the Second Grade), Sofia: Prosveta, 2004.

Turks and Roma, with additional information on how Roma celebrate *Ederlezi* (St. George's Day). A Roma song is also included in the lesson.

Unlike literature textbooks for primary schools, it is hard to find any presence of minorities in the secondary education literature textbooks. Regarding history textbooks, the new curricula for the third and fourth grades contain special lessons devoted to the ethnic and religious communities in the Ottoman Empire. While quite precise for the other communities, these lessons present Roma in a biased and stereotypical way. The only accurate presentation of the ethnic communities in the Ottoman Empire appears in the *History and Civilisation* textbook for the eleventh grade by V. Gyuzelev *et al.*¹⁴⁶ Ethnic communities and especially Roma are realistically presented with a number of references to documents and historical sources.

According to local research, schools usually do not offer Roma literature, history and culture books in their libraries and the pupils usually pay for their own textbooks, while free textbooks are provided to students from the first to the fourth grade, according to the national standards. Some schools have also funds for provision of textbooks to pupils that come from socially disadvantaged families, whereas the NGO Organisation Drom supplies all socially disadvantaged Roma pupils (from the fifth to the twelfth grade) in the Vidin desegregation programme with free textbooks. There is limited access to textbooks of Roma history and culture, and the Roma pupils' access to bilingual curriculum is non-existent in the Vidin Municipality mainstream school system.¹⁴⁷

A Roma-led NGO, Amalipe, has developed textbooks on Roma culture and history books for use in the classroom. These books may be used to teach Roma folklore, which is an optional subject. Two textbooks on Roma folklore were published: *Stories by the Fireplace* for students from the second to the fourth grade¹⁴⁸ and *Roads Retold* for students from the fifth to the eighth grade,¹⁴⁹ accompanied by relevant methodical materials. The two textbooks discuss Roma folklore, culture and history within and with relation to Bulgarian national culture and the culture of the other ethnic groups living in Bulgaria. At present, more than 5,600 students from 200 schools in 26 regions of Bulgaria use these textbooks. In Veliko Turnovo district a course on Roma culture and history is offered in 20 schools and studied by more than 400 pupils. Five schools in the municipality, in Vodoley, Balvan, Ledenik, Resen, and the P. R.

¹⁴⁶ V. Gyuzelev *et al.*, *История и цивилизация: учебник за 11 клас* (History and Civilisation: Textbook for the Eleventh Grade), Sofia: Prosveta, 2001.

¹⁴⁷ Case study Vidin.

¹⁴⁸ A. Krasteva, D. Kolev and T. Krumova, *Истории край огнището: учебно пособие за учениците от 2 до 4 клас* (Stories by the Fireplace: Textbook for the Students from the Second to the Fourth Grade), Veliko Turnovo: Astarta, 2003.

¹⁴⁹ D. Kolev, T. Krumova and A. Krasteva, *Разказани пътища: учебно помагало за учениците от 5 до 8 клас* (Roads Retold: Textbook for the Students from the Fifth to the Eighth Grade), Veliko Turnovo: Astarta, 2003.

Slaveykov Primary School in Veliko Turnovo, study Roma history and culture as a free elective within the programme “Roma Folklore in Bulgarian Schools” organised by the Amalipe Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance.¹⁵⁰ For the 2006–2007 school year these books will be printed by the Ministry of Education and Science under a Phare 2003 project, together with textbooks in Turkish. The Ministry of Education and Science has been supporting the process from the very beginning, although generally only in logistical aspects.

To meet the goals set forth in the *Decade Action Plan*, the Ministry of Education and Science should look to the curricular materials developed by Amalipe and other NGOs, and take steps to ensure that Roma traditions and culture are presented to all schoolchildren in Bulgaria as an integral dimension of the country’s diverse heritage and character.

3.7 Teacher training and support

Pedagogical training in Bulgaria takes place in the “pedagogical colleges”, which used to be independent. Over the past decade, however, all of them have become parts of larger universities, which offer pedagogical degrees both as part of the mainstream fields and in specific pedagogical fields, including “education science”. Teacher training lasts from four to five years, depending on the degree and speciality. Of the 41,500 university graduates (both bachelors and masters) in 2005, 8 per cent were graduates in “teacher training and education sciences”.¹⁵¹

In recent years almost all pedagogical universities preparing teachers have included courses dealing with tolerance and multicultural education. In the SS. Cyril and Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo a course about inter-cultural interaction is taught to pre-school and elementary school future educators. The aim of this course is to acquaint future teachers with the ways in which different ethnic groups interact and communicate among each other and the ways in which this could be used in the educational process. A special module of lectures is devoted to the role of the mother-tongue classes for the integration of minority children. A similar course of lectures entitled “Ethnopedagogy” is taught to all “Primary pedagogy and foreign language” specialists. Thus, students studying in the faculty of pedagogy at this particular university have the opportunity to gain access to a variety of courses that expose them to different aspects of multicultural education.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

¹⁵¹ NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2006*, p. 30.

¹⁵² The course description of the disciplines of all specialities can be found at the website of the Faculty of Pedagogics at the University of Veliko Turnovo, available at <http://www.uni-vt.bg/1/ndefault.asp?p=zinfo&pzid=5&zid=5&cat=struct&lid=1> (accessed on 1 April 2006).

St. Kliment Ohridski University in Sofia offers similar courses to its students in Pedagogics. They deal with bilingual education, general knowledge about the role of mother-tongue education in the school curriculum and the difference between integration and assimilation.¹⁵³ Close to it is the curriculum of the other big pedagogical universities: the University of Shumen and the South-West University of Blagoevgrad. In addition, the University of Shumen offers also an MA programme in civic and inter-cultural education.¹⁵⁴

Article 128 of the Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act stipulates that teachers are obliged to improve their skills.¹⁵⁵ Other provisions of the same act oblige the schools and kindergartens to “create conditions” for raising the qualification of the teachers “through organised forms and through self-education”. The Government is only obliged to provide financial assistance for this if new educational requirements are to be implemented or if there are changes in the existing ones.¹⁵⁶

There are several pedagogical institutes for further qualification of the teachers. They are attached to the larger universities, such as the University of Sofia¹⁵⁷ and the University of Shumen. They have developed several courses based on the principles of multiculturalism, the incorporation of bilingual teaching and minority folklore and culture in the school curriculum in pre-schools, pre-school and basic school education. Occasionally such courses are taught also to secondary school teachers. Furthermore, several of the courses at the University of Shumen are organised around a specific programme for inter-cultural education called “RAMO”.¹⁵⁸ None of these courses is organised as in-service training. Instead the courses are organised rather as lecture courses in the university centre. The teachers select and pay for these courses themselves, and there are no obligations for taking these courses, although they are reflected in the qualification profile of the teacher, which in turn has an effect on the salary. The change in the salary is not sufficiently large to be a stimulating factor for taking such a course.

Three types of programmes are organised for teachers from schools with a high percentage of Roma students. It is up to the director to determine whether the school can receive training in these areas. The first type is the programmes of the National

¹⁵³ Programme available at <http://www.uni-sofia.bg/faculties+bg/edu+bg/curriculum+bg.html> (accessed on 1 April 2006).

¹⁵⁴ Programme available at <http://www.shu-bg.net/Fakulteti/FP/fakultetpercent20-percent20PEDAGOGIKA.htm> (accessed on 1 April 2006)

¹⁵⁵ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 128, pt. 5.

¹⁵⁶ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 130 and 131.

¹⁵⁷ Programme available at <http://www.diuu.bg/> (accessed on 1 April 2006).

¹⁵⁸ The description of the courses can be found at <http://www.ittd.acad.bg/plan/1xxTXT.html#10209p> (accessed on 1 April 2006).

Pedagogical Centre (NPC).¹⁵⁹ NPC is a State institution, which organises and coordinates the policy of the Ministry of Education and Science directed towards pedagogical support and consultation of students, teachers and parents. The National Pedagogical Centre has 28 regional branches, which are responsible for carrying out the training sessions. The courses are regulated by the *Plan for Qualification of the Pedagogical Staff in Secondary Education for 2005*.¹⁶⁰ The courses organised within this plan are free of charge for the teachers.

Several of these courses are designed to address multiculturalism in pre-schools and schools. These include the following: “Work in a multi-ethnic environment” (for pre-schools and all levels of school education); “Creating positive attitudes towards school system of the parents of children of minority background” (for pre-schools); “Keeping children at school and prevention of dropping out” (for primary and secondary education). The director of each school decides which courses are relevant for the teachers under his/her responsibility from the list of 14 (pre-schools), 27 (primary education) or 22 (secondary education) courses. There is no clear evidence with regard to the efficiency of these training courses and on the impact on teaching methods used in the classroom.

Table 18 below provides a picture of how many teachers have taken part in the four courses¹⁶¹ perceived by the school directors as related to children of minority background, for basic education (Table 18a) and secondary education (Table 18b).

¹⁵⁹ Website of the National Pedagogical Centre (NPC): http://npc-bg.com/index_2.htm (accessed on 1 April 2006).

¹⁶⁰ Ministry of Education, *Plan for Qualification of the Pedagogical Staff in Secondary Education for 2005*, available at <http://npc-bg.com/Kuasar/plan.htm> (accessed on 1 April 2006).

¹⁶¹ The four courses in the table were selected after several conversations with directors of the Regional Pedagogical Centres in Veliko Turnovo and Razgrad. They include courses that were not necessarily intended to relate to minority children but are perceived by the teachers as such.

Table 18(a): Number of teachers taking part in courses related to minority children – for basic education (2005)

Region	Courses:			
	Work in multicultural environment	Inter-cultural competency	Keeping children at school	Special educational needs
Blagoevgrad				
Burgas	70			40
Varna			104	
Veliko Turnovo				
Vidin			20	
Vratsa				
Gabrovo			25	
Dobrich	40		30	
Kardzhali	60			
Kyustendil				100
Lovech				17
Montana				
Pazardzhik	20			
Pernik	20		40	
Pleven	30		20	
Plovdiv	80		220	30
Razgrad			60	
Ruse	12		45	13
Silistra				
Sliven	15		30	
Smolyan			50	
Sofia city	600	130	189	100
Sofia district	45		40	20
Stara Zagora			45	
Targoviste	50			
Haskovo			20	30
Shumen			40	30
Yambol	40			
Total	1,082	130	978	380

Source: Regional Pedagogical Centres¹⁶²

¹⁶² The data were provided by the information submitted by the Regional Pedagogical Centres. Independent research, however, showed that not all regional centres have been punctual about submitting the information, and omissions are possible. Data from Regional Pedagogical Centres, available on the website of the National Pedagogical Centre at <http://npc-bg.com> (accessed on 20 February 2007) (hereafter, Regional Pedagogical Centres data).

Table 18(b): Number of teachers taking part in courses related to minority children – for secondary education (2005)

Region	Course:			
	Work in a multicultural environment	Inter-cultural competency	Keeping children at school	Special educational needs
Blagoevgrad				
Burgas	70			40
Varna			104	
Veliko Turnovo				
Vidin			20	
Vratsa				
Gabrovo			25	
Dobrich	40		30	
Kardzhali	60			
Kyustendil				100
Lovech				17
Montana				
Pazardzhik	20			
Pernik	20		40	
Pleven	30		20	
Plovdiv	80		220	30
Razgrad			60	
Ruse	12		45	13
Silistra				
Sliven	15		30	
Smolyan			50	
Sofia city	600	130	189	100
Sofia district	45		40	20
Stara Zagora			45	
Targoviste	50			
Haskovo			20	30
Shumen			40	30
Yambol	40			
Total	1,082	130	978	380

Source: Regional Pedagogical Centres¹⁶³¹⁶³ Regional Pedagogical Centres data.

The most popular courses included “Special educational needs”, “Keeping children at school” and “Work in a multicultural environment”. The total number of teachers who took part in any of these in-service training courses in 2005 is 5,358, just over 6 per cent of primary and secondary school teachers for the 2005–2006 school year. Table 19 shows the corresponding number of teachers in the 2004–2005 and 2005–2006 school years.

Table 19: Number of teachers taking part in in-service training courses (2004–2006)

Grade level (According to the International Standard Classification of Educational Degrees, ISCED-97)	Number of teachers	
	2004–2005	2005–2006
Pre-school education (ISCED-0)	18,893	19,254
Primary education (I-IV class, ISCED-1) ¹	18,182	17,668
Lower secondary education (V-VIII class, ISCED-2A) ¹	27,601	26,844
Upper secondary education (IX-XIII class, ISCED-3A, 3C)	34,475	34,372

Source: NSI¹⁶⁴

The second type of course is organised by the local authorities in coordination with the Regional Inspectorates of Education.¹⁶⁵ These courses are financed by the municipalities themselves. Due to the decentralised system of governance, it is difficult to collect the information about all the courses conducted.

The third type of programmes is organised in the framework of different projects. One such training course was realised in 2004 with *Phare BG 0104.01 “Roma Population Integration”*.¹⁶⁶ Within this project 320 teachers were trained in the University of Veliko Turnovo. Originally (according to the Terms of Reference of the project) five in-service training sessions were supposed to take place instead of training all the

¹⁶⁴ National Statistical Institute website: <http://www.nsi.bg/SocialActivities/Education.htm> (accessed on 20 May 2006).

¹⁶⁵ Information about the educational activities of Varna Municipality is available at http://www.varna.bg/adm/prog/kvalifikacia_06.htm (accessed on 1 April 2006). According to the *Municipal Plan for the Qualification of the Pedagogical Staff*, 20,000 levs from the municipal budget have been provided for organising such courses.

¹⁶⁶ Assessment of the project has been carried out with the project “Roma in South-Eastern Europe: Towards EU Integration” by the Amalipe Centre (Veliko Turnovo), Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (Sofia) and ERIO (Brussels). The data provided above are derived from the field research carried out and a number of interviews carried out with the different stakeholders involved. For additional information, see Deyan Kolev, Teodora Krumova and Boian Zahariev, *Evaluation Report on the Implementation of PHARE BG 0104.01 “Roma Population Integration”*, Sofia: Amalipe, 2006.

teachers together. The training of the teachers was implemented during the period 13 March–2 May 2004. Six two-day seminars were held with 150–160 teachers. From a methodological point of view the training of 300 teachers in one place makes the achievement of real, lasting results impossible.¹⁶⁷ As a result, more than 65 per cent of the 118 interviewed teachers assessed the lectures as inefficient and only 14 per cent held the contrary opinion.

In 2003 a new bachelor's degree programme was founded in the University of Veliko Turnovo: Primary School Pedagogy with Romanes.¹⁶⁸ The aim of the course is to prepare pre-school teachers and primary school teachers in Romanes. At present around 50 students, all of whom but one are Roma themselves, are being educated in the three courses of the programme. Within it, in addition to the general pedagogical courses, they attend courses in Romanes, Introduction to Roma Studies, Roma Dialects in Bulgaria, Ethnopedagogics, Culture of the Interaction between Ethnic Groups, Linguistic Specifics in Romanes Learning in Childhood, Roma Literature for Children, Roma Folklore for Children, Methods of Teaching Romanes, Practice in Multicultural Interaction, Psycholinguistics and Bilingualism, Sociolinguistics and Bilingualism, Hindi and several others.¹⁶⁹

There were no in-service training programmes in bilingual education organised for teachers from majority Roma schools.

A number of interviews with teachers from Vidin Municipality schools confirm that training programmes for Vidin teachers (also in bilingual education training) are rare and they are mostly organised by the NGO Organisation Drom.¹⁷⁰ School directors in Vidin confirm that only Organisation Drom has offered courses for teachers to improve their pedagogical qualification in the past couple of years. Some teachers from Vidin were also involved in a Master's programme for Inter-Cultural Learning at St.

¹⁶⁷ The 320 teachers are formally divided into four sub-groups. The seminars are being conducted with two of the sub-groups (i.e. with about 150–160 teachers). Thus, instead of the 15 seminars required by the Terms of Reference, only six were conducted in practice.

¹⁶⁸ Approved by the Academic Council, Record No. 11 from 22/12/2003. Information available at <http://www.uni-vt.bg/2/ndefault.asp?p=specinfo&nspec=000063&path=plan&plannumb=0&namesp=Primarypercent20Schoolpercent20Pedagogypercent20andpercent20Romapercent20Language> (accessed on 1 April 2006).

¹⁶⁹ Full information about curriculum and courses is available at <http://www.uni-vt.bg/2/ndefault.asp?plannumb=2004358&p=specinfo&path=plandisc&nspec=000063&namesp=Primary+School+Pedagogy+and+Roma+Language> (accessed on 1 April 2006).

¹⁷⁰ Interviews with the following: Petar Petrov, teacher in the Otec Paisii Lower Secondary School, 16 March 2006; Irina Puncheva, the Sofronii Vrachanski Upper Secondary School, 6 March 2006; two anonymous interviews with teachers from the Sofronii Vrachanski Lower Secondary School, 6 March 2006; Georgi Mladenov from the Hristo Botev Upper Secondary School, 16 March 2006; Sashka Radukanova from the P. R. Slaveykov Upper Secondary School, 17 March 2006; Marinka Boyanova from the SS. Cyril and Methodius Upper Secondary School, 20 March 2006.

Kliment Ohridski, Sofia, with the financial support of Organisation Drom from October 2005.¹⁷¹

No teachers from Veliko Turnovo Municipality have taken part in teacher training led by the National Pedagogical Centre and its regional branches. Regular pedagogical meetings and teacher training sessions in Roma folklore, history and culture are organised by the Amalipe Centre with the support of the Regional Inspectorate of Education. The workshops and training sessions are organised within the programme “Roma Folklore and Bulgarian Schools”. At present ten teachers from the municipality and 15 teachers from the other municipalities in the district have passed through these courses.¹⁷² The programme has been under development as an elective subject by the Amalipe Centre with the cooperation of the Ministry since 2002. The classes are included in the school curriculum, and results from previous years show that the number of drop-out students has decreased since the programme’s introduction. The programme has been included in a number of Ministry documents, such as the *Action Plan for the Implementation of the Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society*. In addition, the Ministry included publication of textbooks for the programme of Phare projects for 2004.

None of the goals of the *Decade Action Plan* has any subsequent targets and actions focused on teacher training specifically, with the exception of action number 4.1.4, which mentions organising seminars for training teams who will provide training in inter-cultural education and human rights. There is mention of the development of programmes for teaching Romanes. However, there seems to be little attention to training teachers in techniques to improve their overall pedagogy, which have been proven to have an impact on students’ learning outcomes, especially for minority children, such as child-centred learning pedagogy, and interactive and critical thinking techniques.

There appears to have been a movement to bring in elements of multicultural education and training to pre-service teacher education as well as into in-service teacher education in Bulgaria in recent years. Universities have autonomy in developing their curricula, however, and in the absence of regulations on the national level requiring teachers to update their skills in areas that would be beneficial for Roma and minority students, and requirements or incentives for their updating their skills regularly, substantial and systematic improvements in the practice of pedagogy to benefit Roma children, rather than the dispersed efforts that appear to be happening currently, are unlikely. As evidence from the data gathered in the case studies reveals, few teachers knew about or had access to regular, high-quality teacher education other than that offered by a local NGO, which is a serious obstacle when considering improving access to quality education for Roma.

¹⁷¹ Case study Vidin.

¹⁷² Case study Veliko Turnovo.

3.8 Discrimination-monitoring mechanisms

There are two ways to complain against unequal treatment in the Bulgarian education system: under the general and under a special procedure. The general procedure is administrative and judicial and is based on the anti-discrimination provisions of the Constitution, the international law, which is directly applicable, and the laws in force. Article 6, para. 2, of the Constitution and Article 4, para. 2, of the National Education Act provide for equality of treatment and protection against different forms of discrimination. They were occasionally used before the establishment of the special procedure through the Protection against Discrimination Act. The latter was passed in 2003,¹⁷³ in compliance with the EU Directives 43/2000 and 78/2000.¹⁷⁴

For its part, the Protection against Discrimination Act envisages two mechanisms at the national level, both provided as alternatives for a complainant to choose between. The first is recourse to the Protection against Discrimination Commission, an independent specialised quasi-judicial collegiate equality body established under the Protection against Discrimination Act.¹⁷⁵ The Commission's authority is to make legally binding findings of discrimination, to issue mandatory instructions to prevent impending acts of discrimination, or to abolish the consequences of acts already committed.¹⁷⁶ The Commission further has the authority to impose financial sanctions on liable parties, as well as to make recommendations to public bodies to alter their practices, or to adopt or amend legislation. The Commission has no authority to award victims compensation. Its fact-finding powers include a mandate to question witnesses, to take possession of documents and to carry out on-site inspections.¹⁷⁷ Its proceedings are designed to be expeditious, relatively simple and accessible for complainants. Statutory time limits for procedural steps are brief. Under the law, no fees or expenses are due by complainants.¹⁷⁸ The Commission's decisions are subject to judicial review by the Supreme Administrative Court.

Complaints to the Commission must be written and signed.¹⁷⁹ They must contain a statement of the facts and of the petition to the Commission.¹⁸⁰ No proceedings will be initiated if three years have elapsed since the breach was committed. As of 6 April 2006

¹⁷³ Protection against Discrimination Act, *Official Gazette*, No. 86, 30 September 2003. In force since 1 January 2003 (hereafter, *Protection against Discrimination Act*).

¹⁷⁴ EU Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin (Race Equality Directive); EU Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

¹⁷⁵ *Protection against Discrimination Act*, Art. 40.

¹⁷⁶ *Protection against Discrimination Act*, Art. 47.

¹⁷⁷ *Protection against Discrimination Act*, Art. 56.

¹⁷⁸ *Protection against Discrimination Act*, Art. 53.

¹⁷⁹ *Protection against Discrimination Act*, Art. 51.

¹⁸⁰ *Protection against Discrimination Act*, Art. 51.

the Commission has received no education discrimination complaints by Roma complainants.¹⁸¹ It has only been operational since 1 November 2005, which could in part account for this fact. Another reason for this may be that the equality law is not visible enough within Roma communities, who are not sufficiently aware of the possibilities for legal protection that it provides, including the fact that proceedings are tax-free. Rights groups' lawyers, on the other hand, while better informed about the law, may not have yet approached the Commission with Roma educational inequality complaints or signals because they feel that it still lacks the necessary professionalism and resolve to deal with this critically important issue. They may consider, for the time being, that the courts are the better-equipped authority to meet this challenge.

The second mechanism is a judicial remedy. Victims of discrimination are entitled to a special anti-discrimination claim to have a civil court find discrimination, order the respondent to terminate it, and to abolish its consequences, as well as to abstain from repeating it in the future, and award the claimant compensation for any pecuniary or non-pecuniary damage sustained.¹⁸² No fees or expenses are due.¹⁸³ The procedure is the general civil procedure, with the exception that the burden of proof shifts onto the respondent once the claimant has established facts from which the court may presume that discrimination is at hand.¹⁸⁴ Apart from victims, trade unions and public interest non-profit organisations also have the standing to join proceedings, both as representatives of victims, and in their own right where the equal rights of many parties are infringed.¹⁸⁵ In addition, the law provides for the standing for additional victims or public interest groups and trade unions to join pending proceedings initiated by another party.¹⁸⁶ Discriminatory acts by public authorities are subject to judicial review under general administrative procedure rules.¹⁸⁷

As far as information is available, unofficially and non-exhaustively (as no official record is being kept of discrimination lawsuits), there have been at least 11 cases brought on behalf of Roma complainants before the courts, with at least five rulings being delivered to date, two of which are favourable to the complainants. Some of these allege racial segregation in schools. In 2005 alone three district courts – two in Sofia and one in Ihtiman – ruled on cases alleging that segregation of Roma students in residential schools amounted to discrimination. In one case the court found for the plaintiffs and in two against them. All three were appealed and there is no final decision on any of them at present.

¹⁸¹ Interview with Ms. Zora Guencheva, member of the Commission, 6 April 2006.

¹⁸² *Protection against Discrimination Act*, Art. 71

¹⁸³ *Protection against Discrimination Act*, Art. 75.

¹⁸⁴ *Protection against Discrimination Act*, Art. 9.

¹⁸⁵ *Protection against Discrimination Act*, Art. 71.

¹⁸⁶ *Protection against Discrimination Act*, Art. 72.

¹⁸⁷ *Protection against Discrimination Act*, Art. 73.

In addition, at the institutional level, the law provides for an internal complaint mechanism to be established within each educational body.¹⁸⁸ However, this is only applicable to harassment complaints. Educational institutions' directors are under a duty to immediately investigate such complaints, and to take action to terminate the harassment, and to impose disciplinary liability. There is no information as to any complaints brought under this mechanism.

In cases where educators fail to take action when addressed with harassment complaints, there is no express remedy under the law against such failure, although educators would be liable under general tort law for compensation. Alternatively, or in addition, a harassment victim may complain to the Ministry of Education and Science, asking for administrative pressure to be put on the educator to take due action, including sanctions administered by the Ministry on the educator. However, the law does not provide for such a complaint to the Ministry, nor for any express powers of the Minister of Education to act in such a situation, and, accordingly, the Minister's response would be entirely at his or her discretion. Having no direct authorisation under the law, the Minister would not be likely to impose any sanction. At best, he or she could be expected to make an inquiry, and/or a recommendation to the educator.

As mentioned above, the competent bodies for protection against discrimination are the Protection against Discrimination Commission, the civil courts, the administrative bodies and, as far as complaints of harassment are concerned, directors of schools and universities.

Both the Protection against Discrimination Commission and the civil courts are fairly accessible in terms of cost of the proceedings, with no fees, or expenses due. However, there is not sufficient information publicly available on the existence of these anti-discrimination remedies. The legislation is still relatively new, and the Government has launched no public awareness campaigns to make it known by the general public. The Protection against Discrimination Commission is in the initial stages of preparing such a campaign, national in scope. The impact of this is yet to be gauged. The Commission is still insufficiently accessible in terms of its contact details' availability to the general public. For a certain period, it lacked offices, and, accordingly, had no postal or email address or telephone numbers.

NGOs have conducted training sessions on the new anti-discrimination legislation, primarily for NGO activists. These have had a limited impact on the general public awareness of the legal remedies for redress. On a more positive note, the media have shown interest in the anti-discrimination practices of both the courts and the Commission, and have been covering these adequately, with some particularly good pieces of information having been published or broadcast. This media coverage has not focused so much on the procedural aspects of using these authorities for obtaining redress, but rather on the substantive aspects of their decisions. The general public, and

¹⁸⁸ *Protection against Discrimination Act*, Art. 31.

especially vulnerable communities, particularly the most isolated Roma communities, are still in want of information as to the means to obtain redress for discrimination from the competent institutions.

In terms of damage awards, the courts have not awarded any to date in cases of educational discrimination. In the two cases with positive outcomes, none was sought, since the claims were brought by NGOs in their own right. In only one of these cases did the proceedings result in a remedy other than a declaration of law, namely disbanding a segregated class as a part of a court-approved agreement between the parties.¹⁸⁹

As for assistance offered to complainants of discrimination in education, all lawsuits to date have been sponsored by NGOs, including the provision of legal counsel. No governmental assistance has been provided for complainants to the courts, other than the statutory waiver of fees and expenses.

The *Decade Action Plan* sets out in action 1.1.7 an additional mechanism for ensuring non-discrimination in education for Roma at the pre-school and school level. These mechanisms were scheduled to take place in 2005–2006, but as no indicators were outlined in the *Decade Action Plan*, and no official reports have been published, progress is difficult to track.

¹⁸⁹ Sofia District Court, Decision No. 666/2005 from 7 November 2005.

4. CONSTRAINTS ON ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Some of the obstacles blocking access to education for Roma are straightforward: for example, there are not enough pre-school places to ensure that every child will be able to enrol, a problem that current Government policy fails to address. Pre-school costs are also a significant barrier for Roma families, many of whom cannot afford the fees set by the municipalities, and the free meals and travel subsidies offered by special schools may encourage disadvantaged families to enrol their children in such schools. Financing structures need to be reconsidered in order to counteract these constraints.

Geographical segregation is widespread in Bulgaria, both in urban and rural areas, giving rise to “Roma schools” in predominantly Roma neighbourhoods. Although parents can choose to send their children to schools outside the area, few Roma parents do so outside an organised desegregation programme. Even where desegregation programmes are running successfully, many children are left behind. The number of Roma children enrolling in special schools continues to increase, as all schools seek ways to keep enrolment numbers up. The Ministry of Education and Science has promulgated instructions aimed at improving assessment procedures, but research at the local level indicates that these directives have not successfully counteracted incentives to place children in special schools. Better overseeing of the assessment committees is clearly needed to ensure that each child’s individual potential is appropriately evaluated.

Many Roma children in Bulgaria speak another language at home, making access to pre-school even more important as a means to improve their Bulgarian language skills before entering school. However, the number of teachers proficient in Romani languages is very small, placing Roma children at a disadvantage from their first days of school. More Roma teachers and teaching assistants, as well as training in bilingual education techniques, are needed at the earliest level of education.

4.1 Structural constraints

According to the most recent NSI statistics, in the 2005–2006 school year there were 3,331 pre-schools in Bulgaria. Of these, 2,421 were all-day, 866 half-day and seasonal, 12 for children with intellectual disabilities and 6 convalescent for children suffering specific health conditions, such as heart conditions. More than half, 1,740 of them, were in villages. Since 2001 the number of pre-schools has increased by 2.7 per cent.¹⁹⁰

Ordinance No. 7 of the Ministry of Education and Science¹⁹¹ determines in detail the minimum and the maximum number of children that can be enrolled in one classroom and in one group in a pre-school, depending on the type of school and pre-school. Table 20 below represents some of these numbers:

¹⁹⁰ NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2006*, p. 35.

¹⁹¹ MES, Ordinance No. 7 on the Number of Students and Children in School and Pre-School Classes from 29 December 2000, *Official Gazette*, No. 4, 12 January 2001, the latest amendment from 22 August 2003 (hereafter, *Ordinance No 7/2000*).

Table 20: Minimum and maximum number of children and students permitted in classrooms and pre-school groups

	Number of children/students	
	Minimum	Maximum
Group in all-day and weekly pre-school	12	22
Group in special pre-school	8	11
Preparatory class	12	16
Classroom 1–4 grade in general education schools	16	22
Classroom 5–8 grade in general education schools	18	26
Classroom in a special school	8	12

Source: MES¹⁹²

According to rough statistical estimates, at present there are around 260,000 children in the age group 3–6 years nationwide.¹⁹³ According to NSI data, the capacity of the existing pre-schools in the 2005–2006 school year was 228,146 children.¹⁹⁴ Pre-schools in Bulgaria vary in size, but the average number of children per pre-school was 68.5. In the 2005–2006 school year there were 9,496 groups, with a total of 206,243 children. Almost half, 48.4 per cent, of the children enrolled were girls.¹⁹⁵

According to these estimates, around 32,000 children cannot be served by the present number of pre-schools. Calculated at the rate of 68.5 children per pre-school, 467 pre-schools could accommodate the current number of pre-school-age children. According to some estimates, in Sofia alone 1,500 children cannot attend pre-schools, due to a lack of places. To cover these needs another 24 pre-schools are needed.¹⁹⁶ Due to the higher birth rate among Roma, there is a higher proportion of pre-school-age Roma children, who are therefore disproportionately affected by the insufficient number of pre-school places.

To a certain extent, the obligatory year of pre-school takes in some of those children who otherwise would in any case be in pre-schools, especially when these pre-school classes are organised at schools.

¹⁹² MES, Regulation No 7/2000.

¹⁹³ National Statistical Institute, *Population and Demographic Processes – 2004*, Sofia: NSI, 2005, p. 8.

¹⁹⁴ NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2006*, p. 106.

¹⁹⁵ NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2006*, pp. 36–37 and 106.

¹⁹⁶ Veliko Dimitrov, “За идеята да се разшири повинност ‘детска градина’” (On the Idea to Expand the ‘Pre-School’ Service), *IME Review*, No. 247, 28 October 2005, available at http://www.ime.bg/pr_bg/247-4.htm (accessed on 10 March 2006).

The underdeveloped system of public pre-school institutions is currently inadequate for all children to receive this type of early formal education, which is an important prerequisite for their adaptation to and success in school. The *Decade Action Plan* has not identified this as a problem, and has therefore not made provisions to address this, either.

4.2 Legal and administrative requirements

The procedure for enrolling children in pre-schools in Bulgaria is regulated by the Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act. According to the relevant provisions, parents or legal guardians apply to all-day, half-day and weekly pre-schools (where children stay overnight) with a written request, a copy of the birth certificate of the child and medical certificates issued by the territorial health authority.¹⁹⁷ As these requirements are relatively simple, only Roma children whose births are not registered would not be able to comply with them, and this is a rare occurrence in Bulgaria.

Material collected for this report at the local level illustrates this. In Vidin Municipality no administrative barriers for enrolling Roma children in pre-schools and mainstream schools have been reported. This was confirmed in a number of interviews with school directors, teachers, Roma parents and NGO leaders. Roma parents can freely select their child's school or pre-school and there is no school enrolment regulation that is constrained by the residence of the child. The formation of the classes in the school is based on parents' preferences, which are generally based on the perceived quality of the teacher. This is especially true in the case of primary education.¹⁹⁸ The parents in Vidin Municipality are inclined to send their children to specialist schools (languages, mathematics, art, or sports).

However, while Roma parents in Veliko Turnovo are also free to choose ethnically mixed (non-segregated) schools regardless of their place of residence, this rarely happens in practice among families not living in mixed neighbourhoods. Often the reason for this is the fact that some of the "Roma" schools are the only schools in the settlement, as is the case of the village schools in Vodoley, Ledenic and Tzerova Korja. In other cases, such as the segregated school Hristo Botev in Veliko Turnovo, this is the only school within a 3–4 kilometre distance from the Roma neighbourhood, although the school itself is situated on the border between the Roma neighbourhood and the Bulgarian neighbourhood.¹⁹⁹ Parents are aware that they could send the children to other schools, and transport is not a real constraint. A factor for the parents keeping children in the neighbourhood school in this case is the fact that the local mosque unofficially supervises the school.

¹⁹⁷ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 28, para. 1.

¹⁹⁸ Case study Vidin.

¹⁹⁹ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

According to the Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act, the municipal authorities prepare a list of children who should be admitted to pre-schools and the first grade by 30 April of each year. The authorities send this list to the schools and pre-schools in their area by 15 May.²⁰⁰ Children are enrolled in the mainstream schools on the basis of a request from their parents, who may freely choose the school. There are no entry exams for general education schools, although some art and sports schools may organise such exams.²⁰¹ These are simple procedures and most Roma parents can comply with them.

The National Education Act stipulates that every citizen may realise his/her right to education in a school of his/her choice. Parents choose the school for their minor children.²⁰² Before 2003, in clear violation of this provision, Article 36 of the Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act stipulated that local mayors could draw up school districts for the municipal schools. In 2003 this provision was attacked before the Supreme Administrative Court by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee and the Romani Baht Foundation. Shortly before the decision the Ministry of Education and Science changed the provision in the Rules and Regulations in line with the law. Thus at present the school enrolment is not conditioned on residence in the school district. Parents can choose any school from the system regardless of their domicile. However, this leads to serious pressure on the schools with good reputations, and parents try all available formal and informal means to enrol their children.

4.3 Costs

The National Education Act stipulates that the parents should pay fees for the pre-schools that are set by the municipal councils. In addition, they are required to pay for extracurricular activities.²⁰³ According to the Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act, parents and legal guardians of children enrolled in the one-year obligatory pre-school do not pay fees, when it takes place in kindergartens.²⁰⁴

Different municipal governments have adopted different approaches to determine the basis and the amount of fees. The overwhelming majority grouped citizens into three different categories: those who are to pay the fees in their full amount, those who are exempted in part and those who are exempted in full. The bases for the exemptions, however, are different. Thus parents who are on social welfare pay 50 per cent of the fee

²⁰⁰ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 35, para. 2.

²⁰¹ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 36, para. 1.

²⁰² National Education Act, *Official Gazette*, No. 86, 18 October 1991, with many amendments, the latest one from 1 January 2006 (hereafter, *National Education Act*), Art. 9.

²⁰³ *National Education Act*, Art. 19, para. 2 and 3.

²⁰⁴ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 30, para. 2.

in Pazardzhik Municipality,²⁰⁵ but pay the full fee in Vratza Municipality.²⁰⁶ Usually the parents or guardians who are exempted in full are required to prove that they are students, that one of them is a soldier, that they have disabilities or that their wards are orphans. In many cases the second and the following children in a family are also exempted when all children attend pre-schools, without regard to the social status of the parents. In Vidin the fee determined by the Municipal Council, which every Roma family has to pay on a monthly basis for one child in pre-school, is 30 leva (€15), or 10 per cent of the average salary in Bulgaria. However, if the family does not have an official marriage, then the fee is 15 leva (5 per cent of the average salary, payable by the mother, who is considered single in such a case). Just as elsewhere in Bulgaria, unofficial marriages are frequent practice among Roma families in Vidin Municipality. Furthermore, if the child is the third or fourth in the family, then no fee is due.²⁰⁷

Most municipalities set separate fees for all-day and for weekly pre-schools. The latter are usually higher. Thus the fee for the all-day pre-school in Shumen Municipality is 30 leva (€15) and the fee for the weekly pre-school is 40 leva (€20) per month.²⁰⁸ Some municipalities set a flat monthly fee per child and an additional fee on the basis of the days that the child actually attends the pre-school during the month. Thus Veliko Turnovo Municipality sets a flat fee of five leva per month (€2.5) for all-day pre-schools plus 0.8 leva per day (€0.40) for each day of attendance.²⁰⁹ Vidin Municipality

²⁰⁵ Municipality of Pazardzhik, *Наредба за определянето и администрирането на местните такси и цени на услуги на територията на Община Пазарджик от 21 февруари 2006 г.* (Ordinance for the Determination and Administration of Local Taxes and Prices of Services on the Territory of the Municipality of Pazardzhik from 21 February 2003), available at <http://www.pazardjik.bg/framesywet.html> (accessed on 11 March 2006).

²⁰⁶ Municipality of Vratza, *Наредба за определянето и администрирането на местните такси и цени на услуги и права на територията на община Враца от 6 март 2003 г.* (Ordinance for the Determination and Administration of Local Taxes and Prices of Services on the Territory of the Municipality of Vratza from 6 March 2003), available at <http://www.vratza.bg/docs/naredba4.html> (accessed on 11 March 2006).

²⁰⁷ Case study Vidin.

²⁰⁸ Municipality of Shumen, *Наредба за определянето и администрирането на местните такси и цени на услуги на територията на Община Шумен от 6 март 2003 г.* (Ordinance for the Determination and Administration of Local Taxes and Prices of Services on the Territory of the Municipality of Shumen from 6 March 2003), available at <http://www.shumen.bg/doc/03401.htm> (accessed on 11 March 2006).

²⁰⁹ Municipality of Veliko Turnovo, *Наредба за определянето и администрирането на местните такси и цени на услуги на територията на Община Велико Търново от 6 март 2003 г.* (Ordinance for the Determination and Administration of Local Taxes and Prices of Services on the Territory of the Municipality of Veliko Turnovo from 6 March 2003), available at http://www.veliko-turnovo.com/obs/obs1999/Reshenia/naredba_taksi.htm (accessed on 11 March 2006).

sets the basic fee as a share (20 per cent) of the minimal salary, which in Bulgaria is determined by law.²¹⁰

In addition to the fee, different pre-schools determine different additional contributions that the parents should pay for extracurricular activities. They depend on the nature and the scope of these activities and vary on average between 5 and 20 leva per month (€2.5–10).

The municipalities cover the rest of the costs. According to the deputy mayor of Sofia Municipality, Mr. Minko Gerdzhikov, the average cost (excluding extracurricular activities) per child in a pre-school is 120 leva (€60). Of this, the fee (40 leva in Sofia, €20) covers one third; the rest is covered by the municipal budget.²¹¹

A segregated weekly pre-school, Mir, was run by the municipality in the Roma neighbourhood in Nikolaevo until 2005. When it was established the enrolment in the pre-school was free of charge and all the children from the ghetto attended. Roma leaders report that this was good for the children and most of all for improving their command of Bulgarian, which further influenced their success in school.²¹² In 2005 a fee was introduced – 20 leva (€10) per month. The fee covered the whole stay of the children for the month: accommodation, food, and any other costs. Nevertheless, when the fee was imposed, parents withdrew their children and from the 2006–2007 school year the pre-school was closed. At present some children attend the pre-school in the centre of Nikolaevo; there is transport provided by the municipality for the children from the Roma neighbourhood.²¹³ While the Mir pre-school was operating, there were parents who preferred to send their children to the mixed pre-school in the centre even though they had to pay a monthly fee there.²¹⁴

The fee plus additional payments for extracurricular activities varies in different regions of Bulgaria in the range of 25–70 leva (€13–36) per child per month (when and where children are not exempted from paying the fee). The average household income in Bulgaria in December 2005, according to the NSI, was 580.02 leva per month (€297),

²¹⁰ Municipality of Vidin, *Наредба за определянето и администрирането на местните такси и цени на услуги на територията на Община Видин от 2 февруари 2005 г.* (Municipality of Vidin. Ordinance for the Determination and Administration of Local Taxes and Prices of Services on the Territory of the Municipality of Vidin from 2 February 2005).

²¹¹ Nova TV, “Десният дебат за София” (The Right-Wing Debate on Sofia), from 20 October 2005, transcript available at <http://www.sds-sofia.org/otrazeno.aspx?id=71> (accessed on 11 March 2006).

²¹² Interview with Ivan Minchev, local informal leader in Nikolaevo, 29 July 2006; interview with Ivan Jorov, former teaching assistant in Edrevo, 16 October 2006.

²¹³ Information from Nikolaevo Municipality, Administrative Services Department, October 2006.

²¹⁴ Interview with Ivan Minchev, local informal leader in Nikolaevo, 29 July 2006.

or 229.71 leva per household member (€118).²¹⁵ The average monthly salary in Bulgaria in December 2005 was 340 leva (€174).²¹⁶ Thus the estimated costs incurred for placing a child in public pre-school (excluding the costs for transport), would amount to 4.3–12.1 per cent of the average family income or 7.4–20.6 per cent of the average monthly salary. The costs would, however, be higher in the case of a Roma working family, as the average income and the average salaries in that case are lower. A Roma family living on social welfare would also pay a higher share of its family income where it is not exempted from paying fees and additional contributions.

According to an estimate by a school director in Vidin, the estimated costs incurred by a family for the school participation of one child for one month are 25 leva for the primary level (€13.5), 35 leva for the lower secondary level (€18) and 45 leva for the secondary level (€23).²¹⁷ Calculated on the basis of the average salary around the date of the interview (340 leva), this would mean 7.4 per cent, 10.3 per cent and 13.2 per cent of that salary respectively. As the average salary in the Roma family is lower, pre-school participation places a higher financial burden on Roma families.

An expert has questioned the impact of providing snacks and other benefits to disadvantaged children, charging that the programme affects children's sense of pride and dignity. According to this expert, such programmes have also come under criticism for failing to keep Roma in school.²¹⁸

The NSI reports periodically on household spending by selected categories. Education in this statistics is integrated with leisure and cultural consumption. This integrated spending for December 2005 was 21.41 leva (€11) on average per household and 8.48 leva (€4.3) per household member. Calculated as a share of the average monthly monetary spending per household, the above amounts would make 4.5 per cent of the total household and household member spending.²¹⁹ There are no statistics disaggregated by ethnicity, but the respective share in a Roma household that has all its children in school would probably be higher, because of the much higher number of children.

The number of private pre-schools in Bulgaria is relatively low. In the 2005–2006 school year there were only 34 such pre-schools, with 952 children.²²⁰ Their fees vary

²¹⁵ National Statistical Institute, *Income, Spending and Consumption of the Households*, available at <http://www.nsi.bg/BudgetHome/BudgetHome.htm> (accessed on 11 March 2006) (hereafter, NSI, *Income, Spending and Consumption of the Households*).

²¹⁶ Source: Stat.bg, at <http://www.stat.bg/indicator.html?lang=1&cid=401> (accessed on 11 March 2006).

²¹⁷ Interview with Mr. Ventsislav Stanev, director of the Tsar Simeon Veliki School, Vidin, 5 January 2006.

²¹⁸ OSI Roundtable, Sofia, June 2006.

²¹⁹ NSI, *Income, Spending and Consumption of the Households*.

²²⁰ NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2006*, pp. 35–36.

from €80 to €200 per month on average,²²¹ which is 47 per cent to 117 per cent of the average monthly salary. Private pre-schools are prohibitively expensive for many Roma households, as their income is much lower than that of an average household. The media have reported some cases of corruption with regard to the enrolment of children in well-regarded pre-schools. According to a February 2006 Radio Free Europe report, because around 1,000 children are on waiting lists for pre-schools in Sofia alone, enrolment in some of them requires “connections”.²²²

Sending a child to a special boarding school relieves the family from all the expenses that they usually incur if the child attends a local school. These costs include food, textbooks after the fourth grade, school supplies and medicine. Some boarding schools offer also clothing and shoes if they are able to solicit donations from local and international donors. The special school in Veliko Turnovo is a semi-boarding type, and, according to the school director, it does not receive meal subsidies. The managing body of the school has secured additional money from different sponsors to provide free meals and travel to the school for the students. The amount varies from month to month, ranging between 300 levs and 400 levs (€15–20).²²³ The school director reported that the free meals and travel are often the reasons for Roma parents to send their children to the special school although they do not have disabilities; at the same time, the parents of Roma children enrolled in the special school note that they have to give one or two levs per week for food. There is no special transport provided for the school, but the principal has negotiated with private bus companies so that the children from the special school would travel for free.²²⁴

The constraints raised by school costs, however minor they might seem for a middle-class Bulgarian family, coupled with other factors, such as racism, lower educational status in the Roma communities in general, and the need to involve children in supporting the family from a very early age, apparently discourage many Roma families from sending their children to educational institutions and especially to pre-schools. There are no provisions in the *Decade Action Plan* that deal specifically with addressing costs at the pre-school level, nor provisions for changing the incentives in free provision of services and goods in special schools that encourage socio-economically deprived Roma families to send their children to those institutions.

²²¹ Source: The websites of the private pre-schools “Detski Klub” (www.detskiklub.net) and “ESPA” (www.espa-bg.com).

²²² RFE, “Детските градини” (Kindergartens), broadcast on 28 February 2006, transcript available at http://www.rfi.bg/prog/euaccent/show.shtml?type=show&program=euaccent&news_NUM=664&indexa=no. (accessed on 11 March 2006). Similar practices, due to the insufficient number of places in the pre-schools in Sofia, are reported in the newspaper *Dnevnik* from 25 August 2005 (“Pre-Schools also in the Cafes”).

²²³ Source: the St. Teodosii Turnovski Special School, Veliko Turnovo, school documentation and interview with Mrs. Katinka Obretenova, school director.

²²⁴ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

4.4 Residential segregation/Geographical isolation

Roma in Bulgaria live in the most segregated residential settings as compared to the Roma communities in the other Eastern European countries. Residential segregation grew together with urbanisation in the Roma communities during the period from the 1950s to the 1970s. According to one estimate, 57 per cent of Bulgarian Roma live in “Roma neighbourhoods”, while another 21 per cent live in “neighbourhoods with a predominantly Roma population”.²²⁵ Another estimate from November 2001 puts the share of Roma living in “principally Roma” neighbourhoods in Bulgaria at 66.4 per cent and those living in “mixed” neighbourhoods at 31.4 per cent.²²⁶ In some cases segregated neighbourhoods are separated by walls from the rest of the town or village.²²⁷

Most of the houses in the segregated Roma neighbourhoods are “illegal”, either outside the town/village boundaries or without appropriate authorisation papers. The extent of “illegal” construction, according to one survey from 2000, is approximately 70 per cent of all the real estate in Roma neighbourhoods nationwide. In some cities this share is higher, reaching 90–100 per cent.²²⁸ This situation became a source of tensions in recent years, with some municipal governments targeting Roma neighbourhoods and parts of neighbourhoods for demolition.²²⁹ The living conditions in segregated neighbourhoods are much worse than they are for the rest of the population. The Government recognised that they “are among the main factors for the relatively worse state of health of the Roma population”.²³⁰ The fact that many Roma settlements are “illegal” leads to a lower quality or to a total lack of municipal services.²³¹ Poor living conditions in Roma settlements also negatively affect the school results of Roma children, who in many cases lack adequate conditions for doing homework or other school assignments. While the State pays for transport between two towns or villages, transport within a city or town is not covered.

²²⁵ Mitev, *Dynamics of Poverty*, p. 41.

²²⁶ UNDP, *Avoiding the Dependency Trap*, pp. 101–102.

²²⁷ EUMAP, *Minority Protection in Bulgaria – 2002*, p. 94.

²²⁸ EUMAP, *Minority Protection in Bulgaria – 2002*, p. 93. The figure of 70 per cent Roma “illegally built housing” in the Roma neighbourhoods was cited also in the European Commission’s 2001 *Regular Report on Bulgaria*. European Commission, *2001 Regular Report on Bulgaria’s Progress Towards Accession*, Brussels, 13 November 2001, p. 23.

²²⁹ Cf. International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, “Bulgaria Should Stop Demolition of Roma Houses,” Statement of 31 August 2005, available at http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=4122 (accessed on 20 February 2007).

²³⁰ Replies of the Government of Bulgaria to the List of Issues of CESCR, Art. 4.1, 9 July 1999.

²³¹ Ina Zoon, *On the Margins: Roma and Public Services in Romania, Bulgaria, and Macedonia*, New York: Open Society Institute, 2001, pp. 141–142.

Negative effects of residential segregation and segregated education have been discussed on numerous occasions by Bulgarian sociologists, anthropologists and educational specialists in Bulgaria. These include deficits in basic social skills, language barriers, limited social horizons and lack of experience with multi-ethnic environments.²³²

4.5 School and class placement procedures

4.5.1 Class placement

According to the Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act, the school director distributes the students into classes on the basis of the class and group size requirements.²³³ However, there are no rules on how exactly this should happen, and class placement procedure in Bulgarian schools is informal and often arbitrary. Placement is sometimes negotiated with parents. Opinions of the students and of the teachers are also sometimes, although by no means always, taken into account.

The possibility of placing children with intellectual disabilities in mainstream schools is envisaged by the National Education Act.²³⁴ Although the purpose of this placement, according to the law, is “integrated education”, the law does not prohibit forming separate classes for children with intellectual disabilities. While such classes do exist,²³⁵ they are rare in the Bulgarian education system, where the typical form of remedial educational is the special school for children with intellectual disabilities. The assessment procedures for assigning children to remedial classes are the same as the procedures for assigning them to special schools.²³⁶

There are cases where Roma children are proportionately allocated to integrated school environments, such as, for example, in Vidin by the NGO Organisation Drom, which has organised the desegregation initiative there.²³⁷ The criteria for allocating Roma children in mainstream schools are solely based on the choice of their parents, who take account of the specialisation and reputation of the schools.²³⁸

²³² Nunev, *Roma and the Process of Desegregation*, pp. 40–41.

²³³ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 90, para. 3.

²³⁴ *National Education Act*, Art. 27, para. 1.

²³⁵ In the town of Montana there are two such classes: in one of the mainstream schools and in the segregated Roma school. Both are predominantly filled with Roma students (cf. BHC, *Remedial Schools in Bulgaria*, pp. 256–263). According to the SACP, the total number of children in such classes on 31 December 2004 was 135 (SACP, “Right to Education for Children with Special Educational Needs,” p. 80).

²³⁶ See below.

²³⁷ This is confirmed in an interview with Donka Panayotova, chair of the NGO Organisation Drom, 8 April 2006, Vidin.

²³⁸ Case study Vidin.

4.5.2 Placement in special schools

The overrepresentation of Roma children in special schools for children with intellectual disabilities is a serious problem in Bulgaria. These are schools that enrol children from the first to the eighth grade, but do not offer a formal diploma on graduation. According to the Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act, students who graduate from the eighth grade of these schools receive a certificate but not a diploma for the educational level completed unless they pass exams.²³⁹

The overrepresentation of Roma in special schools came to the attention of the European Commission as early as 1999, with the 1999 Regular Report on Bulgaria's progress towards accession.²⁴⁰

The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee's research, as well as subsequent studies, revealed serious flaws in the procedure for diagnosing intellectual disabilities, which result in arbitrary placement in special schools for purely social reasons.²⁴¹ These include imprecise, formalistic and culturally insensitive testing by a team of experts, many of whom have conflicts of interest, sometimes in clear violation of the procedure prescribed by law. In some cases school directors actively seek their students in Roma neighbourhoods and drive them through the procedure.²⁴² The SACP observed with concern the fact that eight special schools are located in places where there are no other schools, which both creates an obstacle to integration and places pressure on local parents to enrol their children in the special schools.²⁴³ The Government of Bulgaria pledged before the EU to deal with this situation by establishing a diagnostic procedure that prevents arbitrariness, by integrating remedial education with the mainstream

²³⁹ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 46, para. 2 and 3.

²⁴⁰ In 1999, the European Commission noted that "A disproportionate number of Roma children are sent to special schools for the mentally handicapped". Since then the EC has continued to express concerns over this issue. European Commission, *1999 Regular Report from the Commission on Bulgaria's Progress Towards Accession*, Brussels, 10 October 1999, p. 15, available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key_documents/1999/bulgaria_en.pdf (accessed on 20 February 2007).

²⁴¹ See EUMAP/MHI, *Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities: Access to Education and Employment – Bulgaria*, Sofia: OSI, 2005 (hereafter, EUMAP, *Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities – Bulgaria*), pp. 40–45, available at http://www.eumap.org/group1/silva2/reports/2005/inteldis_country/bulgaria/ (accessed on 20 February 2007); The State Agency of Child Protection too observed that "[Roma] parents prefer to place their children in a remedial school for a number of reasons – the ensuring of boarding services, free textbooks, and free or cheap food. Because of the difficulties in communication and the short time in which the child is assessed, these children most often get a diagnosis of intellectual disability, despite the fact that they do not have impaired intellect." SACP, "Right to Education for Children with Special Educational Needs," p. 54.

²⁴² ERRC, *Stigmata*, pp. 41–42.

²⁴³ SACP, "Right to Education for Children with Special Educational Needs," p. 38.

education and by reducing the number of children in the special schools.²⁴⁴ Recent data, however, do not substantiate these commitments (see Chart 2 in section 2.4).

Although since 2002 parents of children with intellectual disabilities have been able to enrol their children in mainstream schools, the Government has so far failed to secure the necessary regulations and resources to make this policy effective,²⁴⁵ such as hiring “resource teachers” in the mainstream schools, ensuring appropriate teaching materials, training teachers for integrated, multi-ability classrooms, and the like.

The procedure for placement of children in special schools for persons with disabilities is regulated by the Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act and by Ordinance No. 6 of the Ministry of Education and Science from 19 August 2002.²⁴⁶ These regulations allow for the placement in special schools of children from the first grade, as well as placement in special pre-schools. Three bodies have a role in the placement: the Central Expert Medical Consultative Commission (CEMCC),²⁴⁷ the Central Diagnostic Commission at the Ministry of Education and Science and the Team for Complex Pedagogical Assessment (TCPA) at the Regional Inspectorates of Education.

Before they were dismantled in 2005, the Regional Expert Medical Consultative Commissions (REMCC) had a role in diagnosing disabilities for the purposes of special education. Today, the TCPA has a decisive role in the placement of children in special schools. For the specific purposes of placement at the beginning of each school year the TCPA is appointed by the Regional Inspectorates of Education and consists of different specialists – educators, medical professionals and psychologists from the special schools and from other institutions in the locality.²⁴⁸ The expert on special schools at the inspectorate chairs the team in this case. For the rest of the year another diagnostic team, chaired by the school/pre-school director, has a specific duty to ensure individualised education for students placed in special schools and pre-schools, including the education and reassessment of the students. REMCC and after 2005

²⁴⁴ The amendments to the National Education Act and passing of Ordinance No. 6, both from 2002, were largely in response to that pledge. Three subsequent documents followed: *The National Strategy for Child Protection 2004–2006 from 2004*; *The National Programme for Child Protection for 2005*; *The National Programme for Child Protection for 2006*. These documents were developed by the State Agency for Child Protection and are available, in Bulgarian, at its website at http://www.stopech.sacp.government.bg/?sid=professional_bg&pid=0000000074 (accessed on 20 February 2007).

²⁴⁵ OSI, *Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities – Bulgaria*, p. 49.

²⁴⁶ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 50, para. 4; Ministry of Education and Science, Ordinance No. 6 for Education of Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Chronic Diseases from 19 August 2002, *Official Gazette*, No. 83, 30 August 2002 (hereafter, *Ordinance No. 6 for Education of Children with Disabilities*).

²⁴⁷ Established with Ordinance No. 19 of the Ministry of Health on the Expertise of Disability of Children under 16 Years of Age, *Official Gazette*, No. 84, 13 October 2000.

²⁴⁸ *Ordinance No. 6 for Education of Children with Disabilities*, Art. 18, para. 1 and 2.

CEMCC assigned medical diagnoses of different degrees of intellectual disability, which were usually accepted by the TCPA.

Before 2002 the procedure was arbitrary in both law and practice and did not even envisage the obligatory use of tests. With the adoption of Ordinance No. 6 for Education of Children with Disabilities in 2002, the procedure became more elaborate in law, with obligatory testing and other guarantees for objective assessment of disabilities. Placement in special schools became a measure of the last resort,²⁴⁹ which by law cannot take place without the consent of the parents. The latter are members of the TCPA and can nominate experts who also participate as members.²⁵⁰

However, in practice the assessment procedure is often arbitrary and simplistic.²⁵¹ Tests are offered in Bulgarian, and the involvement of the parent is formal. A 2004 evaluation of the legality of the placement in the special schools, conducted by the SACP, revealed that in the files of 533 children placed in the special schools there were no TCPA records for placement. In the files of 1,912 children there were no protocols of the diagnostic teams for the assessment of their individual educational needs. In 623 cases there were no applications by family members.²⁵² The system's failure to reduce the relative share of the children in special schools, as a proportion of the school-age children in Bulgaria, generally clearly demonstrates that the system remains arbitrary and imprecise.²⁵³

Material collected at the local level for this report illustrates this. While two thirds of the Roma living in the ghetto on Aleko Konstantinov St. in Veliko Turnovo acknowledge that a higher education would provide them with better opportunities for finding a job, half of the school-age children attend a special school for people with intellectual disabilities. Parents unanimously report that the social benefits available at this school are the main reason that they choose to enrol their children there, although they are aware that the children cannot continue their education after finishing this school. Nevertheless, they accept this as something immutable, not as something dependent on them themselves.²⁵⁴

Desegregation in Vidin Municipality has reduced the number of children studying in segregated Roma schools (see section 3.3); however, the proportion of Roma students at the special school in the municipality increased from 70 per cent in 2005–2006 to

²⁴⁹ *Ordinance No. 6 for Education of Children with Disabilities*, Art. 2, para. 3.

²⁵⁰ *Ordinance No. 6 for Education of Children with Disabilities*, Art. 18, para. 3 and 4.

²⁵¹ Cf. OSI, *Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities – Bulgaria*, p. 40.

²⁵² SACP, "Right to Education for Children with Special Educational Needs," pp. 40 and 49.

²⁵³ See above Table.

²⁵⁴ *Amalipe Newsletter*, January 2005, p. 3, available at <http://geocities.com/amalipe2002> (accessed on 27 May 2006).

85 per cent in 2006–2007; the overall enrolment in the school also increased, from 83 to 105 students.²⁵⁵

The practice in Vidin is for children to be placed in special schools after the parent has filed a request and the child has taken the “Hamburg-Wechsler” IQ test. The child completes an IQ test while a speech therapist conducts a preparatory evaluation, and after that the committee asks several questions to confirm the results from the tests and makes a decision, which is approved by the Regional Inspectorate of Education, Vidin.²⁵⁶ The reassessment of the children is performed after a request from the parent submitted to the head of the Regional Inspectorate of Education, Vidin. The last Regional Inspectorate of Education report does not note how many reassessments have been conducted in the past years. The Regional Inspectorate of Education’s files contained no complaints by Roma parents.²⁵⁷

According to interviews in Vidin, there is one specific element that must be changed, related to the entry regulation for special schools. The children must be carefully medically examined, because the committee accepts children without disabilities in some cases. There are, however, still cases of children entering special schools only because parents insist that the child receives all the benefits provided by State social services and the Bulgarian Red Cross. A member of the committee confirmed that many Roma children do not manage to pass the test because of their inability to speak Bulgarian.²⁵⁸

There are four qualified teachers in Vidin Municipality for work with children who have special needs but study in mainstream schools. The special school registers a high number of illiterate Roma children, but the school programme does not track school results, and there is thus a significant difference between the programme of the special school and that of the mainstream schools in town. A decision of the committee can be revoked in the case that the child completes a second test successfully and before that there is a request submitted to the head of the Regional Inspectorate of Education. Interviews confirmed that no such requests were submitted, and nor were any complaints filed. The Vidin region was the only one in the country that has not submitted a programme for children in the special schools to integrate in the mainstream schools in 2006. Neither the special school authority nor the Regional Inspectorate of Education, Vidin, which are the driving engines for this programme, had a clear explanation of the reasons.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Territorial Statistical Bureau, Vidin, February 2006.

²⁵⁶ Interview with Georgi Mladenov, member of the Committee for Evaluation of Children to the Remedial School in Vidin, 12 April 2006, Vidin.

²⁵⁷ Case study Vidin.

²⁵⁸ Case study Vidin.

²⁵⁹ Case study Vidin.

4.5.3 Transfer between schools

Transfer from one school to another is relatively easy in Bulgaria. The Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act provide for separate procedures for transfer for the students between the first to the fourth grade, for the students between the fifth to the eighth grade and for the students from special schools to the schools of general education. Students between the first to the fourth grade in the schools of general education may be transferred from one school to another throughout the year. Parents direct a request for transfer to the director of their child's school, who is obliged to respond by issuing a certificate for transfer. The director is also obliged to inform the municipal authorities. The director of the accepting school is obliged to inform the municipal authorities within a seven-day period after the enrolment.²⁶⁰ Students between the fifth and the eighth grade are transferred through the same procedure, with the only limitation that the transfer cannot take place later than 30 days before the end of the school term.²⁶¹ The NSI does not publish data on transfers in the Bulgarian education system.

According to Ordinance No. 6 for Education of Children with Disabilities, students from the special schools can be transferred to the mainstream schools if they successfully pass the exams for the respective grade, stage or educational level. The accepting school organises these exams.²⁶² There are no support mechanisms and no preparation whatsoever for this procedure in the special schools. The latter have an interest in not "losing" children to the mainstream schools and therefore transfer takes place very rarely, if ever. The reduction of the number of children in special schools that took place over the past several years is a result of the general demographic decline, not of transfers.

Ordinance No. 6 for Education of Children with Disabilities does not envisage obligatory reassessment of children with special needs by an independent body. The diagnostic commissions of the Regional Inspectorates of Education may conduct additional assessments in order to correct the results of the assessment of the diagnostic teams, as well as for other purposes, which are, however, not specified in the ordinance.²⁶³ This type of reassessment is incidental and not periodic.

Although the right is not specifically provided for in Ordinance No. 6, based on the general clause of the administrative law parents can appeal against the results of the assessment. The Central Diagnostic Commission at the Ministry of Education and Science is empowered to decide on the disputed cases of the commissions at the regional level.²⁶⁴ As the parents are made members of the diagnostic teams and as

²⁶⁰ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 40.

²⁶¹ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 44.

²⁶² *Ordinance No. 6 for Education of Children with Disabilities*, Art. 35, para. 4.

²⁶³ *Ordinance No. 6 for Education of Children with Disabilities*, Art. 23, pt. 13.

²⁶⁴ *Ordinance No. 6 for Education of Children with Disabilities*, Art. 27, pt. 3.

placement in special schools is only possible on the basis of an explicit request by parents in the first place, appeal cases are only hypothetical.

Two of the special schools in Veliko Turnovo Municipality (in Mindia and Gabrovtsi) were closed in June 2006 as part of the Ministry's efforts to meet EU accession criteria regarding special schools. From the school in the village of Mindia with a majority Roma enrolment, only 12 of the 86 children were redirected to the special schools in Novo Selo or Teodosij Turnovski. The other children have been assessed as eligible for integrated education.²⁶⁵ Research carried out by the Amalipe Centre, however, has shown that the Regional Inspectorate of Education has not followed whether these children have been appropriately integrated in the mainstream schools or whether they have been enrolled in a mainstream school at all. The study showed that the children were just formally directed to certain schools in their place of residence, without any consultations with the parents.²⁶⁶

Another problem appeared for the integrated children after the start of the new school year. Resource centres were established in district cities by Ordinance No. RD 14-180/13.09.2006 of the Ministry of Education and Science.²⁶⁷ At the beginning of October 2006, however, these centres were still not operating and not able to provide pedagogical and psychological help to the integrated children formerly enrolled in special schools. Since the first two to three weeks are the most important weeks for the children's psychological and pedagogical adaptation, this created a high risk that these children would drop out.

From the end of the 2005–2006 school year and the beginning of 2006–2007, the Amalipe Centre started a campaign for integrating children without intellectual disabilities from the special school in Veliko Turnovo into mainstream schools in the town. This, however, met with strong resistance from the teachers at the St. Teodosij Turnovski Special School. They made several visits to the Roma ghetto, where the teachers at the special school warned parents not to take their children from the special school.²⁶⁸

On 19 September 2006, the Commission for Complex Pedagogical Assessment met in the special school. A representative of the Amalipe Centre was present at the meeting and charged that the work of the Commission constituted a serious violation of children's rights for access to quality education. Although the goal of the Commission is to assess and stimulate the children who could be integrated to continue their education in a mainstream school, the Amalipe Centre found a number of serious irregularities with the process. First, discussion with the parents revealed that only a few of them were present at

²⁶⁵ Interview with Mr. Lyubomir Minchev, expert in integrated education in the Regional Inspectorate of Education, Veliko Turnovo, 27 May 2006.

²⁶⁶ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

²⁶⁷ *Official Gazette*, issue 77 of 19 September 2006.

²⁶⁸ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

the Commission hearings. One of the girls reported that she had attended the Commission only once, although she is in the sixth grade. The members of the Commission made an unsuccessful attempt to deny the Amalipe Centre access to the meeting, although observers are permitted by law, and the parents gave their authorisation. Furthermore, the observer noted that members of the Commission tried to convince the children that they would benefit and succeed only in the special school and that they would fail if they attended the mainstream school. This was repeated two or three times to the children. At the same time, they were given tasks from textbooks for higher grades. This practice continued even after the representatives of the Amalipe Centre objected.²⁶⁹ The Regional Inspectorate of Education did not intervene, despite requests to do so. The Amalipe Centre is considering further steps to lodge an appeal to higher instances. Unfortunately, the parents themselves did not dare to make a complaint, since the teachers from the special school warned them not to do so.²⁷⁰ As a result, three of the children returned to the special school. No information has been provided so far by the Regional Inspectorate of Education as to how many of the children from the closed schools in Mindia and Gabrovtsi have not been enrolled in schools at all or have already dropped out.²⁷¹

There are no registered cases of transfer of Roma children from the special school to the mainstream schooling system in Vidin, in part because the problem has a social dimension: Roma parents send their children to the special school, even if they qualify for mainstream schools, because of the financial benefits that they receive, without understanding that this path greatly diminishes their children's chances of employment on finishing school. In the 2006–2007 school year the Vidin special school enrolled 105 children, 85 per cent of whom were of Roma ethnic origin. This was an increase from the 83 children enrolled during the previous school year. The average age of children entering the school is between 8 and 12 years.²⁷² During both the 2005–2006 and the 2006–2007 school year there were children who enrolled in that school from the first grade.²⁷³

Parents must submit a request for entry of their child to the special school, which is examined and approved by a committee, attached to the Regional Inspectorate of Education and consisting of a representative of the Regional Inspectorate of Education, a psychologist, a speech therapist, a resource teacher and a primary teacher. The committee's decision is based on a "complex psychological and pedagogical examination

²⁶⁹ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

²⁷⁰ Interviews with parents who prefer to remain anonymous.

²⁷¹ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

²⁷² Several attempts to interview the principal of the remedial school failed. That is why an anonymous interviewee, a teacher at the school, was approached on 30 March 2006 to answer the questions that were directed to the principal.

²⁷³ Case study Vidin.

of the child”.²⁷⁴ After completing the eighth grade the child receives a certificate and not a diploma. The children in the special school are assessed at the beginning of each school year, and there is, at least in theory, an individual programme for the development of each child, which is reassessed at the end of the first school term. In practice, however, this is rarely the case.

The Juvenile Delinquency Act regulates placement of children in special schools for children with behavioural challenges.²⁷⁵ Established during the period of Communism, the placement procedure for these schools was completely arbitrary for years and was a matter of serious concern for local and international human rights monitors.²⁷⁶ This procedure was reformed in July 2004 – placement became possible only through a court decision with some, although not all, due process guarantees. The new procedure did contribute to the reduction of the number of children in this type of special schools.²⁷⁷ However, it is still entrapped by the deficiencies of both the Bulgarian criminal justice system and the education system, with selective targeting of Roma juveniles as delinquents, and children from poor families being used as material to maintain the capacity of institutions serving their own institutional logic, just as in the case of the special schools.

4.6 Language

The number of Romanes-speakers in Bulgaria is relatively high, at 327,882 according to 2001 census data. At 88.4 per cent of the self-identified Roma in the census, this is probably proportionately the highest in Europe. The real number of Romanes-speakers is almost certainly higher, as is the number of Roma identified as such by others. The share of Romanes-speakers from the latter, however, is most probably lower, although how much lower than the respective shares from the census data is not clear.

There is no precise information on how many children using a Romani language (including different dialects of Romanes) and/or Turkish are also proficient in Bulgarian at the age of three years (the general age of enrolment in pre-school) and at the age of seven years (the age of enrolment in the first grade of primary school). There is, however, no doubt that a significant portion of them cannot speak Bulgarian even by an older age. This problem has been recognised on several occasions by different governmental institutions, most recently with the *National Programme for the*

²⁷⁴ Interview with Georgi Mladenov, member of the Committee for evaluation of children to the remedial school in Vidin, 12 April 2006, Vidin.

²⁷⁵ Juvenile Delinquency Act, *Izvestia*, No. 13, 14 February 1958, with many amendments, the latest one from 25 December 2005.

²⁷⁶ Cf. Human Rights Watch, *Children in Bulgaria: Police Violence and Arbitrary Confinement*, New York: HRW, September 1996.

²⁷⁷ See Table 16.

*Development of School Education and Pre-School Upbringing and Instruction.*²⁷⁸ According to the IMIR 2003 survey, around 74 per cent of Christian Roma children and around 90 per cent of Muslim Roma children in Bulgaria speak a minority language (Romanes or Turkish) at home. Also, around 70 per cent of Christian Roma children and 87 per cent of Muslim Roma children speak a minority language with friends.²⁷⁹ There is clear evidence from this survey that speaking Bulgarian at home correlates positively with higher grades at school in both the Turkish community and the Roma community. However, Turkish children (a separate object of study of the IMIR survey) report higher grades at school, despite the fact that they speak a minority language at home and with friends much more often than Christian Roma and as often as Muslim Roma. Yet 60.7 per cent of the Muslim Roma children and 50.3 per cent of the Christian Roma children report that they need additional education in Bulgarian language.²⁸⁰ Another study reports that more than two thirds of the children in the Roma and in the Turkish communities start the school with no knowledge of the Bulgarian language.²⁸¹

There is no precise information on how many educators working in pre-schools or in schools with a high percentage of Roma speak Romanes or Turkish and are prepared to teach or conduct some instruction in these languages using bilingual techniques. The overwhelming majority of the teachers in these schools are Bulgarians who do not speak any Romanes or Turkish. They are unable to use bilingual techniques and do not understand the specific educational needs of Roma children. This is also true for the teachers in integrated schools.²⁸² Yet clearly there are some teachers who speak Romanes or Turkish, as all the teachers who taught Romanes at the height of its popularity in the mid-1990s were themselves Roma. According to information from the Regional Inspectorates of Education for the 2004–2005 school year, 11 teachers identified themselves as Roma and as Romanes-speakers.²⁸³ Their number, however, is probably higher in fact.

Research in Vidin suggests that the level of Bulgarian language proficiency of Roma children in pre-school and before entering the first grade at school is very limited, because they live in segregated Roma settlements, where Romanes is dominant, and

²⁷⁸ *National Programme for the Development of School Education and Pre-School Upbringing and Instruction*, IV.3.

²⁷⁹ IMIR, *Final Report on Minority Education*, pp. 17–18. See also the entry on the Roma neighbourhood of Stolipinovo, in Plovdiv, indicating the gravity of the problem and the tendency to have fewer Roma Bulgarian-speakers among the younger generation.

²⁸⁰ IMIR, *Final Report on Minority Education*, p. 18.

²⁸¹ Tomova, “Education of Vulnerable Minority Communities,” p. 197.

²⁸² Hristo Kyuchukov and A. Ivanova, “Отношението на учителите към образованието на ромските деца” (The Attitude of Teachers to the Education of Roma Children), in Kyuchukov (ed.), *Desegregation or Inter-Cultural Integration*, p. 187.

²⁸³ Interview with Yosif Nunev, State expert at the Ministry of Education and Science, 23 March 2006.

they communicate at home solely in this language.²⁸⁴ The practice of Organisation Drom shows that once Roma children enter integrated schools they quickly adapt to the language environment if they are tutored after the regular classes. The Vidin desegregation model has shown that this is a much better practice instead of channelling resources for assistant teachers to enter integrated classes and translate for the Roma children. According to a member of the committee that decides for the placement of children in special schools, there are misdiagnoses of Roma in special schools because they do not speak Bulgarian well, but the Roma parents, usually of a poor social background, insist that their children go to this type of school because of the substantial benefits offered by the State.²⁸⁵

In Veliko Turnovo Municipality, however, poor command of Bulgarian is only rarely the reason for misdiagnosis of Roma in the special schools. Most of the Roma children in the municipality are Turkish-speakers. There is a serious problem for the children from the Sveta Gora neighbourhood in Veliko Turnovo, since many of them do not attend pre-school prior to first-grade school enrolment. A pre-school group has been established in the Hristo Botev School in Veliko Turnovo for children with low proficiency in Bulgarian and/or Turkish as their mother tongue. At the same time, the school has eight groups for studying Turkish as a mother tongue as a free elective subject. Some of the teachers speak Turkish. Observations of teachers teaching in the secondary schools in the town show that children coming from the Hristo Botev School drop behind in the school material due to their low command of Bulgarian.²⁸⁶

There are no schools in Veliko Turnovo where Romanes is taught as a mother tongue. In the neighbouring Gorna Oriahovitza Municipality, students specialising in primary school pedagogy with Romanes language have their practice in teaching Romanes within the Roma folklore classes. The primary teacher teaching Roma folklore in the school of Vodoley has reported that she uses the mother tongue of the children (which is a mixture of Romanes and Turkish) to facilitate her everyday work with the children.²⁸⁷

Likewise, both Roma community representatives and schoolteachers and principals report that Roma children in Nikolaevo face serious language difficulties, especially those who have not attended pre-school.²⁸⁸ The problems are greatest in the first school grade, and sometimes the communication necessitates interpretation by a person who speaks the mother tongue of the children. None of the teachers speaks Turkish, which appears to be the mother tongue of most of the Roma children.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁴ Case study Vidin.

²⁸⁵ Anonymous interview with a committee member, 23 April 2006, Vidin.

²⁸⁶ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

²⁸⁷ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

²⁸⁸ Interviews with Biliana Belcheva, school principal, Ivan Minchev, informal Roma leader, Ivan Jorov, teaching assistant, and Tania Kostadinova (Nikolaevo Municipality), October 2006.

²⁸⁹ Case study Nikolaevo.

A number of experts have noted the importance of studying Romanes as a mother tongue, in terms of building children's self-esteem and personal identity. The lack of an overarching Government policy on the study of second languages has been cited as a problem in establishing a comprehensive system to enable children to study their mother tongue in school.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ OSI Roundtable, Sofia, June 2006.

5. BARRIERS TO QUALITY OF EDUCATION

In every way, schools with a high level of Roma students are inferior to those with lower numbers of Roma enrolled. Many Roma schools are in poor physical condition and lack the facilities necessary to educate students adequately, such as computers and laboratories; in the special school networks, even the most basic equipment, such as desks, textbooks and teaching materials, is inadequate or altogether lacking. With such conditions, these schools cannot attract the most highly qualified and motivated teachers, although the lack of vacant teaching positions throughout Bulgaria limits staff turnover in all schools. As the school system adjusts to reflect the lower birth rate and consequent smaller numbers of students, the Government must take steps to ensure that all children attend an integrated school with adequate facilities and appropriate resources.

Recent NGO-conducted research demonstrates that Roma students in segregated schools perform worse on tests in mathematics and language than their counterparts in integrated schools do. Literacy rates for Roma are below those for the majority population; in particular, Roma who have attended segregated schools have much lower literacy rates, possibly because attendance at such schools is poorly monitored, the quality of education is low, and students can pass from grade to grade without meeting basic standards. Indeed, for children attending special schools for children with intellectual disabilities (remedial schools), and other types of special schools, there are no set standards at all – further ensuring that these students will be unable to go on to further education or reasonable expectations of employment.

Teaching in Bulgaria still relies heavily on older methods, and while professional development courses are available, many are offered by NGOs and not part of recognised teacher training. The Ministry of Education and Science could offer certificates for these courses, which would encourage teachers to take part and advance professionally. Many teachers acknowledge that they have lower expectations for Roma students, despite efforts to improve inter-cultural awareness; this is a reflection of Bulgarian society in general, which still opposes integrating education. Research suggests that once the desegregation process moves ahead, communities are more receptive, further indicating that concerted Government action is needed to take integration forward. In particular, the Government could empower the network of regional inspectorates of education to do more with regard to segregation: first to recognise it, and then to work with local authorities to reverse the process and ensure equal access to quality education for all children.

5.1 School facilities and human resources

5.1.1 School infrastructure

There are no statistical data nationwide that would allow a systematic assessment of the state of infrastructure in schools with a high percentage of Roma students. The latter is affected by a number of factors, among which are not only the ethnicity of the students but also the location (urban versus rural, suburb versus centre), the socio-economic status of the parents, the relationship of the school management with the political institutions and personalities at the local and at the national level, its ability to solicit donations from private sources and the like. There have been several credible reports on the deplorable material conditions of the segregated Roma schools, of some special schools and of some boarding schools for children with behavioural challenges.

The 2001 OSF-Bulgaria report on Roma schools painted a grim picture of the material conditions in many segregated Roma schools. According to this report, they were by and large substandard – some of them lacked basic facilities such as blackboards and chalk; in more than 50 per cent of them windows were screened with plywood, rather than glass.²⁹¹ Since then the infrastructure and equipment in all the schools in Bulgaria have probably improved slightly, but reports have continued to reveal serious problems in that regard in all types of Roma schools. The 2003 IMIR report states that, according to information obtained from students in the schools where ethnic Turks and Roma are educated, there were only half as many specialised laboratories and study areas as there were in the schools of the Bulgarians. While 64 per cent of the schools of the Bulgarians had specialised laboratories in chemistry, the respective shares were 32 per cent for the Roma schools and 45 per cent for the Turks.²⁹² The same survey reported that 60 per cent of Bulgarian children had access to a computer against only 14 per cent of the Roma and 30 per cent of the Turkish students.²⁹³

The field research conducted in Veliko Turnovo in 2006 for this report indicates that only two out of the five schools with a prevailing number of Roma students have their own libraries, and that the number of volumes in these libraries is below the average for the municipality.²⁹⁴

The 2002 BHC survey on special schools reported harsh material conditions in a number of these institutions. According to its findings, in 40 per cent of them there were problems with the buildings that required urgent repairs, such as leaks from the roofs, and the heating, electricity and water supply systems. In several schools heating was provided through wood and coal stoves. The report revealed problems with the hygiene, lighting and the state of the walls and furniture in the residential facilities. In 80 per cent of the schools classrooms were equipped only with desks, blackboards and shelves. BHC researchers found a drastic shortage of teaching materials, including textbooks. Some subjects, such as music, were taught without textbooks at all, as there none had been published for this type of educational institution.²⁹⁵ Subsequent research by the State Agency of Child Protection (SACP) also found that the lack of textbooks and of teaching materials, as well as the old and non-existent textbooks, “is one of the major problems” of the special schools.²⁹⁶

The Roma segregated school in Vidin’s Nov Pat neighbourhood, for example, is located on a secondary street, surrounded by a large fence with three entrances – one is

²⁹¹ OSF-Sofia, *Roma Schools in Bulgaria – 2001*, pp. 10–11.

²⁹² IMIR, *Final Report on Minority Education*, p. 7.

²⁹³ IMIR, *Final Report on Minority Education*, p. 10. According to the survey, while most children from all ethnic backgrounds use computers outside the school, 80 per cent of the minority students want to have a computer education at school.

²⁹⁴ Case study Veliko Turnovo.

²⁹⁵ BHC, *Remedial Schools in Bulgaria*, pp. 15–16 and 18.

²⁹⁶ SACP, “Right to Education for Children with Special Educational Needs,” p. 53.

connected to the Health Centre, the Mayor's Office and the Police Department, while the other two are provided for the pupils and local residents, who often use the school yard to go directly to their houses. The three-storey segregated school resembles a prison-like building with gratings put in 20 years ago. No major repairs of the school have been done in recent years, although all mainstream schools in Vidin have had such renovation. There is no green grass, and nor are there any trees or bushes in the school yard. Desks are in poor condition, tables and chairs are broken, and the classrooms are dirty. There is central heating but no drinking water.²⁹⁷

There are no functioning laboratories or libraries. There are two computer rooms in the school as confirmed by the school director,²⁹⁸ one of which has 11 computers, donated by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2005, while the other computer room is in a process of installation. It is expected to have a total of eight computers, donated by Vidin Municipality, at the beginning of the 2005–2006 school year. There is also a computer in the art classroom. An internet hall with five computers is located in the school yard, created by the NGO “Free Youth Centre”, which is a project funded by the EU.²⁹⁹

The infrastructure of the Vidin mainstream schools is much better than that of the two segregated schools in the municipality. They have running water, indoor toilets, central heating and equipped laboratories and libraries. There are 40–50 computers on average in the schools, which makes one computer per every 10–15 children. The overall physical quality of the buildings and the furniture in the mainstream schools, on average, is also much better than that in the segregated schools.³⁰⁰

In contrast, the special school in Veliko Turnovo was completely renovated in August and September 2006. The school has been equipped with a modern computer laboratory, toilets and bathrooms, with 227,972 leva (€113,986) from the “Beautiful Bulgaria” Programme (a project of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy) and 56,993 leva (€28,497) from the Ministry of Education and Science.³⁰¹

The 2004 BHC research on former basic schools with enforced labour education (BSELE) focused specifically on the school infrastructure, technical and human resources in these typically Roma schools. Because most of them were established in the cities, access to infrastructure, technical and human resources were probably not as bad as was the case with the Roma schools in rural areas. Yet the BHC researchers found

²⁹⁷ Case study Vidin.

²⁹⁸ Interview with Nina Ivanova, principal of the Sofronii Vrachanski School, 26 September 2006, case study Vidin.

²⁹⁹ Case study Vidin.

³⁰⁰ Case study Vidin.

³⁰¹ Further details, in Bulgarian, available on the MES website at http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/opencms/top_menu/news/archiv2006-1/06-01-20_pu_vt.html (accessed on 20 February 2007).

striking situations of desolation and neglect, even in otherwise large and affluent urban communities. One such case was the situation with the Hristo Botev former BSELE in the Roma neighbourhood of Pobeda in Burgas. The BHC researcher who visited that school in May 2004 wrote the following:

The state of the school building was miserable from both outside and inside [...] The look from outside was wintry and in the middle of the school yard there was a dangerously crumbling building to which the municipal authorities did not want to pay any attention. The yard was additionally narrowed by a 3–4 metre-tall metal wall, built to prevent football players breaking the windows [...] From inside the plaster of all the walls and ceilings was peeling and there were huge sections where it was absent altogether; the linoleum cover of the floors was torn into pieces; the doors were distorted and did not close well and in some there were huge holes; here and there one can see broken windows and even the rooms for the staff were in a miserable condition [...] There were faeces throughout the floor in the lavatory and a stinking smell spread throughout the corridors and the nearby classrooms. One of the cleaning ladies said that the students relieve themselves even in the wash-basins placed in the corridors on each floor of the building.³⁰²

The BHC researchers found similar conditions in several other former BSELE.³⁰³ In some former BSELE, including the Dr. Peter Beron Lower Secondary School in Yambol and the SS. Cyril and Methodius Lower Secondary School in the village of Bluskovo, Varna region, material conditions were relatively good.

The BHC survey of the former BSELE also found that while some of these schools were equipped with computers (for the most part donations from charitable organisations), there were no schools where the computers were sufficient in number to be used meaningfully as educational tools. Thus among the best-equipped schools were the Naiden Gerov former BSELE in the large Roma neighbourhood of Stolipinovo in Plovdiv, which had 12 computers for 1,280 students, the Otec Paisii Lower Secondary School in Varna, which had five computers for 421 students, and the Hristo Botev Lower Secondary School in Lom, which had 13 computers for 596 students. Most former BSELE did not have any computers at all. In some the computers that they possessed were used only by the school administration.

Access to infrastructure and technical resources is also a serious problem in the boarding schools for children with behavioural challenges. The 2005 BHC survey revealed that “the state of repair of most buildings is very bad and they need

³⁰² BHC, *2004 Report on Former BSELE*.

³⁰³ These included the Georgi Sava Rakovski Lower Secondary School in Berkovitsa, the Dobri Voinikov Lower Secondary School in the village of Kamenar, near Varna, the Anton Strashimirov Lower Secondary School in Kazanluk, the Hristo Smirnenski Lower Secondary School in Nova Zagora and the Hristo Smirnenski Lower Secondary School in the village of Georgi Dobrevo, Haskovo region.

renovation”. The problems reported were ramshackle buildings, peeling plaster from the facades, dampness, broken joinery, leaking roofs and not working heating systems. In at least eight of these institutions the need for renovation, according to the BHC, was urgent.³⁰⁴ The researchers found the following in the social-pedagogical boarding school (SPBS) in the village of Pchelarovo:

SPBS-Pchelarovo is threatened with closure as it cannot comply with the requirements of the State Hygiene Inspectorate with regard to the buildings of the school and the hostel, which are in need of urgent repair. The material basis of the school is in very bad condition. There are no desks, chairs or even doors in the classrooms. In the dormitories the windows are broken. A project proposal was directed to the Ministry of Education and Science, but it was rejected.³⁰⁵

According to the BHC report, the teaching facilities in many of the schools for children with behavioural challenges were very basic: “the classrooms were most often furnished with very old blackboards, where the writing cannot be read, desks and chairs covered with scratches and without backs”.³⁰⁶ Many schools lacked textbooks and teaching materials, and the available ones were in a deplorable condition.

In conclusion, there appears to be a correlation between schools with a high proportion of Roma students, whether geographically segregated schools, special schools (with exceptions) or BSELE schools, and their material quality. Whether this is the result of neglect, low tax-based funding, or lack of lobbying on behalf of citizens, the impact on the quality of the learning experience cannot be denied.

5.1.2 Human resources

Due to the population decline in Bulgaria over the past decades and the constant reduction in the number of students in the school system, there have been strong employment pressures on the teachers in the Bulgarian schools, and in fact their number has declined as well. Thus the mass presence in the Roma schools of “irregular teachers”, teachers who did not have the necessary training, is less the case now than it was in the mid-1980s. The 2004 survey of the former BSELE found very few “irregular teachers” employed there: only six in the entire system. There was no former BSELE that employed more than one such teacher. The disciplines where these teachers were employed were diverse, including English language, music, sports and others. BHC research on the special schools and on the boarding schools for children with behavioural challenges did not find a serious problem with “irregular teachers” there either.

This is, however, just part of the problem with the shortage of qualified teachers in the Roma schools. Because of the difficult and unrewarding working conditions in these

³⁰⁴ BHC, *In the Name of the Institution*, p. 34–36.

³⁰⁵ BHC, *In the Name of the Institution*, pp. 34–35.

³⁰⁶ BHC, *In the Name of the Institution*, p. 57.

schools, poor material conditions and the lack of opportunities for private lessons, these schools attract teachers who are unable to find work in more competitive environments and who are not motivated for serious work.

However, the available research does not suggest that the staff turnover in the separate schools with a majority of Roma students is higher than in mainstream schools. Even for the most difficult of them, the special schools for children with behavioural challenges, the 2005 BHC report found very low staff turnover, despite the almost unanimous lack of satisfaction with the salaries and the working conditions.³⁰⁷ Again, this is due to the employment pressure on the teaching profession over the recent years, shrinking the job pool. The result is that teachers who are employed in special schools, and perhaps in BSELE, want to keep their jobs due to the difficulty of finding employment in other schools or other sectors. The reality is that many will resist structural changes in the education system as schools begin to close, and will lobby to keep schools open and to keep their jobs.

5.2 School results

There is no information nationwide that would allow a comparison of the examination results for exit/entry into critical points in the system between the national average and the average for Roma students, because there is no collection of disaggregated data. Furthermore, an expert has noted that since a national system for examination is absent, standards vary wildly. Many children may receive a certificate even where they have not attained basic literacy. Under such circumstances, any kind of evaluation of quality education between schools is extremely difficult.³⁰⁸

In May 2005 the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science, administered tests of Bulgarian language and mathematics on three groups of fourth-grade students: Roma students educated in segregated schools for four consecutive years, Roma students educated in integrated schools for four consecutive years and Bulgarian students educated in integrated schools. The tests had to also take into account the problem of non-attendance, mostly in the segregated Roma schools. All students educated in different settings who did not attend got a technical poor mark. The comparison between the results of the Roma students from segregated schools and Roma students from integrated classes in five cities is presented in Table 21.

³⁰⁷ BHC, *In the Name of the Institution*, p. 80.

³⁰⁸ OSI Roundtable, Sofia, June 2006.

Table 21: Test results for Roma students in segregated schools and integrated classes – results for five cities

			Average test results ³⁰⁹			
			Mathematics		Bulgarian language	
			Of those who took the test	After inclusion of technical poor marks	Of those who took the test	After inclusion of technical poor marks
Roma children only	In segregated schools	All	3.36	2.99	3.22	2.87
		Girls	3.39	–	3.37	–
		Boys	3.32	–	3.03	–
	In integrated classes	All	3.72	3.44	3.85	3.57
		Girls	3.84	–	4.13	–
		Boys	3.61	–	3.57	–
Difference 1 (between results for Roma children in integrated classes and those in segregated schools)			+ 0.36	+ 0.45	+ 0.63	+ 0.70
Ethnic Bulgarian children	In integrated classes	4.92	4.65	5.56	5.23	
Difference 2 (between Bulgarian and Roma students in integrated classes)			+ 1.20	+ 1.21	+ 1.71	+ 1.66

Source: BHC³¹⁰

The Roma students in segregated schools got the lowest average results. The difference between the Bulgarian and the Roma students in integrated schools, however, is even greater. The size of the samples did not allow for any application of a control over the results for socio-economic status, education of the parents and other factors affecting educational achievement beyond segregation. However, in Sliven, where the local desegregation project targets the poorest segments of the Roma ghetto, the Roma students in integrated schools scored better than Roma students in segregated schools. The results in Vidin were as shown below in Table 22.

³⁰⁹ The highest possible grade was six.³¹⁰ BHC, *Five Years Later*, pp. 28 and 33.

Table 22: Test results for Roma students in segregated schools and integrated classes – result for Vidin only

		Average test results			
		Mathematics		Bulgarian language	
		Of those who took the test	After inclusion of technical poor marks	Of those who took the test	After inclusion of technical poor marks
Roma children only	In segregated schools	2.83	2.45	2.65	2.30
	In integrated classes	3.94	3.55	4.56	4.05
Difference 1 (between results for Roma children in integrated classes and those in segregated schools)		+ 1.11	+ 1.10	+ 1.91	+ 1.75
Ethnic Bulgarian children in integrated classes	In integrated classes	5.02	4.78	5.70	5.40
Difference 2 (between Bulgarian and Roma students in integrated classes)		+ 1.08	+ 1.23	+ 1.14	+ 1.35

Source: BHC³¹¹

Here too, the results of the Roma students from integrated schools were significantly better than those of the Roma students from the segregated school. They were much better in Bulgarian language than in mathematics. Grade repetition for Roma pupils who take part in the desegregation programme, according to the NGO Organisation Drom, is extremely limited (ten Roma pupils).³¹²

Grade repetition in the Bulgarian education system is uncommon. The system does not encourage holding children back, because it reflects negatively on the overall evaluation of the teachers' performance, on the attractiveness of the school and on the drop-out rates. According to data from the National Statistical Institute, around 1.5 per cent of the students repeat a grade. The trends in grade repetition have been stable over the past five years.³¹³

Research conducted for this report in Nikolaevo revealed that grade repetition in this municipality was more common than nationwide statistics would suggest. According to data from the Education Department in Nikolaevo Municipality, around 100 Roma

³¹¹ BHC, *Five Years Later*, pp. 29–32.

³¹² Case study Vidin.

³¹³ NSI, *Education in Bulgaria – 2006*, p. 47.

pupils repeated the school year (around 17 per cent). No information has been provided for the 2006–2007 school year. The results for repeating students from the previous years are shown below in Table 23.

Table 23: Number of students repeating a grade (2003–2005)

Grade	Number of students	
	2003–2004	2004–2005
1	–	–
2	23	22
3	11	14
4	17	18
5	9	9
6	3	2
7	10	3
8	–	–
9	7	8
10	3	2
11	2	–
12	–	–

Source: Nikolaevo Municipality, Education Department, June 2006

According to the OSF-Sofia 2001 Roma Schools survey, around 0.3 per cent of Roma students took part in the national exam for admission to language and other specialised schools after the seventh and eighth grades.³¹⁴ There are, however, no statistics on their results. Research in Vidin indicates that no Roma pupils have taken part in national competitions in literature, mathematics and chemistry, but a small number of Roma pupils (28 altogether) have entered elite schools in Vidin, supported by the NGO Organisation Drom through extracurricular tutoring.³¹⁵

According to official data, the share of Roma population that is “illiterate” or has an incomplete elementary education aged 20 and over is 23.18 per cent.³¹⁶ Census data trends show that between 1992 and 2001 the share of “illiterate” Roma aged seven and

³¹⁴ OSF-Sofia, *Roma Schools in Bulgaria – 2001*, p. 10.

³¹⁵ Case study Vidin.

³¹⁶ See above Table 6.

over increased from 11.2 per cent to 14.9 per cent.³¹⁷ Some scholars suggest that functional illiteracy among Roma includes half of the community.³¹⁸ These figures apparently include also Roma who went to school but were unable to learn how to read and write or forgot how to do so later. Data on functional illiteracy in the fourth and in the eighth grade are not systematically collected in the Bulgarian education system. However, there are credible reports of functionally illiterate Roma students at all levels of the Bulgarian education system. The OSF-Sofia 2001 report on Roma Schools observes that “it is not uncommon for a fourth-grader [in a Roma school] to be illiterate.”³¹⁹

Data from the UNDP survey indicates that of people over 15 years of age, Roma lag behind the majority population in terms of literacy, with 88 per cent of Roma between the ages of 35 and 44 being literate as compared to 100 per cent of their majority peers. The figure drops dramatically for those over 45 years of age, with the data at 71 per cent for Roma and 91 per cent for the majority population.³²⁰

In segregated settings, there is evidence that literacy is far lower than it is in integrated settings. This is illustrated by material gathered at the local level for this report. The functional literacy of Roma children from Vidin Municipality, for example, who are outside the desegregation programme is below 30 per cent,³²¹ at least in part due to irregular attendance in segregated schools where their presence is not monitored appropriately. Another reason for the low literacy rate is the fact that about 50 per cent of school-age Roma children outside the desegregation programme (about 500 Roma children) are transferred to village schools: Makresh, Bukovetz, Novo Selo, Vrav or Boinica. These village schools educate the Roma and non-Roma children from several grades in one classroom, which disturbs the education process and inhibits skill development, since the teachers are not properly trained to handle such situations.

In the course of the 2004 BHC research on former BSELE the organisation came across a complaint from 2001 of Roma parents from the town of Lom, who claimed that their children had graduated from the Hristo Botev Lower Secondary School, which is 96 per cent Roma, and were still illiterate. In October 2001 the Regional Inspectorate of Education in Montana tested 77 fifth-grade students in the school and

³¹⁷ EUMAP, *Monitoring the EU Accession Process: Minority Protection, Bulgaria*, Budapest: OSI, 2001. Available at http://www.eumap.org/reports/2001/minority/sections/bulgaria/minority_bulgaria.pdf (accessed on 20 February 2007) (hereafter, EUMAP, *Minority Protection Bulgaria – 2001*), p. 90.

³¹⁸ Илона Томова, “Демографски процеси в големите етноконфесионални общности в България” (Demographic Processes in the Big Ethno-Religious Communities in Bulgaria), in Ivanov and Atanasov (eds.), *Demographic Development of the Republic of Bulgaria*, p. 162.

³¹⁹ OSF-Sofia, *Roma Schools in Bulgaria – 2001*, p. 10.

³²⁰ UNDP, *Vulnerable Groups*.

³²¹ The estimate is reported by Donka Panayotova, chair of the NGO Organisation Drom, 8 April 2006, Vidin.

found that 23 of them (30 per cent) were “completely illiterate”.³²² During the May 2004 visit to SS. Cyril and Methodius in Pazardzhik, a former BSELE, now a lower secondary school, the school director Tsvetana Vracheva told the BHC researcher that many Roma students come from the primary school illiterate and remain so to the eighth grade but get basic school diplomas nevertheless.³²³

According to directors of mainstream schools in Vidin, illiteracy among Roma children in the fourth and eighth grades is almost eliminated. The NGO Organisation Drom reported that only five eighth-grade Roma pupils from mainstream schools had to retake an exam after the end of the 2005–2006 school year. In fact, only two of them did not manage to pass the final exam and had to repeat the school year.³²⁴

The two types of special schools where Roma are overrepresented also contribute to the functional illiteracy in the Roma community. The 2005 BHC report on boarding schools for children with behavioural challenges revealed that the proportion of illiterate children there is higher than the national average.³²⁵ Many students in the special schools for children with intellectual disabilities also remain illiterate even on graduation.

There is no information available on Roma pupils’ achievement in the PISA and other tests administered in the Bulgarian education system.

5.3 Curricular standards

5.3.1 Special schools and classes

The national educational standards are regulated by Ordinance No. 2 of the Ministry of Education and Science on the Curriculum from 18 May 2000.³²⁶ According to these standards, the students at the end of the fourth grade are supposed to be able to do the following:

- Read fluently aloud and be able to show that they understand the basic meaning of the text;
- Read for themselves and show that they have understood the text;
- Write in Bulgarian with a knowledge of basic punctuation;
- Write a text on the basis of their own experience, describe an object and respond to a question on a theme relevant to their age;
- Plan and edit their own and other people’s texts.

³²² BHC, *2004 Report on Former BSELE*.

³²³ BHC, *2004 Report on Former BSELE*.

³²⁴ Case study Vidin.

³²⁵ BHC, *In the Name of the Institution*, p. 55.

³²⁶ MES, Ordinance No. 2 on the Curriculum from 18 May 2000, *Official Gazette*, No. 48, 13 June 2000, latest amendment from 18 July 2006.

No such requirements exist for the students in the remedial classes or special schools; the above standards can in principle apply to students in special schools, in which case they will be able to pass the respective level. Students who pass the exam may go on to the secondary school of their choice.

Curricula for the remedial classes and for the special schools in Bulgaria are the same. They differ from mainstream classes/schools in the possibility to obtain the respective educational degree, as well as in the length of the classes. However, they do not differ in the number of classes in the respective educational fields.³²⁷ The length of the classes in the special schools/remedial classes is five minutes less for the students in the third grade and above. Students enrolled in remedial classes are not able to obtain a certificate for completion of basic educational level (eighth grade) unless they pass an exam. Without a basic degree they are not able to enrol in high school and are highly unlikely to pass the entrance exam.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science standards, students in the first grade are required to take seven hours a week in Bulgarian language and literature, four hours a week in mathematics, and several hours a week in other subjects (such as music, painting and physical exercise), in total 806 hours per year. The number of hours for the students in the first grade in special schools/special classes is the same. The difference is that they are not allowed to take “obligatory elective subjects” but only “obligatory” and “free electives”. In effect, this results in special schools taking one hour a week more Bulgarian language and literature as an “obligatory” class (eight versus seven in the mainstream schools/classes). Many students in the mainstream classes compensate for this, however, by taking additional classes in Bulgarian language and literature as “obligatory electives”.

5.3.2 Segregated schools

There is abundant evidence that the teachers’ expectations with regard to pupils from segregated Roma schools are lower. The very fact that many of these students can pass from grade to grade and even graduate without being able to read and write is a clear indication of this leniency. Some school directors and chiefs at the Regional Inspectorates of Education openly recognised this problem. Thus in the course of the BHC visit to the SS. Cyril and Methodius former BSELE in the village of Ignatievo, Varna district, in May 2004, the director of the school recognised that the criteria for evaluation of the Roma students there are lower than normal, without regard to the quality of the teaching. In April 2004 officials at the Regional Inspectorate of Education in Stara Zagora admitted that the criteria for evaluation of the Roma children in one of the segregated schools of the city are lower than in the other schools.

³²⁷ Cf. MES Regulation, *Organisation and Management of the Activities in the School of General Education, Professional and Special Schools during the 2002–2003 Year*, Sofia: MES, 2002.

They justified this by the need to “make compromises” in order to keep the children in the school and to allow them to graduate.³²⁸

5.4 Classroom practice and pedagogy

The importance of the quality of the teaching and the learning process in education and school success cannot be denied; in efforts of equal access to quality education, including desegregation, this component must also be taken into consideration.³²⁹

The 2006 *National Programme for the Development of School Education and Pre-School Upbringing and Instruction*, although seemingly a step back from some commitments already undertaken by the Government, may be seen as a positive step forward towards raising the overall level of pedagogy and the teaching and learning process in Bulgaria. As one expert said, “The positive thing is that finally there is a strategy and an idea of how to do it.”³³⁰ To support the process, two new institutions were formed: the National Institute for the Training of School Managers, which offers professional development training, and the Centre for Control and Assessment of the Quality in Education, which develops assessment instruments in Bulgarian language and mathematics.

The timing for a move towards improving the overall quality of pedagogy in the system is probably overdue, as the majority of teachers in Bulgaria are still working in the old paradigm, that of frontal teaching with a passive learning style. Although some critics argue that such a style of teaching produces results, and that “real” learning takes place, others argue that the result is inequality in school achievement, which is obvious from the available statistics and data, and that those who hold on to old methodologies do not understand the new techniques, their benefits to all children, or how to practise them. “It is easier to work in the old way. If you want to use interactive methods, you have to think before the lesson – what to do, how to do it, should I use brainstorming, or separate them into small groups – it means making a lot of effort before the lesson, which is why they prefer to use those old methods.”³³¹

According to the same expert, even Bulgaria’s national institutes,³³² where teachers go to improve their qualifications, do not offer subjects such as how to use interactive methods in the classroom, or even what the term “interactive methods” means, and the like. Although there has been an improvement with pre-service and in-service institutions in Bulgaria in terms of providing teachers with exposure to courses dealing with tolerance, multicultural education, inter-cultural education, bilingual education,

³²⁸ BHC, *2004 Report on Former BSELE*. See also below at school inspections.

³²⁹ Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2005

³³⁰ Interview with Emil Buzov, pedagogical expert and director of the “Step-by-Step” Foundation, Bulgaria, on 30 January 2007.

³³¹ Interview with Emil Buzov, pedagogical expert and director of the “Step-by-Step” Foundation, Bulgaria, on 30 January 2007.

³³² In Sofia, Stara Zagora and Varna.

and so on, one of the drawbacks of this offer is the fact that their focus is on a lecture delivery, and based on theoretical knowledge, with little or no opportunity for teachers to implement in a practicum what they have been taught. Although it may seem as though institutions are opening up in a direction that embraces diversity and allows teachers exposure to such concepts, there is at the same time a gap between knowledge and practice, much as there is often a gap between policy documents and implementation of those policies. This remains a problem even with the new *National Programme*. As for the pedagogical practices, they presumably should be an integral part of the “supporting environment”. However, the Government has passed no regulations regarding the State educational standards in that regard. This is a weakness with regard to the whole education system: although official policy may require certain practice, it does not have a system or means to monitor or support its implementation. Therefore, the *status quo* remains in practice in schools, and few teachers actively implement new techniques.

The responsibility for training teachers in new techniques and, almost more importantly, in supporting them in the process of using and implementing those techniques, has remained primarily in the third sector. Although theoretically this could or should be the role of school inspectorates, in fact, they do not have the capacity to carry out this function. Most training that is covered by project funding, such as Phare, is targeted at teachers and schools, which leaves little room for other professionals in the education sector, such as inspectors, to update and improve their skills. Furthermore, bylaws inhibit the Government’s supporting the NGO sector to integrate it into its overall system for professional development. In the existing system, if a teacher receives a certificate for having participated in any NGO training, the certificate does not work towards achieving points to increase the teacher’s salary. Furthermore, the Government cannot financially support the third sector as a service provider in professional development. Opening up the professional development market in Bulgaria, which would allow for certificates obtained by NGO training to count towards salary increase, and for financial support of the third sector in the Government’s professional development framework, are important changes that the Government could implement to improve the quality of classroom teaching.

Opening up the market may help to reach more teachers to improve their skills. The total number of teachers who took part in in-service training courses in 2005 was 5,358, just over 6 per cent of primary and secondary school teachers for the 2005–2006 school year (see Tables 18 and 19). This is too few. Currently, according to a pedagogical expert, what could be considered good, high-quality practice in schools is uneven, at best. Good practice does exist, but only in those schools where teachers and directors are very highly motivated, where they have done their best to implement what they have learned in training, despite the lack of any infrastructure for ongoing and sustained mentoring and support. The Vela Blagoeva School in Veliko Turnovo has been mentioned as such a school, and another is in Kardjali, the P. R. Slaveykov School, an ethnically mixed school – Turkish, Roma and Bulgarian – which was “a well working, ‘effectiveness school’ in a multi-ethnic environment, with well-prepared

teachers, highly motivated teachers, and working as a real team with mixed classes, although this region is complicated.”³³³ The practices that these examples put in place should be analysed to give other schools a framework in which to make their own improvements.

5.5 School–community relations

The education system, centralised as it is, allows only a very limited role for the parents’ boards. The law does not oblige the schools and the pre-schools to establish parents’ boards. Municipal schools can form parents’ boards as non-governmental organisations. However, they do not have governing functions. The parents’ boards do not have any role in the human resources and the curriculum policy. Their functions, according to the law, are limited to the following:

- Ensuring additional funding and logistical support for curricular and extracurricular activities and school/pre-school infrastructure;
- Offering help in the realisation of school/pre-school policies, such as ensuring the attendance of the students or involvement of the parents in the extracurricular activities;
- Addressing the competent bodies in cases of irregularities.³³⁴

Roma parents take part in some parents’ boards, predominantly in the segregated schools. Roma parents are involved in the parents’ boards also in some integrated schools. The practice of the Bulgarian education system at all levels allows for a very limited involvement, if any, of the parents in the pedagogical practice of a school. The participation of Roma parents in the school boards is token at best.

Case study research conducted for this report in 2006 identifies some good practices in this regard; these examples could be models for more active Government policy in supporting a cooperative relationship between Roma parents and the school. In Vidin, Roma parents are involved in parents’ meetings.³³⁵ School celebrations and competitions among children also attract both Roma and non-Roma parents. The integrated mainstream schools and the segregated school in Vidin included Roma parents in their school boards.³³⁶

In Veliko Turnovo, the schools that have introduced Roma folklore classes have achieved a comparatively high level of Roma parental involvement. A very positive example in this direction is the school of Vodoley, where the Roma parents are

³³³ Interview with Emil Buzov, pedagogical expert and director of the “Step-by-Step” Foundation, Bulgaria, on 30 January 2007.

³³⁴ *National Education Act*, Art. 46.

³³⁵ Case study Vidin.

³³⁶ Case study Vidin.

involved also in the organisation of the educational process and classes. Several joint children-parents lessons have been organised by the primary teacher, Mrs. Diana Dimitrova. Furthermore, the parents actively participate and financially support all out-of-school activities. Parents of Roma pupils in the first grade participated also in the third edition of the Children Roma Festival “Open Heart” organised in late May by the Amalipe Centre and Veliko Turnovo Municipality in Veliko Turnovo. Furthermore, in the 2004–2005 school year several out-of-class activities were organised where parents taught the children different skills, such as cooking, playing musical instruments and the like.³³⁷

5.6 Discriminatory attitudes

Government programmes for dismantling segregation fail because of insufficient political will, which is itself a consequence of the widespread negative prejudices and social distances towards Roma in Bulgarian society. Table 24 below presents the results of four surveys, conducted between 1992 and 2005, on the attitudes of the ethnic Bulgarians towards Roma.³³⁸ These surveys reveal that over a period of 13 years social distances have remained very high and do not show any positive dynamics, unlike the case of the Bulgarian Turks, where there have been some positive changes.

Table 24: Attitudes to social distance of Bulgarians towards Roma (1992–2005)

The Statement “Would you agree to:”	Proportion of respondents disagreeing with the statement (per cent)			
	1992	1994	1997	2005
Maintain friendship with Roma	64	70	72	67
Be in the same neighbourhood with Roma	63	60	69	63
Work in the same workplace with Roma	39	49	36	52
Be in one country with Roma	34	28	38	27

Source: Gallup International/BHC³³⁹

The Gallup International/BHC survey from May 2005, just like the previous surveys, focused among other things also on the attitudes of the Bulgarians towards the integrated schooling of their children, together with Roma children. Table 25 below

³³⁷ Case study Vidin.

³³⁸ For more on the dynamics in the perception of ethnic minorities in Bulgaria and in some other Balkan countries, see Krassimir Kanev, “Changing Attitudes towards the Ethnic Minorities in Bulgaria and the Balkans 1992–97,” in Thanasis Sfikas and Christopher Williams (eds.), *Ethnicity and Nationalism in East Central Europe and the Balkans*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.

³³⁹ Gallup International/BHC, *Bulgarians and Roma: Interethnic Attitudes, Social Distances and Value Orientations*.

shows some of the results, as well as the dynamics since 1992 in response to one of the questions.

Table 25: Attitudes of Bulgarians towards educational integration (1992–2005)

The Statement “Would you let your child/grandchild study in a class where:”	Proportion of respondents disagreeing with the statement (per cent)			
	1992	1994	1997	2005
There are several Roma	42	38	36	27
Half the class are Roma	86	74	82	77
More than half are Roma	90	82	88	86

Source: Gallup International/BHC³⁴⁰

The above data reveal a rather low level of acceptance of Roma children in an integrated educational environment, but at the same time indicate some positive dynamics, especially since 1997. They also partly explain the Government failures to implement school desegregation programmes, despite commitments. An expert has noted that children participating in integration programmes may experience a high level of stress, which can lead to a decline in performance, or even to dropping out.³⁴¹

The attitudes of Roma towards integrated schooling are much more positive. The May 2005 Gallup International/BHC survey showed that 84 per cent of Roma accept the idea of integrated education, 12 per cent were uncertain and only 4 per cent objected. Only 2.3 per cent of the Roma surveyed believed that the [segregated] “neighbourhood schools” are better than the mainstream schools. 30 per cent believed that they are worse and 50 per cent found them as good as the mainstream schools.³⁴²

Local-level research in Vidin indicates that school directors generally have a positive attitude about Roma children when asked whether they should study with non-Roma children. Some are very supportive, stating “The children are all equal. Diversity is also more effective and necessary for development”³⁴³ and “All are Bulgarians and they should all go through one and the same programme”,³⁴⁴ while others are more reserved, suggesting that “Roma children should study with non-Roma, but in limited numbers,

³⁴⁰ Gallup International/BHC, *Bulgarians and Roma: Interethnic Attitudes, Social Distances and Value Orientations*.

³⁴¹ OSI Roundtable, Sofia, June 2006.

³⁴² BHC, *Five Years Later*, pp. 53–54.

³⁴³ Interview with Ventsislav Stanev, principal of the Tsar Simeon Veliki Upper Secondary School, 10 March 2006, Vidin.

³⁴⁴ Interview with Silvia Pradoeva, deputy principal of the Mathematical Upper Secondary School, 9 March 2006, Vidin.

in order to be more effective in the integration process”.³⁴⁵ However, they all acknowledge the positive impact of the desegregation initiative on mainstream society and the Roma Community and recognise that there is no other local initiative that drives forward the desegregation process of Roma education in Vidin Municipality except that of the NGO Organisation Drom.

Organisation Drom has acted as a partner to all upper secondary schools in Vidin since 2000. The leader of the desegregation process, Mrs. Donka Panayotova, the chair of Organisation Drom, confirmed that there is public support for desegregation in Vidin, which is strong and irreversible, despite the appearance of the nationalistic party “ATAKA” during the last parliamentary elections from June 2005.³⁴⁶ The public support for desegregation is explicit insofar as there are no internal conflicts initiated by parents or citizens. However, public support is undermined by governmental institutions that continue to support the existence of segregated schools (see section 5.7)

Interviews with local journalists emphasised the point that they do not support segregation of the Roma children in education, because of the low quality of education of segregated schools and the separation of the children, which does not offer an opportunity for Roma children to compare their knowledge with their non-Roma peers.³⁴⁷ Furthermore, the journalists agreed that there is a high number of Roma children in the special school in Vidin because of the need for the school to fill up their classes and receive the necessary State subsidies. According to these local residents, it is most important that the Roma children in integrated schools are treated equally, as that would guarantee the success of their adaptation. The journalists support the desegregation efforts in Vidin, and they confirm that the NGO Organisation Drom is the leader of that process that has made such an important contribution.³⁴⁸

Roma parents of children that are enrolled in the desegregation programme in Vidin are highly satisfied with their children’s performance at school. Some of them say the following:

I am very happy about the mainstream school and the teachers, because the segregated school in the Roma neighbourhood is not that good. I am satisfied because of several things, like the light meals that are offered and all the rest [...] the attitude towards my child. I cannot say anything negative about the new school in town, and I am sure that my child will continue

³⁴⁵ Interview with A. Gerasimov, principal of the Otec Paisii Lower Secondary School, 7 March 2006, Vidin.

³⁴⁶ This political party, which entered Parliament in June 2005, openly instigates hatred against Roma and other ethnic and religious minorities.

³⁴⁷ Interview with Valeri Borisov, Bulgarian Telegraph Agency reporter in Vidin, 14 March, Vidin, and Anna Lozanova, editor-in-chief of TV “Vidin” and reporter of the national channel bTV.

³⁴⁸ Case study Vidin.

education because of the special attitude, and I have also noted that the non-Roma children are friends and they play with my child.³⁴⁹

Some non-Roma parents find it natural that their children study together with Roma children:

I am highly satisfied with the education of my child. I have selected the school and the choreography class because my child loves to dance. I am very positive about the Roma children and I do not think that there should be a different attitude towards them. I know that the class teacher of my child is a psychologist and she does not treat the Roma children differently. I have noticed that the relationship between Roma and non-Roma children at school is in good shape. I do not think that there are any problems, and for instance my daughter has Roma girlfriends from school.³⁵⁰

Interviews with Roma children also show the positive attitude towards the integrated school environment and the successful integration. Tsvetan, who studies at the Tsar Simeon Veliki Upper Secondary School, emphasises the following points:

I study in an elite school where the teachers are very attentive and respect us. I do not like the obsolete equipment in the school so much. I have been praised several times in physical training classes and I do not like to study only with Roma children because I cannot learn anything new from them. I have non-Roma friends and if I were a school director I would change the interior of the school.³⁵¹

Other Roma pupils, such as the eighth-grader Emil, confirms also that the teachers are very good and he could not find any reasons to dislike the school.³⁵² He noted that he was praised at school for his excellent grades and he does not want to study only with Roma children in the segregated school. Margarita, who is in the seventh grade in an integrated school, responded thus:

I like the school because of the quality education, but I do not like some children in my class who are not disciplined enough. I have been praised by my teacher because I was good in the final test. I have never been insulted. If I were a school principal I would introduce discipline, computers and more foreign language studying.³⁵³

³⁴⁹ Interview with Milka Nikolova, a Roma parent of a first-grader at the Otec Paisii Lower Secondary School, 10 March 2006, Vidin.

³⁵⁰ Interview with Ivanka Kirilova Stoyanova, parent of a non-Roma child at the SS. Cyril and Methodius Upper Secondary School.

³⁵¹ Interview with Tsvetan Russinov (Roma pupil), eighth-grader at the Tsar Simeon Veliki Upper Secondary School, 15 March 2006, Vidin.

³⁵² Interview with Emil Petrov Stefanov (Roma pupil), eighth-grader at the Tsar Simeon Veliki Upper Secondary School, 15 March 2006, Vidin.

³⁵³ Interview with Margarita Anguelova, seventh-grader from the Tsar Simeon Veliki Upper Secondary School, 16 March 2006, Vidin.

At the same time, non-Roma children are also positive about their Roma classmates, as Maria shared in an interview:

I have good teachers and I like my classmates. I like the Roma children at school and I would like to study with them – but not only with them but also with children from other ethnic groups. I have two Roma classmates with whom I talk and we respect each other. We play together. There are Roma children from my school who are my friends too. If I had a golden fish [a figure in Russian and Bulgarian folk tales, who grants wishes to those who catch him] my three wishes would be that the children always play and never quarrel, that the children respect each other and they do not steal. In addition to that, I would always like to stay with my schoolteacher, my class and to stay in this school.³⁵⁴

5.7 School inspections

Regional Inspectorates of Education (RIE) are territorial administrative bodies under the competence of the Ministry of Education and Science.³⁵⁵ Their structure and functions are regulated by a special regulation, issued by the Ministry.³⁵⁶ They are based in each of the 28 regions of the country and in 2005 had a total staff of 740.³⁵⁷ Their main function is to coordinate the fulfilment of the State educational standards in the pre-schools, schools and educational support institutions on the territory of the region.³⁵⁸ Each Regional Inspectorate of Education has two divisions: administrative and inspection. Inspections to the schools are carried out by the inspection division.

Regional Inspectorates of Education carry out two types of inspections: planned and not planned.³⁵⁹ Planned inspections are based on a yearly schedule developed by the Ministry of Education and Science. The plan envisages comprehensive, thematic and current inspections. All the schools, including the segregated Roma schools, may become targets of each one of these inspections. There is no public information on the frequency of the inspections and the schools visited during the year that would allow a comparison between segregated Roma schools and mainstream schools.

Inspectors are empowered to evaluate all the problems related to the fulfilment of the State educational standards by the school. They concentrate their inspections on the issues that are more or less clearly spelled out in the law. The inspections can result in

³⁵⁴ Interview with Maria Ilieva Boyanova (non-Roma), fourth-grader in the Otec Paisii Lower Secondary School, 13 March 2006.

³⁵⁵ *National Education Act*, Art. 35, para. 2.

³⁵⁶ MES, Regulation on the Structure and Activities of the Regional Inspectorates of Education, *Official Gazette*, No. 61, 8 July 2003, latest amendment from 31 May 2005 (hereafter, *Regulation on the Structure and Activities of the Regional Inspectorates of Education*).

³⁵⁷ *Regulation on the Structure and Activities of the Regional Inspectorates of Education*, Art. 6, para. 1.

³⁵⁸ *Regulation on the Structure and Activities of the Regional Inspectorates of Education*, Art. 11.

³⁵⁹ *Regulation on the Structure and Activities of the Regional Inspectorates of Education*, Art. 12 and 19.

obligatory prescriptions.³⁶⁰ They are issued by the head of the Regional Inspectorate of Education through an order. The order prescribes deadlines for the measures that are to be taken. The results of the inspection, as well as the non-fulfilment of the prescribed measures, can become a basis for disciplinary sanctions envisaged by the Labour Code, including dismissals.

As there are no provisions that outlaw geographical segregation, the existence of the special schools and disproportional placement of Roma children in them, this would normally fall outside the scope of the scrutiny of the inspections. The inspectors tend to take a permissive view of the situation of the Roma schools in any case,³⁶¹ so the chances that they might deal with structural segregation, or the existence of *de facto* segregated Roma schools, are close to zero. In fact, the research of the BHC on former BSELE revealed a striking leniency on the part of the Regional Inspectorates of Education towards the Roma schools. By and large BHC researchers found that despite serious problems the evaluations from the inspections were positive.³⁶²

Research in Vidin confirms discrepancies in the regularity of visits to Roma schools; according to an expert, “There is a difference in the number of visits of the Roma segregated school as compared to the mainstream schools in town, because it is often the case that the Roma segregated school is not visited at all.”³⁶³

During the 2005–2006 school year, the Roma segregated school in Vidin was inspected by the Regional Inspectorate of Education in February 2006, and that body reached certain conclusions for the education process, discussed in an interview with Donka Panayotova, the chair of Organisation Drom:

On 23 February 2006 I was present for the so-called “Day of open doors”, organised by the RIE at the Roma segregated school. The RIE confirmed that they have prepared a healthy plan for the school and the RIE experts organised two lessons (one in Bulgarian literature and one in mathematics), after which we were all invited to a roundtable. Schoolteachers from the Vidin mainstream schools were also present. An expert from the Ministry of Education and Science, responsible for the Vidin region, took part in the meetings too. The representative of the Ministry emphasised the fact that according to the plan for the new school year the Ministry of Education and Science has decided to open a new specialised class for woodworking in the fifth grade, and that this is great for the children. I find this quite disturbing,

³⁶⁰ *Regulation on the Structure and Activities of the Regional Inspectorates of Education*, Art. 18.

³⁶¹ BHC, *2004 Report on Former BSELE*.

³⁶² BHC, *2004 Report on Former BSELE*.

³⁶³ Expert at the Education Department, Vidin Municipality, who wishes to remain anonymous, 29 January 2006, Vidin.

especially when considering that a desegregation process for Roma children to study together with their non-Roma peers started six years ago.³⁶⁴

This additional class suggests that RIE-Vidin continues to support segregated schooling for Roma children. The last complex examination of the segregated school in Vidin dates back to 2003 and neither the RIE nor the segregated school principal has allowed access to the protocol of this examination, although it is a public document.³⁶⁵

OSI research on the right of people with intellectual disabilities to education and employment in Bulgaria also revealed that despite the serious problems in the special schools they were not paid sufficient attention by the Regional Inspectorates of Education. Inspectors visit them seldom and they do not have the relevant qualification to carry out meaningful inspections.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁴ Expert at the Education Department, Vidin Municipality, who wishes to remain anonymous, 29 January 2006, Vidin.

³⁶⁵ Case study Vidin.

³⁶⁶ EUMAP, *Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities – Bulgaria*, p. 57.

ANNEX 1. ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

A1.1 Structure and organisation

Traditionally, the education system in Bulgaria played an important role in nation-building and is rather centralised and ethnocentric in content. Before 1944, minority children (with the exception of Roma) had their own private minority schools. The major area of Government educational policy is “national education” or “school education”, which includes basic and secondary education. It is generally regulated by the National Education Act 1991; it does not include tertiary education, which is regulated by the Law on Higher Education.³⁶⁷ In terms of educational degrees, school education is basic and secondary; in terms of the content, it is general and professional.³⁶⁸ This structure is further elaborated upon in the Law for the Degree of Education, the General Education Minimum, and the Education Plan (hereafter, the Law for the Degree of Education). According to this law, the basic degree comprises two phases: the primary, including the period from the first to the fourth grade, and the lower secondary, including the period from the fifth to the eighth grade. Secondary education includes only one phase from the ninth to the twelfth grade.³⁶⁹ The Ministry of Education and Science may change the number of years spent in the different phases by ordinance.³⁷⁰

The National Education Act provides for compulsory education up to 16 years of age³⁷¹ and does not provide for a compulsory degree of education, meaning that it is not obligatory to receive a diploma. Under the Constitution, basic and secondary education in State and municipal schools is free of charge.³⁷² However, the Ministry of Education and Science may set fees for any activities outside the State educational requirements, for professional education after the secondary degree and for competitive exams.³⁷³ The State pays for transport to school for students up to 16 years of age who are educated in all schools with the exception of special, sports and art schools outside their places of residence.³⁷⁴

³⁶⁷ Tertiary education is also an area of governmental policy, although to a much lesser degree.

³⁶⁸ *National Education Act*, Art. 22, para. 2.

³⁶⁹ *Law for the Degree of Education, the General Education Minimum, and the Education Plan*, Art. 3, para. 3 and 4.

³⁷⁰ In professional, sports and special education, as well as in all the forms of education that are different from the day form. *Law for the Degree of Education, the General Education Minimum, and the Education Plan*, Art. 4.

³⁷¹ *National Education Act*, Art. 7, para. 1.

³⁷² *Constitution*, Art. 53, para. 3.

³⁷³ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 5.

³⁷⁴ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 34, para. 7.

According to the National Education Act, children may start their school education by enrolling in the first grade if they will turn seven years old during the school year. If parents or guardians consider that their children are mature enough physically and psychologically, they may enrol them in the first grade at six.³⁷⁵ Starting in the 2003–2004 school year, with the amendments of the National Education Act, the Government began to cover the cost of one “preparatory” year, often referred to as “zero year”, before the first grade. To complete this requirement the children may be enrolled in pre-schools or schools,³⁷⁶ according to the parents’ choice. Completion of the “preparatory” year is compulsory,³⁷⁷ and parents are exempted from paying fees to the pre-schools or the schools.

There are three types of schools in Bulgaria: State, municipal and private. All municipal and State schools and pre-schools are juridical persons.³⁷⁸ All State schools and pre-schools are opened, transformed and closed by a decree of the Ministry of Education and Science. The Ministry also opens, transforms and closes municipal schools, but on the proposal of the respective municipal council.³⁷⁹

All municipal pre-schools are opened, transformed and closed by the municipal mayors following a decision of the municipal councils.³⁸⁰

The largest network is that of the municipal schools. State schools are governed by a director, who is appointed by the Minister of Education and Science. Municipal schools are governed by a director, who is appointed by the Chief of the Regional Inspectorate of Education of the Ministry of Education and Science.³⁸¹ Private schools are governed by boards, which appoint their directors. There is no fixed term for their appointment.

The bulk of the Bulgarian education system is composed of the “schools of general education”, which are for the most part the municipal public schools, including those offering secondary degrees. In addition, several options for vocational education are available for the students from the lower secondary and secondary education. These include professional, art and sports schools. The decision whether a child will attend a technical school or a general education school is in general made between the seventh and the eighth grade, although some schools offer technical curricula from the fifth or

³⁷⁵ *National Education Act*, Art. 7, para. 2.

³⁷⁶ *National Education Act*, Art. 20.

³⁷⁷ *National Education Act*, Art. 20a, para. 1; *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 6, para. 4. All children of a certain age must be enrolled. There are administrative sanctions, fines imposed by the mayor, but they are not enforced for poor parents who do not enrol their children.

³⁷⁸ *National Education Act*, Art. 10, para. 4.

³⁷⁹ *National Education Act*, Art. 10, para. 5.

³⁸⁰ *National Education Act*, Art. 10, para. 6.

³⁸¹ *National Education Act*, Art. 37.

sixth grade. A separate category, although in theory mostly part of the schools of general education, are those schools that are popularly considered to be “elite” and regulate entry through competitive examinations.³⁸² Since the mid-1990s a system of private “elite” schools has begun to develop in Bulgaria; at present these enrol a very limited number of students (less than 0.7 per cent of the entire student body in the 2004–2005 school year). “Special schools” (a total of 127 in the 2004–2005 school year), all of which enrol students from the first grade, are administratively separate. They include schools for children with intellectual disabilities, schools for children with behavioural challenges and schools for children with some physical disabilities.

A1.2 Legal roles and decision-making

The major role of the Ministry of Education and Science is to oversee the fulfilment of the State educational requirements by all the schools, whether State, municipal or private, that offer educational degrees. State educational requirements are set on the basis of numerous laws, Government decrees and ordinances of the Ministry of Education and Science and other ministries. Article 16 of the National Education Act determines their scope. The latter includes a variety of standards related to the following:

- The educational degrees;
- The curriculum in all types of schools that offer educational degrees;
- The curriculum in the special schools;
- The evaluation system;
- The school textbooks and educational materials;
- Extracurricular activities;
- The documentation that is to be maintained in the entire system;
- Teacher qualification;
- Work conditions and salaries of the teachers;
- School infrastructure;
- Costs per pupil in the State and municipal schools and pre-schools;
- Health care in the system;
- Scientific, informational and library support;
- School inspections.³⁸³

³⁸² At present the procedure for entry exams to such schools is regulated by Ordinance No. 11 of the Ministry of Education and Science for the Enrolment of Students in the State and in the Municipal Schools from 28 March 2005, *Official Gazette*, No. 29, 5 April 2005, amended from 8 November 2005.

³⁸³ *National Education Act*, Art. 16.

The State educational requirements serve as the basis of the work of the Regional Inspectorates of Education – the local administrations of the Ministry that are supposed to exercise management and control over the system of the national education on the territory of each of the 28 regions of Bulgaria. There is one inspectorate per region, but with different staff depending on population and the number of schools. They oversee the special schools as well.

Much of the finances of the education system at the municipal level come from the State. The municipal governments are supposed to ensure and to oversee the maintenance of school buildings and pre-schools, including their periodic renovation, as well as to contribute and to control the costs per pupil and some of the teacher and other staff salaries in the municipal schools and pre-schools.³⁸⁴

The schools in Bulgaria have a rather limited autonomy in determining the curriculum. Much of the latter constitutes State educational requirements, determined, according to the law, by ordinances of the Ministry of Education and Science.³⁸⁵ State educational requirements form the obligatory part of every school curriculum. Outside the scope of the obligatory part of the curriculum, schools may decide to include additional elements within their curriculum, according to the needs of the students and the available resources; these elective subjects must also be approved by the municipal education authorities.

The human resources policy in the education system, including that implemented at the municipal level, is regulated by the National Education Act and the Rules and Regulations for its Application. It is implemented by the Regional Inspectorates of Education, the municipal mayors and the school directors.³⁸⁶ The structure of accountability follows the management structure. The Ministry of Education and Science appoints the directors of all State schools and pre-schools.³⁸⁷ The chiefs of the Regional Inspectorates of Education of the Ministry of Education and Science appoint the directors of municipal schools.³⁸⁸ The municipal mayors appoint the directors of the municipal pre-schools.³⁸⁹ The school and pre-school directors appoint the staff in schools and pre-schools.³⁹⁰ They have some flexibility in that regard, depending on the available school budget. One part of the latter is the budget for activities delegated by the State that comes as a subsidy from the State budget, to pay teachers' salaries, for example. However, the positions for which the State pays are strictly determined by laws and sub-legal acts. The municipality raises the second part of the school budget

³⁸⁴ *National Education Act*, Art. 36, para. 1, pt. 3 and 4.

³⁸⁵ *National Education Act*, Art. 17, pt. 4. At present there are several dozen such ordinances in force.

³⁸⁶ See more on this mechanism in section A1.4.

³⁸⁷ *National Education Act*, Art. 37, para. 3.

³⁸⁸ *National Education Act*, Art. 37, para. 4.

³⁸⁹ *National Education Act*, Art. 37, para. 5.

³⁹⁰ *National Education Act*, Art. 40, para. 2.

and it allows the director the authority to create or appoint positions (such as after-class educator, school mediator, or school guard), according to the budget that the director negotiates with the municipal government. All salaries of pedagogical staff are determined by ordinances of the Ministry of Education and Science, even when the positions are paid through the municipal budget. This rigid system has recently been widely criticised by local and international observers.³⁹¹

A1.3 Administrative structures dealing with Roma education at the Ministry of Education and Science

The last Structural Regulation of the Ministry of Education and Science³⁹² establishes 15 Directorates within the specialised administration of the Ministry. Of these, two have direct and specific responsibilities related to Roma education: “Educational Environment and Educational Integration” and “Policies in General Education”. According to the regulation, the “Educational Environment and Educational Integration” directorate has a number of responsibilities, which include, *inter alia*, the following:

- Organisation and support of the educational integration of children and students with special educational needs;
- Support of educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities;
- Support of educational integration of migrant children and students.³⁹³

Within this directorate there is a department “Integration through Inter-Cultural Education and Upbringing”, which focuses its work directly on the educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities, predominantly on Roma. This department has an official staff of five experts, but only two are working there at present. One of the experts is Roma.

The “Policies in General Education” directorate is involved in the creation of educational programmes, plans and forms of education, as well of the testing methodologies. It is tasked with developing a national programme for prevention of school drop-out.³⁹⁴ This

³⁹¹ World Bank, *Bulgaria – Education and Skills for the Knowledge Economy*, 2005, p. 9, available at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTBULGARIA/Resources/EducationPolicyNote_EN.pdf (accessed on 20 February 2007); Ministry of Finance, *Review of the Public Spending: Education – State, Problems and Possibilities*, discussion paper available at <http://www.minfin.government.bg/docs/EDU%20report%2020041.pdf> (accessed on 20 February 2007) (hereafter, Ministry of Finance, *Review of the Public Spending: Education – State, Problems and Possibilities*), p. 68.

³⁹² Council of Ministers, Decree No. 148 from 19 June 2006 on the adoption of Structural Regulation of the Ministry of Education and Science, *Official Gazette*, No. 52, 27 June 2006 (hereafter, *Structural Regulation of MES*).

³⁹³ Structural Regulation of MES, Art. 42.

³⁹⁴ Structural Regulation of MES, Art. 39.

directorates employ one expert with the specific responsibilities of developing education in Romanes as a mother tongue.

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for administering also the Centre for Educational Integration of the Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities.³⁹⁵ At present the Centre has six employees, and operates with a rather modest budget of 500,000 leva (€250,000), envisaged as matching funds that it is supposed to solicit from international and local donors. However, as no donations have yet been secured, the Centre has not started activities in earnest.

A1.4 School funding

The share of education from the GDP in Bulgaria over the last five years was 4 per cent in 2001, rose to 4.2 per cent in 2002, rose again to 4.4 per cent in 2003, was 4.3 per cent in 2004 and was 4.3 per cent in the projected 2005 budget.³⁹⁶ This share is less than the average share for the OECD countries (5.6 per cent for 2004).³⁹⁷

Municipal schools are financed through the municipal budgets, which include some funding from the State budget for “delegated activities”. These activities include salaries for school and pre-school teachers and “material maintenance”.³⁹⁸ State schools in Bulgaria are financed from the State budget directly as parts of the budgets of the ministries that operate State schools.³⁹⁹ Each municipal government has a department responsible for education. It has some role in overseeing the distribution of money, but the major role is played by the financial department.

Municipalities are obliged by law to ensure finances for school and pre-school infrastructure maintenance, as well as to contribute to some of the salaries of the teachers in the schools and pre-schools. These are ensured through the local tax-based financing, which contributes to the financing from the State budget. As the municipalities in Bulgaria differ in their abilities to solicit local funds, because of

³⁹⁵ See section 3.3.

³⁹⁶ Sources: Ministry of Finance, *Review of the Public Spending: Education – State, Problems and Possibilities*, p. 84, and Letter of the Ministry of Finance to the BHC, May 2006 (website accessed on 16 January 2006).

³⁹⁷ Ministry of Finance, *Review of the Public Spending: Education – State, Problems and Possibilities*, p. 85.

³⁹⁸ See below. The concept of “material maintenance” as applied to the State and municipal educational institutions is clarified by the Council of Ministers’ Ordinance for the State Educational Requirement for the One-Year Maintenance of Children and Students in the State and Municipal Pre-Schools, Schools and Service Units from 19 August 2004, *Official Gazette*, No. 76, 31 August 2004. According to this ordinance, “the standard for maintenance of one student in the State and municipal schools of general education ensures the means for the creation of conditions for education of the student and for self-preparation” (Art. 4. pt. 2).

³⁹⁹ These include the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

regional disparities in economic development, the shares of the local tax-based financing for municipal education are different in the different municipalities. At the national level the share of the local resources in the total financing per school over the past five years was as follows:

Table A1: Municipal-level education funding (2001–2005)

Year	Local level education funding as a share of total funding per school, average across all municipalities (per cent)
2001	54.7
2002	57.8
2003	56.6
2004	58
2005 (planned)	51.8

Source: Ministry of Finance⁴⁰⁰

The local finances go predominantly towards maintaining the infrastructure of the schools and pre-schools and for financing the pre-schools. Except for State budget funding for one obligatory pre-school year (where it takes place in kindergartens), all other expenses of the pre-schools are covered by the municipality.

The State budget finances, through the municipal budgets, all the expenses of the State schools, including teachers' salaries, school maintenance and utilities, texts, supplementary materials and supplies, as well as the meals and other expenses of boarding schools. The State budget also finances part of the expenses of the municipal schools. Every year this share is determined by a decision of the Council of Ministers for the standards of financing of activities in the municipalities delegated by the State. This financial contribution is based on standards for the number of personnel and standards for "material maintenance". According to Decision No. 21 from 19 January 2006, which sets the standards for 2006, the standard for the number of personnel for students between the first and the eighth grade in the municipal schools at 15 students per classroom was 0.152, with an increase of 0.0074 for each student above that number. The standard for "material maintenance" was 146.50 levs per pupil (€73.25) with an additional 14 levs (€7) if the school is heated with liquid fuel, and a yearly lump sum of 1,820 levs (€910) for schools with fewer than 100 students. The standard for the number of personnel for pre-schools was 0.26 per pupil with an additional 0.065 for the one-year obligatory municipal pre-school. The standard for the "material maintenance" on a per-pupil basis for the one-year obligatory municipal pre-school was

⁴⁰⁰ Letter of the Ministry of Finance to the BHC, May 2006.

169.40 levs (€86.90).⁴⁰¹ Similar standards are set for the different types of special schools, orphanages, social care institutions and other activities “delegated” by the State to the municipalities.

On this basis each year the Law for the State Budget allocates funds for delegated State activities to the municipalities on the basis of certain “natural indicators”. In the Law for the State Budget of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2006 these indicators as a basis for the subsidy for education were as follows:

- The number of personnel;
- The number of students in the schools;
- The number of students in the service units;
- The number of children in pre-schools.⁴⁰²

In the light of these indicators, and on the basis of the standards, each municipality gets a subsidy from the State budget.

The State subsidy finances the salaries of the teachers and any other personnel, but only on the basis of the per-pupil standards determined by the Government decision. If school directors wish to appoint more personnel, such as a Roma school mediator or an after-class educator, they are expected to fund these positions through municipal sources. Textbooks for the one-year obligatory pre-school and for the first four grades are free of charge. The funds for their purchase are included in the State subsidy for the pre-school as part of the “material maintenance”. From the first to the fourth grade the Ministry of Education and Science buys the textbooks and delivers them to the schools through its Regional Inspectorates of Education.⁴⁰³ All the other textbooks, educational materials and schools supplies are paid for by the parents.

Part of the State subsidy for municipal schools in the form of “material maintenance” pays school maintenance and utilities. The rest, as well as the investment into school infrastructure, is paid by the municipal tax-based budget. In February 2005 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy started the programme “a cup of warm milk”, under which it pays for one meal plus a drink for each student of obligatory school age from the first to the fourth grade.

The Regional Inspectorates of Education, municipal governments and school directors, supported by the school educational councils, all have roles in governing the schools in

⁴⁰¹ Council of Ministers, Decision No. 21 from 19 January 2006, Annex 2 and 3.

⁴⁰² Law for the State Budget of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2006, *Official Gazette*, No. 105, 29 December 2005.

⁴⁰³ Council of Ministers, Decree No. 104 from 10 May 2003, *Official Gazette*, No. 76, 31 August 2003.

Bulgaria.⁴⁰⁴ The Regional Inspectorates of Education are responsible for the fulfilment of the State educational standards. They inspect the system, give recommendations, organise re-educational and supportive activities, and coordinate the activities of the different institutions. Municipal governments ensure the school funding and offer social support to parents and students. The school directors, together with the school educational councils, ensure the fulfilment of the State educational standards in their schools, develop the educational plan and decide on the enrolment, the school educational plan, forms of education, extracurricular activities, school uniforms and other matters.

⁴⁰⁴ School educational councils consist of all pedagogues in the school. Members of the parents' boards and medical personnel too can take part in the educational councils as consulting members (*Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 151).

ANNEX 2. CASE STUDIES

A2.1 Nikolaevo

A2.1.1 Administrative Unit

Nikolaevo Municipality has 5,025 inhabitants, who live in the town of Nikolaevo and three villages: Edrevo, Elhovo and Nova Mahala.⁴⁰⁵ It is one of the poorest municipalities of Bulgaria.

Table A2: Case Study: Nikolaevo Municipality – demographic distribution 2004

Permanent address	Total	Men	Women
Edrevo village	565	302	263
Elhovo village	584	276	308
Nikolaevo	3,082	1,489	1,593
Nova Mahala village	794	381	413
Total	5,025	2,448	2,477

Source: Territorial Statistical Bureau⁴⁰⁶

The ethnic distribution of the population is as follows (on the basis of self-identification):

Table A3: Case Study: Nikolaevo Municipality – ethnic distribution 2004

Ethnic Group	Percentage	Number
Bulgarians	68	3,346
Roma/Gypsies	25	1,252
Turks	3	179
Non-identified	4	143
Other	0	9

Source: Territorial Statistical Bureau⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ Municipality of Nikolaevo: Civic Registration and Administrative Services Department, October 2006.

⁴⁰⁶ Territorial Statistical Bureau, *Statistics Collection of Stara Zagora District 2004*, available in Bulgarian at <http://www.chambersz.com/statistic/2005/> (accessed on 20 February 2007).

⁴⁰⁷ Territorial Statistical Bureau, *Statistics Collection of Stara Zagora District 2004*.

The Bulgarian population in the villages is mainly elderly. In the town of Nikolaevo, the Roma community comprises around 1,000 persons, who live in a segregated neighbourhood called Vazrazhdane. Since the conditions in the Roma ghetto in Nikolaevo are very poor, those Roma who are above the economic average or have a better education tend to move to the villages and buy houses there. In the villages the Roma population is also mostly segregated, but there the social distinction between Roma and non-Roma population is limited.

The local authorities have devoted attention to the problems of the Roma community. According to the *Municipal Development Plan (2007–2013)*, the fourth priority of the Plan is Roma population integration.⁴⁰⁸

There are two Roma among the 13 municipal councillors after the last local elections. Both of them represent the Movement for Rights and Freedom. Both of them have a low level of literacy and officials in the municipality report that the work with them is not very successful. At the same time, the municipality has established regular working relations on an everyday basis with the informal leader of the Roma community in Nikolaevo, Ivan Minchev (known as “Bangoolu”).⁴⁰⁹

A2.1.2 Roma and the Community

According to 2001 census data, 1,252 inhabitants of the municipality declare themselves as Roma/Gypsies, 179 as Turks and 9 as others. From these same data, 1,194 state that they speak Romanes, 287 speak Turkish and 5 speak another language (Romanian).⁴¹⁰ At the same time, interviews with people from the Roma community, informal Roma leaders and officials from the municipality show that most of the people speak Turkish as their mother tongue. They belong to the *Millet* group. Only the people living in the village of Edrevo are defined as “Roma” and speak Romanes. Five Romanian-speaking Roma from the *Rudari* group live in Elhovo.⁴¹¹

During the last ten years there has been a trend towards declining educational levels and literacy among the Roma population. It is not rare that the parents are more educated than the children in Roma families, which was not the case 20 years ago.⁴¹² The number of Roma children enrolled in school has been decreasing in recent years,

⁴⁰⁸ Nikolaevo Municipality, *Municipal Development Plan 2007–2013*.

⁴⁰⁹ Interviews with Eng. Kolio Chergelanov, mayor of Nikolaevo Municipality, 25 September 2006, and Tania Kostadinova, director of the Administrative, Information and Financial Services Department, 25 September 2006.

⁴¹⁰ Territorial Statistical Bureau, *Statistics Collection of Stara Zagora District 2004*, available at <http://www.chambersz.com/statistic/2005/>.

⁴¹¹ Interview with Ivan Minchev, local informal Roma leader, 29 July 2006; informal discussions with people from the Vazrazhdane neighbourhood, Nikolaevo, July 2006 and 16 October 2006.

⁴¹² Nikolaevo Municipality, *Municipal Development Plan 2007–2013*; interview with Ivan Minchev, local informal Roma leader, 29 July 2006.

while at the same time the number of Roma children as compared to Bulgarian students is increasing, due to the low birth rate among Bulgarians and the ageing of the population.⁴¹³

Table A4: Case Study: Nikolaevo Municipality – pre-school- and school-age population (2006)

Age group	No. of children
Under 7 years	556
7–13 years	449
14–17 years	321

Source: Territorial Statistical Bureau⁴¹⁴

Around 60 per cent of the Roma population live in the municipal centre. In all the four settlements of the municipality the Roma live predominantly in segregated neighbourhoods. Only exceptionally are there families who live among the Bulgarian population. All of the neighbourhoods are out of the regulation plans, with the exception of two streets in the Vazrazhdane neighbourhood in Nikolaevo. Significant numbers of the houses are illegally built, and are too close to each other and do not fit into the space requirements. Therefore, in order to build road infrastructure, the houses would need to be demolished and reconstructed in line with the relevant regulations. This raises serious problems for any improvements.⁴¹⁵ In 2005 a meeting was organised between the mayor and the people from the Roma ghetto in Nikolaevo. It was decided after the meeting that some of the streets would be partly covered with gravel. This was included in the set of activities within the programme “From Social Benefits to Employment”.⁴¹⁶ The programme “From Social Benefits to Employment” is a national programme of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.⁴¹⁷

The ghetto in Nikolaevo is divided into two parts, and two social categories within the Roma community living there can be defined. The first group inhabits the area around the two streets that are in line with regulations. The houses are stable and have a visibly better outside appearance. These people consider themselves to be the original

⁴¹³ Information provided by the Education Department, Nikolaevo Municipality, June 2006.

⁴¹⁴ Territorial Statistical Bureau – Stara Zagora, August 2006.

⁴¹⁵ Information from the Territorial and Settlement Planning Department, Nikolaevo Municipality, October 2006.

⁴¹⁶ Interviews with Eng. Kolio Chergelanov, mayor of Nikolaevo Municipality, 25 September 2006. “From Social Benefits to Employment” is a national programme aiming at replacing monthly social benefits with permanent employment of the beneficiaries in public works.

⁴¹⁷ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, *Programme “From Social Benefits to Employment”*, available in Bulgarian at http://www.az.government.bg/Projects/Prog/NPSPZ/Frame_SPomZaet.htm (accessed on 20 February 2007).

inhabitants of Nikolaevo.⁴¹⁸ The other group is composed of more recent arrivals, who have settled within the last one or two decades. They live in slums. Some of them do not have even roofs but use nylon fabric instead. No hygienic conditions exist in this part of the neighbourhood.

The whole municipality has no sewage system except for two kilometres in the municipal centre. Another serious problem is the garbage collection. The official garbage dumps do not meet current needs. At the same time, unofficial garbage dumps have been created near some of the Roma settlements. All areas have electricity and running water. The Roma community in Nikolevo uses free water from a reservoir near the village, which is not included in the water-providing system. No telephone system exists in the neighbourhood.

Table A5: Case Study: Nikolaevo Municipality – infrastructure situation

	Settlement:				
	Edrevo	Elhovo	Nikolaevo	Nova Mahala	Total
Area (hectares)	58.4	103.9	119.5	51.7	333.5
Streets (km)	4	17.7	11.4	5.6	38.7
Streets with public utilities (per cent)	10	10	30	10	–
Streets with electric lights (per cent)	70	70	70	70	–
Streets with a water supply (per cent)	90	90	90	90	–
Sewage systems	–	–	2	–	–
Green areas	1	2	25	5	–
Garbage collection	Central and illegal garbage dumps				

Source: Nikolaevo Municipality⁴¹⁹

There is no public transport within the town, but children from the Roma ghetto are bussed to the pre-school in the centre of the town. The transport is organised by the Municipality. Although estimates show that the distance from the Roma ghetto to the town school is not greater than the distance from one of the Bulgarian neighbourhoods, no transport is provided for school-age children. For all children living in villages, transport is provided to the school in Nikolaevo.

The unemployment rate among Roma in the municipality is twice as high as the unemployment rate among Bulgarians: it is between 50 and 60 per cent among people of working age. Some 85 per cent of the 491 people registered in the local labour office (this is a local structure of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy) are Roma. The

⁴¹⁸ Informal discussions with people from the Vazrazhdane neighbourhood, Nikolaevo, July 2006.

⁴¹⁹ Nikolaevo Municipality, *Municipal Development Plan 2007–2013*.

reasons for this are the shrunken labour markets in Nikolaevo and the extremely low educational and qualification level of the Roma community. Most of the people who work are occupied with seasonal (usually construction) work or within the programmes of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; 176 working places were provided for 2005 and most of them were occupied by Roma unemployed people.⁴²⁰

Most of the Roma families live off the social benefits provided. Around 10 per cent of the municipal budget is spent on social benefits.⁴²¹ The majority of mothers are registered as single mothers; they do not work, and they receive help for every newborn child and monthly social benefits, according to the number of the children. The average number of family members in the Roma families in Nikolaevo is between seven and eight, so a family with five children, one of whom is under one year old, and where the parents do not work, receives monthly around 250 leva (€125) or 30–35 leva per member (€15–17). If the father works he usually receives the minimum wage, which increases the family income by another 160 leva (€80), which would mean 55–60 leva (€27–30) in total per person in the family. This money, however, is inadequate to meet daily needs.⁴²²

The Roma communities in Nikolaevo Municipality differ in the various settlements of the locality. As mentioned above, two social groups make up the community in the town of Nikolaevo. Most of the residents have only elementary or primary education. This is reflected in the general educational structure of the whole municipality, where the people who are illiterate, or have only elementary or primary education, make up 68.10 per cent of the total.⁴²³ For the Roma community this contributes to a high unemployment rate. There are no Roma NGOs in the community, but there is an informal leader, who is also the local money-lender. He is the main political figure in the community. In previous election he participated in the campaigns of different Roma parties, United Romani Union, Free Bulgaria Party and Evroroma, as well as in the campaigns of the different mainstream parties.⁴²⁴

At the same time, there is a very strong presence of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms. Two representatives from this party were elected in the local city council at the last local elections.

In recent years the number of Roma who have emigrated to Western Europe has increased. They go to work mainly in Greece and Spain. There is a visible tendency

⁴²⁰ Information from the Administrative Department, Nikolaevo Municipality, and from the local labour office. September 2006.

⁴²¹ Nikolaevo Municipality, *Municipal Development Plan 2007–2013*.

⁴²² Interview with Ali Asanov, Roma man from Nikolaevo, 16 October 2006; interview with Galia Asenova, mother of five children, living in Nikolaevo, 16 October 2006; interview with Ivan Minchev, informal local leader, Nikolaevo, 16 October 2006.

⁴²³ Nikolaevo Municipality, *Municipal Development Plan 2007–2013*.

⁴²⁴ Interview with Ivan Minchev, informal local leader, Nikolaevo, 16 October 2006; informal discussions with people from the Vazrazhdane neighbourhood, Nikolaevo, July 2006.

towards raising the living standards of the families who have one member or more abroad. The work abroad leads also to a change in the educational attitudes. The children of such parents go more regularly to school and show higher results.⁴²⁵

The Roma community in the village of Nova Mahala differs from the rest of the Roma population in the municipality. The educational level of the community there is higher; parents actively participate in school activities and in activities organised by the local cultural house. They have the best infrastructure as compared to the other Roma communities in the municipality. Only one sixth of them receive social benefits; many people work in Greece. One person works for the municipality, and they have also one municipal councillor.⁴²⁶

The Roma community in the municipality is socially rather than culturally isolated (with the exception of the inhabitants of Nova Mahala). The major conflicts with the majority population appear because of the marginalised situation in the Roma ghettos, especially in Nikolaevo. One of the factors is the high amount of unpaid electricity bills and the high share of social benefits.

Representatives of the municipality confide that they hardly work with the Roma city councillors, but they work quite well with the informal leader, with whom they organise weekly meetings, and several other representatives who have higher education, with whom they discuss everyday problems.

A2.1.3 Education

School and education network

The three village schools have a majority of Roma students. The total share of Roma students in the municipality is 88.41 per cent; Roma comprise 100 per cent of the students in Nova Mahala, 97.62 per cent in Edrevo, 100 per cent in Elhovo and 60 per cent in the school in Nikolaevo.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ Interview with Svetlana Stoyanova, school principal of SS. Cyril and Methodius Primary School in Nova Mahala, 26 September 2006.

⁴²⁶ Interview with Svetlana Stoyanova, school principal of SS. Cyril and Methodius Primary School in Nova Mahala, 26 September 2006.

⁴²⁷ Information from the Education Department, Nikolaevo Municipality, on the basis of school reports, June 2006.

Table A6: Case Study: Nikolaevo Municipality – number of students in the schools (2006)

School	Pre-school	Primary	Lower secondary	Secondary
Nikolaevo	19	199	184	–
Edrevo	–	43	–	–
Elhovo	–	26	–	–
Nova Mahala	–	48	–	–
Atanas Damyanov Vocational School in Nikolaevo	–	–	–	71

Source: Nikolaevo Municipality⁴²⁸

There are no special schools in the municipality. There are four children with physical disabilities and special educational needs. All of them are Roma, and two of the children are from one family. The school in Nikolaevo has designed a special individual programme for them and provides home visits for the children. The teachers from the schools indicate that the children show good results and success in their studies.

Enrolment and completion

Formally, Roma parents are free to choose ethnically mixed (non-segregated) schools regardless of their place of residence. This, however, rarely happens in practice if the families do not live dispersed among Bulgarians. Often the reason for this is the fact that some of the “Roma” schools are the only schools in the settlement. Furthermore, Roma children in Nikolaevo Municipality make up over 88 per cent of the total number of children.⁴²⁹

There is only one lower secondary school where Roma and non-Roma children study together. Since enrolment in pre-school is not obligatory, and there is a monthly fee, most of the Roma parents are reluctant to send their children to pre-school.

⁴²⁸ Nikolaevo Municipality, Education Department, October 2006.

⁴²⁹ Information provided from the Education Department, Nikolaevo Municipality, and submitted to Stara Zagora Regional Inspectorate of Education, October 2006.

Table A7: Case Study: Nikolaevo Municipality – number of Roma students by grade (2003–2005)

Grade	Number of students		
	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006
1	64	80	45
2	90	87	97
3	75	73	78
4	84	83	70
5	78	60	54
6	45	66	50
7	40	45	66
8	26	20	40
9	11	8	5
10	5	4	8
11	3	2	2
12	2	2	–
13	–	–	–
14	–	–	–

Source: Nikolaevo Municipality⁴³⁰

⁴³⁰ Nikolaevo Municipality, *Municipal Development Plan 2007–2013*.

Table A8: Case Study: Nikolaevo Municipality – Roma enrolment rates (2006)

	Enrolment rate (per cent)					
	Pre-school ⁴³¹	Basic Education		Secondary education		
		Primary education	Lower secondary	Secondary overall (general, professional, vocational)	Secondary general	Secondary professional and vocational
Boys	18	98	58	10.9	–	10.9
Girls	16	98	64	2.5	–	2.5
Total	17	98	61	6.7	–	6.7

Source: Nikolaevo Municipality⁴³²

Table A9: Case Study: Nikolaevo Municipality – Total enrolment rates per cent (2006)

	Enrolment rate (per cent)					
	Pre-school	Basic Education		Secondary education		
		Primary education	Lower secondary	Secondary overall (general, professional, vocational)	Secondary general	Secondary professional and vocational
Boys	21	98	61	35.50	–	35.50
Girls	19	98	67	12	–	12
Total	20	98	64	23.75	–	23.75

Source: Territorial Statistical Bureau⁴³³

Almost all Roma children enter school in the first grade, but sharp differences can be observed between the enrolment rate in primary and lower secondary education. The differences between the enrolment of girls and that of boys are also significant. The only school with lower secondary classes is in the town of Nikolaevo. Since all the children who live in the villages have to travel to Nikolaevo after they finish the fourth

⁴³¹ Estimation of Tania Kostadinova, director of the Administrative, Information and Financial Services Department, Nikolaevo Municipality, and Ivan Minchev, informal Roma leader in Nikolaevo.

⁴³² Nikolaevo Municipality, Education Department, October 2006.

⁴³³ Territorial Statistical Bureau, Stara Zagora, August 2006.

grade, many of them never get as far as the fifth grade. However, this is not reflected in the drop-out statistics. Usually each school keeps statistics about drop-outs within its own system. All the schools in the municipality (except one) are primary schools. Children must enroll in the town school to continue to the lower secondary level; the primary school is responsible for them until they finish the fourth grade, while the lower secondary school is responsible only after they are enrolled in it. Since these children move from one school to another, even if they do not show up in the lower secondary school they are not considered to be drop-outs. Hypothetically, they might have enrolled in another school outside the municipal area.

Usually Roma children in Nikolaevo spend one year in pre-school, four years in primary school, around three years in lower secondary, and 2.25 years in secondary vocational school. The average age of enrolment of Roma children in pre-school is six, and in the first grade it is seven.

Table A10: Case Study: Nikolaevo Municipality – Drop-out rates (2006)

	Drop-out rates (per cent)		
	Primary education	Lower secondary	Secondary overall (general, professional, vocational)
Total	5.22	4.89	NA
Roma students	6.19	15.38	81.82

Source: Regional Inspectorate of Education and Nikolaevo Municipality.⁴³⁴

The drop-out rate is measured on the basis of data from three school years (2003–2004, 2004–2005 and 2005–2006). The drop-out rate for the Roma students in lower secondary education is rather high, in part due to the need to travel into Nikolaevo, as mentioned above. The average distance between the villages and the town of Nikolaevo is 10 kilometres. The drop-out rate is extremely high for vocational school: out of 11 Roma students who are enrolled in the ninth grade, only two finished the eleventh grade.

The net enrolment rates in the municipality are far below the country's average, especially at the levels above primary. The only secondary school in the municipality is the Atanas Damyanov Vocational School of Electronics. Many of the children (mainly the non-Roma children) at that age, however, prefer to study in different cities, a fact that is not reflected by the statistics at the municipal level. Before the beginning of each school year, the municipality prepares a list with the addresses of all the children who should enter the first grade, and the teachers visit them prior to the beginning of the

⁴³⁴ Regional Inspectorate of Education, Stara Zagora, October 2006, and Nikolaevo Municipality, Education Department, October 2006.

school year. The procedure is facilitated by the fact that there is only one school in each settlement.⁴³⁵

Financing

The municipality has four municipal schools and one State school. Education consumes around 40 per cent of the municipal budget and is the largest single budgetary item.⁴³⁶ Each school and pre-school receives funds according to the school and municipal regulations: salaries and travel expenses for teachers who have another place of residence are covered by the State budget, while expenses for renovations and supplies for the school are provided from the municipal resources. They are distributed on a needs basis.

Table A11: Case Study: Nikolaevo Municipality – Human and financial resources (2004)

Schools	No. of Students	No. of Teachers	Budget (2004)	Per pupil (levs)
Nikolaevo	386	25	237,846	616.18
N.Mahala	50	5	38,175	763.50
Edrevo	54	7	52,133	965.43
Elhovo	29	2	20,316	700.55
Professional school	79	8	76,130	963.67

Source: Nikolaevo Municipality⁴³⁷

The municipality sets pre-schools fees, currently 20 levs per month. Nevertheless, the parents need to provide clothes and different materials for the children, and these costs are estimated at around 40 levs per month for both pre-school and primary schools. An NGO in the municipality, the Centre for the Development of Nikolaevo Municipality, manages every year to provide clothes and school materials (notebooks, stationery and textbooks) and thus reduce the costs for the parents.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ Interview with Biliana Belcheva, school principal of the SS. Cyril and Methodius Primary School of Nikolaevo, October 2006.

⁴³⁶ Nikolaevo Municipality, *Municipal Development Plan 2007–2013*.

⁴³⁷ Nikolaevo Municipality, *Municipal Development Plan 2007–2013*.

⁴³⁸ Interview with the deputy chair of the Board of the Centre for the Development of Nikolaevo Municipality, 16 October 2006.

School conditions

All the schools have running water, although buildings are not in very good condition; nevertheless, modest renovation works are carried out every year. The worst is the situation of the school in Nikolaevo. New furniture and coal-burning stoves were provided for this school in 2005, and recently a large sports hall was completely renovated next to the school. Only the schools in Nikolaevo and Elhovo have libraries. In 2005 all schools received computers and equipped computer labs. The schools in Niklaevo and Nova Mahala have a connection to the internet, but for technical reasons this is not possible for the school in Edrevo. Only two of the schools (in Nikolaevo and Elhovo) have indoor toilets.⁴³⁹

All the teachers have the appropriate qualifications. But more than half of the teachers are not local: they travel from Kazanlak and Stara Zagora. This influences the quality of the educational process.⁴⁴⁰

More than 10 per cent of students (especially those after the fourth grade) travel, with the municipality providing transport. Most of the students from the villages travel to the municipal centre. Some of the Roma students from the village of Edrevo prefer to travel to a village that is in another municipality but is closer than Nikolaevo. The students themselves say that they prefer to study in the school in Panicherevo (Gurkovo Municipality), because it is a smaller school and the teachers are more sensitive to their needs.⁴⁴¹

Education quality

No national tests have been carried out in the schools in Nikolaevo Municipality. No students, Roma or non-Roma, participate in national literature or mathematics competitions. Most of the students do participate in sport events and in folk dance groups.

While no independent assessment of literacy levels among Roma pupils has been carried out, teachers estimate that the level of literacy is not high. According to interviews, this is due to shortcomings in literature classes, and insufficiently motivated teachers.⁴⁴²

There is no difference in the curriculum of the schools. Teachers and the municipal administration organise regular campaigns at the beginning of every school year for providing additional textbooks and school materials. There are no textbooks on Roma history and culture. A bilingual curriculum is not provided; mother-tongue classes are

⁴³⁹ Interview with Biliana Belcheva, school principal of the SS. Cyril and Methodius Primary School of Nikolaevo, October 2006.

⁴⁴⁰ Nikolaevo Municipality, *Municipal Development Plan 2007–2013*; interview with Tania Kostadinova, director of the Administrative, Information and Financial Services Department, Nikolaevo Municipality, and former teacher, 16 October 2006.

⁴⁴¹ Nikolaevo Municipality, *Municipal Development Plan 2007–2013*.

⁴⁴² Interview with Tania Kostadinova, former teacher of German.

also not included in the curriculum. None of the schools has any teachers trained to work in a multicultural environment, in a bilingual environment or to teach a mother tongue (Turkish or Romanes).

A common perspective is that the quality of the educational process depends on the attitudes of the teachers and their willingness to work. Interviews suggest that the local teachers are seen as working better with the children than those who live outside the municipality. The opinion of people from the local community and of the officials from the municipality is that the quality of education is much better in the village schools (especially in the school in Nova Mahala) than the quality of the school in Nikolaevo.

Only the schools in Nikolaevo and Edrevo have a school board, but it practically does not function. No Roma parents participate in it. At the same time, good cooperation has been established between the school managing body and the parent community in Nova Mahala without having a school board. They are involved also in everyday activities.⁴⁴³

Several inspections have been carried out during the last three years – in Nova Mahala (2006), in Edrevo and in the school of Nikolaevo (2004 and 2005). No significant recommendations have been made for improving the educational process.

A2.2 Veliko Turnovo

A2.2.1 Administrative Unit

Veliko Turnovo Municipality has a territory of 885 square metres and a population of 90,432. The municipality includes the town of Veliko Turnovo, two other towns (Debeletz and Kilifarevo) and 34 villages and *mahalas*.⁴⁴⁴ The population density is 102.1 persons per square metre. The ethnic distribution of the population in the municipality, according to the official census, is shown in Table A12. Nevertheless, according to the estimations and survey carried out by the Amalipe Centre,⁴⁴⁵ the actual proportion of the Roma population is higher, at around six per cent. This discrepancy is due to the fact that certain Roma groups on the territory of the municipality (such as *Rudari*, *Millet* and some *Dassikane* Roma) prefer to identify themselves as Turks, Bulgarians or Romanians (other).⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ Interview with Svetlana Stoyanova, school principal of the SS. Cyril and Methodius primary school in Nova Mahala, September 26, 2006.

⁴⁴⁴ Here *mahala* does not refer to a Roma neighbourhood but to a small scattered settlement (usually in mountain areas) with a very small number of inhabitants (very often one or two).

⁴⁴⁵ A Roma organisation based in Veliko Turnovo.

⁴⁴⁶ D. Kolev and T. Krumova, *Mejdu Scila I Haribda: za identichnostta na milleta* (Between Scylla and Charybdis: about the Identity of the *Millet* Roma), Veliko Turnovo: Astarta, 2005.

Table A12: Case Study: Veliko Turnovo Municipality – ethnic distribution

Ethnic group	Proportion of total population (per cent)	Number of inhabitants
Bulgarians	92.15	83,285
Turks	5.42	4,919
Roma	0.88	786
Other	0.44	390
Not identified/other	1	1,052

Source: Veliko Turnovo Municipality⁴⁴⁷

Some Roma families (around 20 per cent of the total Roma population in the municipality) live dispersed among Bulgarian families in some neighbourhoods of the town of Veliko Turnovo as well as in Debeletz and several villages. Most often Roma live in Roma neighbourhoods (called *mahala*) that are part of the broader administrative units (villages or towns) and do not form a distinct administrative unit. There are two Roma neighbourhoods in Veliko Turnovo as well as a Roma neighbourhood in Kilifarevo and some of the villages.

There is no special budget allocated for the Roma community. The municipality finances some activities in the field of education and culture (for example, Roma folklore classes, and celebration of *Vassilitza*, the Day of Roma Culture) as well as some activities of the local Roma NGO Amalipe within its mainstream budget. In August 2005 the City Council passed Decision No. 639.04.08.2005, after a proposal from the mayor and the Amalipe Centre, to exchange municipal land for new flats where Roma from the ghetto of Aleko Konstantinov St. will be resettled. The flats will be built by the company that buys the land.

There is no Roma representative in the local council or in the municipal administration.

A2.2.2 Roma and the Community

Over the past five years the number of school-age Roma children has gradually decreased, due to the lower birth rate in 1997 and 1998 as compared to previous years. After the two critical years the birth rate has increased again, and this is reflected now in the pre-school enrolment.

Turkish is the mother tongue of 74.64 per cent of the Roma in Veliko Turnovo; 14.67 per cent of the Roma population speak Romanes, 6.96 speak Bulgarian as their first language, and 3.73 per cent are Romanian-speaking.

⁴⁴⁷ *Municipal Development Plan 2007–2013*, available at <http://veliko-turnovo.bg> (accessed on 3 June 2006).

Community infrastructure differs from place to place. It is relatively good in the largest Roma neighbourhood, Sveta Gora, in Veliko Turnovo, where all streets are paved, there is electricity, running water, a sewage network, and so on. The infrastructure is the worst in the Roma ghetto located at Aleko Konstantinov St. in Veliko Turnovo, where Roma live in slums, some of them without electricity and running water. As a whole, the Roma *mahalas* in the villages have bad roads and lack a sewage system, but the houses comply with regulations. However, this is a general problem for the villages in the municipality.⁴⁴⁸ At the same time, most of the houses have electricity and running water. The only *mahala* outside the municipal planning is one of the Roma neighbourhoods in the village of Resen. It is situated in a region often flooded by the Negovanka and Rositza rivers. As a result, the municipality has not so far considered any actions to improve conditions. A solution would be to provide new houses for the inhabitants of the neighbourhood in another part of the village.

The percentage of Roma formally employed at the community level in the villages is extremely low – less than ten per cent. Generally, Roma lost their jobs immediately after 1991–1992, when the agricultural cooperatives from the Communist period were abolished. In the town of Veliko Turnovo the percentage of formally employed Roma is higher, but still less than 30 per cent.

The municipal communal company and work employ most of the Roma working in Veliko Turnovo, as street cleaners. Roma also work as bakers and non-qualified workers. Many Roma were employed within the Government programme “From Social Benefits to Employment” (especially in 2004 when the programme reached its peak). At present the number of people employed by this programme has decreased, due to limits on the programme itself. In 2006 the number of Roma included in the programmes provided by the local labour office may be broken down as follows:

- Programme for educating and qualifying illiterate Roma – 31 persons;
- A course for professional qualification – 36 persons;
- Motivation training – 18 persons;
- Tailoring course – 12 persons;
- Professional orientation – 133 persons;
- Subsidised employment programmes – 147 persons (128 out of them being employed with the programme “From Social Benefits to Employment”);
- Assistants of disabled people – 5 persons;
- “Beautiful Bulgaria” Programme – 2 persons;
- Other – 9 persons.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁸ Veliko Turnovo Municipality, *Municipal Development Plan 2007–2013*, available in Bulgarian at <http://veliko-turnovo.bg> (accessed on 3 June 2006).

⁴⁴⁹ Information provided by the local labour office, 3 October 2006.

During the summer many Roma in Veliko Turnovo are employed in construction or other seasonal work in the construction industry. In the villages some Roma work as agricultural workers, especially in the summer. The percentage of Roma who have their own agricultural business is low, since they do not own land. In 2004 and 2005 some Roma families in the village of Vodoley were provided with land, but this is still an exception.

Different types of social benefits, together with income from seasonal work, continue to be the main source of income for many Roma families. For example, the household of Efrail Efremov, who lives in Veliko Turnovo, is composed of six people: his wife, two daughters, a son-in-law, a grandson and himself. His wife is long-term unemployed and does not have any income. The younger daughter is a student and the family receives an additional child allowance for her: around 20 leva (€10). The girl receives another 20 leva (€10) as a scholarship for excellent success in school.⁴⁵⁰ Efrail and his son-in-law work as builders during the summer months and they receive around 400 leva (€200) per month altogether. In the winter they do not have any income. The only significant constant income is the social benefit that the elder daughter receives for her son.

The extended family is the basis of the social structure of the Roma communities in Veliko Turnovo region. There are no preserved potestarian social institutions (such as *meshere*, *longja* and others) except among the few *Kaldarashi* Roma from the village of Samovodene.⁴⁵¹

Although there are no ethnic conflicts, Roma communities in the municipality are socially and culturally isolated. This is especially true for the Roma from the biggest neighbourhood, that of Sveta Gora in Veliko Turnovo. They are Turkish-speaking and most of them are unemployed; they watch mainly Turkish TV, identify themselves as Turks and do not have ongoing contacts with the majority population. Officials recognise that the level of isolation is “too high and even dangerous”. Due to the work of the Roma culture classes programme developed by the Amalipe Centre, in recent years the level of isolation has been reduced, especially in the villages of Vodoley, Resen, Balvan and Ledenik, where the school brings together Roma and Bulgarian parents in public events.

⁴⁵⁰ The scholarship is a programme of the Ministry of Education and Science. There are two types of scholarships: if a student has school marks above 5.5 (6 is the maximum) then he or she receives a scholarship for high school success, while if the marks are above 4.5 and the family members receive an income below the minimum salary per person (160 leva or €80) then the student receives a social scholarship. The scholarship programme, however, is for secondary schools only. Since the girl is still a student her mother receives 20 leva per month child allowance

⁴⁵¹ The *potestarian* forms are informal authority mechanisms in traditional communities. Such a form is the *meshere* (or Romani Kris – the Roma internal court) or the *longja* (a traditional form of economic mutual support among community members). These forms are preserved only among the most traditional Roma groups: the *Kaldarashi*, the *Burgudjii*, and so on.

A2.2.3 Education

School and education network

The total population of school-age children is 13,630, of whom 4,668 (34 per cent) are under the age of seven, 4,756 (35 per cent) are between the ages of 7 and 13, and 4,206 (31 per cent) are between 14 and 17 years old.⁴⁵² The Regional Inspectorate of Education registered a drop-out rate of 0.45 per cent among primary school pupils, and 0.57 per cent among lower secondary students in the 2004–2005 school year.⁴⁵³ According to specialists working in the education field, however, these figures are underestimated, since very often the dropping out of children is not officially reported, in order to maintain higher school budgets. The figures can be estimated at 2.3 per cent for the primary education and 3.1 per cent for the lower secondary education.⁴⁵⁴ Enrolment rates for the 2004–2005 school year are as follows: primary education – 110.64 per cent; lower secondary – 107.89 per cent; secondary overall (general, professional, vocational) – 127.37 per cent. Rates are over 100 per cent, as many parents from neighbouring municipalities enrol their children in the Veliko Turnovo schools.

There is one segregated school in Veliko Turnovo, the Hristo Botev Lower Secondary School. It is situated at the beginning of the *mabala* in close proximity to a “Bulgarian” school. At the same time, there is a school with a majority of Roma students (71.6 per cent in primary education) in Kilifarevo, which is the only school in a town where the number of school-age Bulgarian children is low. There are also schools with more than 80 per cent Roma students in the villages of Vodoley, Balvan, Ledenik and Tzerova Kuria.

There is no school in the municipality that is defined only as primary (which has only the first four grades). There are 13 schools that cover teaching from the first to the eighth grade, which are grouped under lower secondary and 15 schools where children can study up to the thirteenth grade. There are 123 pupils in primary grades that are enrolled in the segregated school, and 148 students at the lower secondary level.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵² Table of the population according to permanent address, age and gender – Veliko Turnovo Municipality. Source: Veliko Turnovo Municipality, 13 February 2004.

⁴⁵³ Regional Inspectorate of Education, February 2006.

⁴⁵⁴ Informal conversation with municipal officials, March 2006.

⁴⁵⁵ Regional Inspectorate of Education.

Table A13: Case Study: Veliko Turnovo Municipality – proportion of Roma in six schools

School	Number of children – by grade					Proportion of minority (Roma) children (per cent) – by grade				
	Pre-school	I	II	III	IV	Pre-school	I	II	III	IV
“Hristo Botev” – Veliko Turnovo	15	17	33	34	30	100	100	100	100	100
“Neofit Riski” – Kilifarevo	12	23	22	19	20	83	87	91	42	55
“Hristo Smirnenki” – Vodoley	11	11	12	14	14	100	100	100	100	100
“Ivan Rilski” – Balvan	5	12	6	13	12	100	90	100	80	90
“Vasil Levski” – Ledenik	7	5	8	7	5	95	95	95	95	95
“P.R.Slaveykov” – Tzerova Kuria	10	8	12	7	9	70	75	83	57	66

Source: Veliko Turnovo Municipality

Table A14: Case Study: Veliko Turnovo Municipality – special school enrolment

	Special schools for children with intellectual disabilities		
	Primary education (7–10 years)	Lower secondary (11–14 years)	Secondary overall (Grades 9 and 10)
Total number of special schools	–	4	–
Total enrolment in special schools (2004–2005)	127	144	40
Roma pupils enrolled in special schools as a share of the total of pupils enrolled in special schools	Around 80%	Around 75%	–

Source: Estimates of the Amalipe Centre

By an order of the Ministry of Education and Science from June 2006,⁴⁵⁶ and as a result of the policy of the Ministry to respond to the requirements in the process of the EU accession regarding the special schools, two of the special schools were closed

⁴⁵⁶ *Official Gazette*, issue 44 of 30 May 2006.

down: the Vasil Levsky special boarding school in the village of Mindia, and the special boarding school in the village of Gabrovtsi. As a result of a joint campaign of the Amalipe Centre and the P. R. Slaveykov Primary School in Veliko Turnovo, 12 out of 22 Roma children from the ghetto at Aleko Konstantinov St. in Veliko Turnovo have been integrated from the St. Teodosij Turnovski special school in Veliko Turnovo to the mainstream school.

The special schools in Mindia and Novo Selo are boarding schools, and their budget is 795 leva per pupil (€398), while the budget of the Teodosij Turnovski School in Veliko Turnovo is 211.60 leva per pupil (€106).⁴⁵⁷ At the same time, the schools rely to a great extent on sponsors and external donations. For example, the St. Teodosij Turnovski School in Veliko Turnovo receives around 400 leva per month (€200) in cash and additional materials in kind.⁴⁵⁸

The sum allocated for a student in a general mainstream school is 146.50 leva plus 14 leva per pupil for heating (€73 plus €7).

Enrolment and completion

According to the official data submitted by the municipality to the Regional Inspectorate of Education, there are no children who have never been enrolled in school. At the same time, informal conversations with officials indicate that there are such children. Estimates given by local formal and informal leaders show, however, that their percentage is low – around one per cent of all Roma children. Dropping out is a more serious problem: 190 children are recorded as dropping out of primary school, 271 from the lower secondary level, and 300 from secondary schools in Veliko Turnovo district for 2004–2005.⁴⁵⁹ These percentages are higher in the more marginalised communities.

For the 2004–2005 school year the total number of drop-outs for the district is 767 or 2.25 per cent, higher than the 1.99 per cent average for the country, while only in Veliko Turnovo Municipality is the percentage as low as 0.57 (or 71 students).

⁴⁵⁷ Decision No. 21/19.01.2006 of the Council of Ministers.

⁴⁵⁸ Interview with Katinka Obretenova, school director of the St. Teodosij Turnovski Special School in Veliko Turnovo.

⁴⁵⁹ Table for the movement of students in Veliko Turnovo district during the 2004–2005 school year, provided by the Regional Inspectorate of Education, Veliko Turnovo.

**Table A15: Case Study: Veliko Turnovo Municipality
– drop-out rates (2004–2005)**

Reason for dropping out	Proportion of total drop-outs (per cent)
Family	35
Absences	23
Social	19
Travel abroad	18
Low school marks	3
Health	2

Source: Regional Inspectorate of Education, Veliko Turnovo

Financing and costs

In addition to funds allocated by the State, the Education Department in the municipality allocates money to each school on the basis of its needs for renovations, equipment supply and so on. Table A16 below provides information on the budget allocated to each school by the municipality for 2006.

Table A16: Case Study: Veliko Turnovo Municipality – budget allocations (2006)

Type of school	School name	Number of pupils	Total budget (levs)	Per-pupil budget (levs)
Segregated town school	Hristo Botev School, Veliko Turnovo	252	239,157	949.04
Mainstream town school	Vela Blagoeva Secondary School, Veliko Turnovo	644	536,677	833.35
Elite school	Prof. Asen Zlatarov Language School, Veliko Turnovo	789	566,885	718.49
Village school with a prevailing number of Roma students	Hristo Smirnenski School, Vodoley	97	96,077	990.48
Village school with a low number of Roma students	Hristo Smirnenski School, Samovodene	108	107,746	997.65
Average for Veliko Turnovo municipality		8,274	6,511,630	787.00

Source: Veliko Turnovo Municipality⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁶⁰ Veliko Turnovo Municipality, Education Department, May 2006.

Table A17: Case Study: Veliko Turnovo Municipality – per-pupil budget in the 5 schools with a prevailing number of Roma students (June 2006)

School	Per-pupil budget (levs)
Hristo Botev, Veliko Turnovo	949.04
Tzerova Kuria	1,591.24
Ledenik	1,224.04
Vodoley	990.48
Neofit Rilski, Kilifarevo	935.50
Average	781.30

Source: Regional Inspectorate of Education; school directors ⁴⁶¹

The budget of each municipality is nationally defined by the Ministry of Finance, while the investments are the result of the economic policy of the municipality. In 2003, 34.2 per cent of the municipal budget was allocated for education, which was the single largest budget item; the proportion rose to 37 per cent in 2006. Investments allocated for education for 2003 were 13.88 per cent of the total.

A significant amount of the educational budget is allocated for renovating the buildings and providing a good school environment. Recently, a new local heating system has been built in the Vodoley village pre-school (which shares one building with the school). Roof repairs, heating systems overhaul and toilet renovation were done at a cost of 1,154 lev (€577). One of the buildings with the worst conditions is the Prof. Asen Zlatarov Language School in Veliko Turnovo. Nevertheless, within the municipality's gas connection programme, many of the town schools already have been equipped with gas. ⁴⁶²

According to the National Education Act, the obligatory one year of pre-school is free of charge. ⁴⁶³ Nevertheless, the parents need to provide clothes and other supplies for the children, and the cost of all this is estimated at around 40 lev per month. Until the 2004–2005 school year only the textbooks for the first grade were offered for free and

⁴⁶¹ Source: Regional Inspectorate of Education; school directors – June 2006. Three of the schools have classes for basic professional skills in the ninth and the tenth grade, but they are optional. They have specialities in baking and flower cultivation. The schools are generally lower secondary schools.

⁴⁶² "The Problems in the Education Field Are Due to the Lack of Rules," interview with Rumiana Yordanova, head of the Education Department, Veliko Turnovo Municipality, available at http://www.forum-bg.net/bg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=132&Itemid=32&lang=bg (accessed on 16 May 2006).

⁴⁶³ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 30, para. 2.

could be retained by the students after the school year. Since 2005–2006 all textbooks for the primary grades (first to fourth) have been offered for free. Therefore, all children (including Roma) in the primary grades have access to school textbooks. Access is more difficult in the higher grades, where the families themselves must buy textbooks.

Access

The procedure for enrolling children in pre-schools is regulated by the Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act. Parents choose the pre-school that they wish and submit a written request together with a copy of the birth certificate of the child and a recent medical certificate.⁴⁶⁴ Fees are regulated by a municipal ordinance.⁴⁶⁵ The procedure for enrolling children in the first grade of general schools is similar. Parents submit a written application.

Roma children are not generally placed in segregated classes in the municipality. Such a practice appeared in 2003 in a school in Gorna Oriahovica, but after an intervention by the local Roma organisation, the Amalipe Centre, and discussions with the school director the practice was immediately abandoned and the children were integrated. At present all the Roma children (who make up around 50 per cent of the pupils in the school) are allocated to mixed classes, and ethnically mixed groups are created for studying Roma folklore as a free elective.

According to regulations, the Regional Inspectorate of Education director issues an order on a yearly basis to establish a Commission for complex pedagogical assessment for pupils who should be directed to special schools or classes or integrated in the mainstream schools.⁴⁶⁶ The team includes the expert in integrated education in the Regional Inspectorate of Education, a psychologist, a primary teacher, and so on, but after the changes in the National Educational Act it no longer includes a medical specialist who could estimate the level of disability of the child. Thus the functions of the Commission have been shifted from diagnostic to just pedagogical assessment. This allows developmentally average children to be directed to the special school after a request from their parents (for various reasons, usually social). The frequency of the meetings of the Pedagogical Assessment Commission depends on the Regional Inspectorate of Education; there are four planned for the 2005–2006 school year. The commission examined 237 children for the 2005–2006 school year: 69 children only from Veliko Turnovo Municipality. Of these, 122 were directed towards integrated education in the mainstream schools.

⁴⁶⁴ *Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act*, Art. 28, para. 1.

⁴⁶⁵ Source: City Council of Veliko Turnovo Municipality. Information available at <http://www.veliko-turnovo.bg/obs/naredbi.htm> (accessed on 26 May 2006).

⁴⁶⁶ Rules and Regulations for the Application of the National Education Act, Art. 6A and Ordinance No. 6 for Education of Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Chronic Diseases from 19 August 2002.

School infrastructure and human resources

The conditions of the school infrastructure differ significantly between the urban and the village schools. Some of the village schools (although not many) still have outdoor toilets and use wood and charcoal as their major heating source during the winter. In the 2004–2005 school year, all Bulgarian schools were equipped with computer configurations within the Ministry’s National Programme for Broader Inclusion of Students in Compulsory School Age. The schools in Veliko Turnovo Municipality received 363 computers for 30 computer labs in ten schools.

The average number of pupils per computers for the municipality is 33.5 pupils per computer. There is, however, a serious problem with the technical support of the computer equipment, especially in the village schools, and there is a lack of equipment and resources to ensure that the computers are working consistently.

The libraries in the schools, however, are still far from satisfactory. Some schools, especially in villages, do not even have libraries.

Table A18: Case Study: Veliko Turnovo Municipality – available computers and library volumes (in the five schools with a majority of Roma students)

School	No. of computers	No. of computer laboratories	No. of library volumes
Hristo Botev, Veliko Turnovo (using the library of the School of Humanitarian Studies)	11	1	11,669
Hristo Smirneniski School of Vodoley	9	1	-
Vasil Levski School of Ledenik	8	1	1,800
Neofit Rilski School of Kilifarevo	10	1	2,310
P. R. Slaveykov School of Tzerova Kuria	15	1	-
Average for Veliko Turnovo Municipality	18.15	1.5	6,696.75

Source: Veliko Turnovo Municipality

The autonomy of the schools with regard to the curriculum is rather limited. It is connected only with “free elective subjects”, which can form at most 10 per cent of the classes. These courses may be made available after children submit a written request signed by their parents, which is finally approved by the municipal authorities responsible for education. Since 2002 Veliko Turnovo Municipality has annually approved “Roma folklore and culture” classes as a free elective subject in several municipal schools: Vodoley, Resen and Ledenik.

Schools have greater autonomy with regard to human resources policy. The Regional Inspectorate of Education appoints all school principals. The selection is made by a

commission that includes representatives of the Regional Inspectorate of Education and at least one representative of the Ministry of Education and Science. The school director appoints teachers and other staff depending on the possibilities of the school budget.

All the teachers in the municipality have the appropriate educational level, largely due to the presence of the University of Veliko Turnovo. The total number of teachers in Veliko Turnovo District is 3,341, of whom 85 per cent have a university degree and 14 per cent have a college education.⁴⁶⁷ The teachers visit qualification courses at three levels: national, regional and local. During the 2005–2006 school year none of the teachers in Veliko Turnovo Municipality participated in a qualification course directed to working in a multi-ethnic environment.⁴⁶⁸

Veliko Turnovo Municipality has the lowest percentage in the district of classes with the minimum number of students (0.63 per cent with an average for the district of 3.07 per cent for the 2003–2004 school year) and the lowest percentage of mixed classes (where children of different grades study together) – 1.59 per cent with an average for the district of 6.15 per cent⁴⁶⁹

The table below shows the school results of Roma pupils in three of the schools in Veliko Turnovo district for 2005–2006. In the last two schools (in Ledenik and Vodoley) the proportion of Roma children is around 100 per cent.⁴⁷⁰

Table A19: Case Study: Veliko Turnovo Municipality – school results of Roma pupils (2005–2006)

Village	School results	
	Grades 1–4	Grade 7–9
Resen	3.8	3.68
Ledenik	3.37	3.41
Volodey	4.48	3.89

Source: Regional Inspectorate of Education⁴⁷¹

There are no data about the participation of Roma children in national competitions for mathematics, literature, or chemistry. One fifth-grade Roma student from the school in

⁴⁶⁷ Strategy for the development of Veliko Turnovo District (2005–2015).

⁴⁶⁸ Information from the Regional Pedagogical Centre.

⁴⁶⁹ Report for the activities of the Regional Inspectorate of Education, Veliko Turnovo, for the 2003–2004 school year, submitted to the MES in August 2004.

⁴⁷⁰ The director of Hristo Botev School in Veliko Turnovo has so far refused to provide us with this information.

⁴⁷¹ Information from the schools, submitted to the Regional Inspectorate of Education (June 2006).

Vodoley prepared for a national mathematics competition but could not attend due to health reasons. Nevertheless, the children actively participate in the social and public events organised. Children from all the municipal schools where Roma folklore classes are taught regularly participate in the municipal celebrations of the major Roma feasts and Bulgarian holidays. A 14-year-old student from the Hristo Botev School in Veliko Turnovo, Sevginar Topalova, is a European weightlifting champion.

There is no difference in the school curriculum except for the Hristo Botev School in Veliko Turnovo, where an intensive Turkish-language course is available as a free elective in all grades, and the schools in Vodoley, Balvan, Ledenik and Resen, where Roma folklore is studied as a free elective subject within the Programme of the Amalipe Centre and the Ministry of Education and Science's "Roma Folklore in Bulgarian Schools". From the beginning of the 2006–2007 school year Roma culture has also been offered in one of the mainstream town schools, P. R. Slaveykov.

Most of the schools with Roma pupils do not have school boards of trustees where parents participate. A type of school–community relation has been established between the Hristo Botev School and the Sveta Gora neighbourhood in Veliko Turnovo. It is religiously and politically based. A very influential factor is the local imam and the local mosque's board of trustees, who actively participate in the overall school life. This is interrelated with the strong position and role of the local representatives of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, a political party oriented towards the Turkish minority.

The Regional Inspectorate of Education usually makes four or five school inspections per year. The most recent one in a school with Roma children from the municipality was in 2003–2004 in the Neofit Rilski School in Kilifarevo. The school inspectors' report points out that there are still administrative weaknesses in the managing of the school, which are not considered significant. One of the recommendations is for more intensive cooperation with NGOs in the different fields. The limited number of school boards of trustees is also a general recommendation after all the inspections.

No cases of ethnic discrimination have been brought so far to the competent bodies on the territory of the municipality.

A2.3 Vidin Municipality

A2.3.1 Administrative Unit

Vidin Municipality is located in the north-western part of Bulgaria, about 250 kilometres from the capital, Sofia. According to official data, the total population of the municipality is 80,050, of which the Roma community represents about 10 per cent (2005).⁴⁷² However, a high-ranking municipal official has stated that the number of

⁴⁷² Vidin Municipality Plan, 2005.

Roma in Vidin Municipality is around 12,000,⁴⁷³ while unofficial data report 13,000 and 14,000 Roma living only in Vidin itself, the largest town of the administrative unit (which would represent 30 per cent of the town's population), as of 2005.⁴⁷⁴

There are 9,000 officially registered Roma households in the Vidin region, which consists of eight municipalities. Many other Roma households are not included, as their members are not officially registered on the territory of the municipality.⁴⁷⁵ As far as Vidin Municipality is concerned, there are large communities of Roma in the neighbourhood of Nov Pat in the town of Vidin and in the town of Dunavtzi.

Only the Nov Pat neighbourhood has its own mayor, who is appointed by Vidin Municipality's mayor. There is no quota principle for selection of Roma representatives to the local government, and neither there are institutional mechanisms that ensure participation of Roma in the local governance. In spite of this, seven Roma were elected to the local parliament from the "Roma" Political Party and one was elected from the Bulgarian Socialist Party during the last municipal elections, held in 2003. Roma therefore hold 22 per cent of the seats in the Vidin Municipal Council.

A2.3.2 Roma and the Community

Close to 100 per cent of the Romanes-speakers in Vidin speak the Yerliiski dialect. A majority of the Roma in the municipality do not wear typical Roma clothes. Roma women who belong to the congregation of the Evangelist Church do wear headscarves.

Vidin Municipality registered one of the highest levels of unemployment in the country. According to the National Statistical Institute in Sofia (2005), unemployment varies between 30 per cent and 32 per cent, while the average for the country is between 14 per cent and 18 per cent. Interviews with Roma leaders and local NGOs suggest that the unemployment rate among adult Roma is about 80 per cent. Between 20 per cent and 40 per cent of all Roma in the municipality subsist on social payments. This means that a substantial number of Roma there live in extreme poverty, on approximately €1 per day.⁴⁷⁶

The major sources of income for the Roma families in Vidin are unemployment benefits and participation in programmes for temporary employment at the minimum wage. According to the Bureau of Labour, Vidin, there are 3,302 active Roma adults on the labour market, of whom 56 per cent have no qualification or degree. The average budget for one Roma household, consisting of five people, is 242 leva, which makes less than €1 person per day. The social stratification of the Roma in Vidin

⁴⁷³ Interview with Ivan Perchinski, deputy mayor of Vidin Municipality, 10 April 2006, Vidin.

⁴⁷⁴ Interview with Donka Panayotova, chair of the NGO Organisation Drom, 8 April 2006, Vidin.

⁴⁷⁵ Interview, Ivan Perchinski, deputy mayor of Vidin Municipality, 10 April 2006, Vidin.

⁴⁷⁶ The data are taken from a micro-study of the NGO Organisation Drom, conducted between April and May 2005 with a database of 200 Roma families that reside in the municipality.

Municipality is the following: wealthy (4 per cent), mid-level (26 per cent, usually due to the fact that a member of the family lives abroad and remits money to the family at home) and poor (70 per cent).⁴⁷⁷ Only about 50–70 Roma households in Vidin Municipality live and coexist peacefully with their non-Roma neighbours. These Roma families pay their utility bills regularly. The Roma from the territorially segregated Roma settlements in the Municipality are not welcome in the local institutions.⁴⁷⁸ They are frequently not served or treated well by public agencies.⁴⁷⁹

Around 1 per cent of the municipal budget is distributed specifically for the needs of the Roma community. It is mainly used for improving infrastructure in the Roma settlements, which is poor and deteriorating in both villages (such as Bukovets) and towns (including Dunavtzi and Vidin).

Nov Pat neighbourhood

Nov Pat is the main Roma neighbourhood in Vidin, where the largest number of Roma in the municipality live (between 90 and 95 per cent of the total). Nov Pat is situated three kilometres from the centre of Vidin, and there is no regular public transport that connects the neighbourhood with other neighbourhoods of the town. There is a sewer line only in one main street in the neighbourhood, which is also the only street that is asphalt-paved in that neighbourhood.

About 60 per cent of the Roma houses in the neighbourhood are built of bricks and cement, while the rest are frame houses. The Roma settlements were not planned developments, and are completely lacking in grass, trees and bushes.

Around 90 per cent of the Roma in the neighbourhood are heated with solid fuel, and when that is depleted, families burn their clothes and shoes during the winter season. Every winter there is severe tension between the Roma Community and the electricity public company in Vidin. The Roma in Vidin have problems with electricity bills. Because a large number of poor Roma families do not pay, the whole neighbourhood's electricity supply is limited and irregular.

At present there are 50 home telephone lines registered in Nov Pat, which is extremely low. The institutions, public and private facilities that function in Nov Pat include one Evangelist Church, eight small shops, fourteen cafes, one private restaurant, a police station and mayor's office, and a health centre with a dentistry clinic, one gynaecologist and one doctor. The health centre works only during the day.

⁴⁷⁷ The social stratification of the Roma Community is an estimate provided by the NGO Organisation Drom, which conducted research in April 2005 among 200 Roma families. The deputy mayor of Vidin Municipality confirmed in an interview that there is no other research on Roma family revenues.

⁴⁷⁸ Interview with Donka Panayotova, 8 April 2006, Vidin.

⁴⁷⁹ Interview with Donka Panayotova, 8 April 2006, Vidin.

The distance of the Roma community to the nearest segregated school is 100 metres, while the nearest segregated pre-school is 500 metres away, and the nearest lower secondary school is two kilometres away, as are the nearest upper secondary school and the nearest integrated pre-school.

Thus the Roma community in Vidin Municipality is to a large extent territorially and socially isolated from the mainstream society. The only opportunity for Roma children to communicate with non-Roma peers is for those who are integrated in the mainstream schooling system, whereas the Roma parents of these children communicate with non-Roma parents through the parents' meetings and in cases of gatherings for a variety of school celebrations.

A2.3.3 Education

School and education network

The school network in Vidin Municipality is as shown below in Table A20.

Table A20: Case Study: Vidin Municipality – pre-school and school network (2006)

Local/district school network	Pre-school	Primary education	Basic education	Secondary overall (general, professional, vocational)	Total
Total number of schools	0	0	16	9	25
Number of pupils enrolled	576	2,538	2,831	4,038	9,983
Total number of segregated schools	0	0	2	0	2*
Number of pupils enrolled in segregated schools	46	215	220	0	607

*Segregated schools located in the towns of Vidin and Dunavtzi
 Source: Territorial Statistical Bureau⁴⁸⁰

Enrolment and completion

The number of Roma in the age group between 3 and 18 is decreasing, as more and more young families are deciding to raise only two children.⁴⁸¹ According to pre-school

⁴⁸⁰ Territorial Statistical Bureau, Vidin, February 2006.

⁴⁸¹ Interview with Donka Panayotova, chair of the NGO Organisation Drom, 8 April 2006, Vidin.

directors and Roma leaders, in Vidin Municipality there are no Roma children attending “informal” pre-schools operated by NGOs, which are not recognised by the State as formal education. It has been identified also that due to the desegregation of Roma Education in the town of Vidin, 56 per cent of Roma children have access to better-quality education in an integrated school environment as of April 2006.

Table A21: Case Study: Vidin Municipality – pre-school- and school-age population (2006)

Age group (years)	Number of children
3–6	2,507
7–10	2,436
11–14	3,095
15–18	3,774
Total	11,812

Source: Territorial Statistical Bureau⁴⁸²

There are no Roma children who cannot comply with the local procedures for enrolment in pre-school due to a lack of documents or other barriers. Roma parents do not report facing any administrative barriers. The same is true for Roma children who are enrolled in the first grade of school.

Table A22: Case Study: Vidin Municipality – pre-school- and school-age Roma population (2006)

Age Group (years)	Number of schoolchildren	Number of school-age children who are not in the education system	Total
3–6	89	–	–
7–10	1,061	58	1,119
11–14	1,094	52	1,146
15–18	725	20	845
Total:	2,969	–	–

Source: Territorial Statistical Bureau⁴⁸³

⁴⁸² Territorial Statistical Bureau, Vidin, February 2006.

⁴⁸³ Territorial Statistical Bureau, Vidin, February 2006

Roma pupils in Vidin Municipality represented 30 per cent of all pupils in the 2005–2006 school year. There are no aggregated data on the exact number of pre-school-age Roma children who do not attend pre-schools. Few Roma families have the chance to send their children to local pre-schools, because they cannot cover the monthly fees.

Table A23: Case Study: Vidin Municipality – net enrolment rates by educational level (2006)

	Net enrolment rate (per cent)					
	Pre-school	Basic education		Secondary education		
		Primary education	Lower secondary	Secondary overall (general, professional, vocational)	Secondary general (general)	Secondary professional and vocational
Boys	25	96	88	95	36	59
Girls	21	96	96	93	54	39
Average:	23	96	92	94	45	49

Source: Territorial Statistical Bureau⁴⁸⁴

The net enrolment rates in Vidin are lower than the national average net enrolment rates at the pre-school and primary education levels, but they are significantly higher at the lower and upper secondary education level. There is even a two per cent increase in enrolment from lower secondary to secondary education. This is due to the fact that there are both Roma and non-Roma children from neighbouring municipalities (Dimovo, Kula and Bregovo) who prefer to continue their education in Vidin, where the high schools have a better reputation.

⁴⁸⁴ Territorial Statistical Bureau, Vidin, February 2006.

Table A24: Case Study: Vidin Municipality – enrolment rates of Roma pupils (2006)

	Enrolment rates (per cent)					
	Pre-school	Basic education		Secondary education		
		Primary education	Lower secondary	Secondary overall (general, professional, vocational)	Secondary (general)	Secondary professional and vocational
Boys	–	95	94	86	50	36
Girls	–	95	96	86	60	26
Total:	–	95	95	86	55	31

Source: Territorial Statistical Bureau⁴⁸⁵

The Roma pupils of Vidin Municipality are primarily concentrated in basic education: 73 per cent of Roma boys and girls are found in this segment. Another specific indicator shows that most of the secondary school-age Roma are found in general education schools and not in professional and vocational training schools.

There is one special school for children with intellectual disabilities (remedial school) in Vidin Municipality.

Table A25: Case Study: Vidin Municipality – drop-out rates (2006)

	Enrolment rates (per cent)	
	Primary education	Lower secondary
Boys	4	7
Girls	4	5
Average:	4	6

Source: Territorial Statistical Bureau, Vidin, February 2006

According to recent statistical data, a total of 95 (Roma and non-Roma) children have dropped out of primary education, while 184 have dropped out of lower secondary education.

According to official data, about two per cent of all Roma pupils in Vidin Municipality are registered in the only special school found in the municipality. The average number

⁴⁸⁵ Territorial Statistical Bureau, Vidin, February 2006.

of years that Roma children spend in pre-school is three years, while the average number of years spent in school for Roma children is five or six years. The official data confirm that 230 Roma children dropped out of school at the end of the first school term of the 2005–2006 school year in Vidin Municipality. The majority of these children (120) dropped out of upper secondary education, while a minority dropped out of lower secondary education (52) and primary education (58).

Organisation Drom operates the only system for monitoring the enrolment and drop-out of Roma pupils. There are oral but no written complaints of discrimination in integrated schools, and there are no sanctions imposed for discriminatory actions against Roma.⁴⁸⁶ According to the deputy mayor of Vidin Municipality, representatives of the Roma Community have not deposited any written complaints for discrimination with the local institutions. Nor are there any lodged with the Commission against Discrimination or the courts.

Table A26: Case Study: Vidin Municipality – drop-out rates of Roma pupils (2006)

	Enrolment rates (per cent)		
	Primary education	Lower secondary	Secondary overall (general, professional, vocational)
Boys	5	6	14
Girls	5	4	14
Total:	5	5	14

Source: Regional Inspectorate of Education⁴⁸⁷

Financing

Pre-schools are entirely financed by Vidin Municipality, whereas the schools are financed by the State and the municipal budget.⁴⁸⁸ The distribution of education funds is based on national standards. A Council of Ministers' Decision defines the standards for the number of personnel in schools and pre-schools, as well as standards for annual subsidy per pupil and school.⁴⁸⁹ The annual financial contribution of the State and the municipal budget is 55 per cent and 45 per cent, respectively,⁴⁹⁰ which was fulfilled

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with Donka Panayotova, 8 April 2006, Vidin.

⁴⁸⁷ Regional Inspectorate of Education, Vidin, April 2006

⁴⁸⁸ Interview with Malinka Russinova from the Education Department, Vidin Municipality, 5 January 2006, Vidin, and the deputy mayor of Vidin Municipality, Mr. Ivan Perchinski, 10 April 2006, Vidin.

⁴⁸⁹ Decision No. 21 of the Council of Ministers from 19 January 2006 and its Annexes.

⁴⁹⁰ Interview with Ventsislav Stanev, director of the Tsar Simeon Veliki School, 8 January 2006, Vidin.

during 2005.⁴⁹¹ The local government votes the budget for each school on the basis of the number of pupils and teachers, and this is directly transferred to the school's bank account. Vidin Municipality covers, on a monthly basis, the financial resources for the school's utilities (electricity, water, telephone and building repairs). The contribution for education is estimated at 44.62 per cent of the municipality budget.⁴⁹² The municipality subsidy allocated per pupil in a segregated pre-school or school is the same as the sum allocated per pupil in a predominantly non-Roma pre-school or school.⁴⁹³ The percentage of the total pre-school financing represents 44.62 per cent of the municipality budget, made up from local, tax-based, resources.

School curriculum and programme

In interviews with school directors it was confirmed that the mainstream schools in Vidin have some autonomy with regard to the curriculum and human resources policy, but only in the framework of the laws and regulations governing these issues.⁴⁹⁴ The school director is responsible for hiring and dismissing the school staff. The members of the school board are proposed by the class teachers, while the candidates are selected by the Pedagogical Council. The school boards make decisions related to supply of means for school building repairs and extracurricular activities, supplied by private firms, and take part in the activities of the monthly and annual pedagogical councils.

There is no curricular difference between the municipality-based schools except in the case of the special school, which does not take account of the education results of its pupils; hence, it does not issue a diploma for the completion of classes but just a certificate.

The school governance body is composed of the school principal, schoolteachers and parents. The types of decisions are related to the financing of building repairs, extracurricular activities and implementation of curricular standards. Parents usually take part in regular meetings or when they need to speak with the teacher on some issue related to their child's activities.

The access of Roma pupils to school textbooks is either gained through the NGO Organisation Drom or freely supplied by the State for primary school pupils.

Inspections

There are 20 employees at the Regional Inspectorate of Education, Vidin. The functions of the Regional Inspectorate of Education include the following:

⁴⁹¹ Interview with Valya Nikolova, chief accountant of Vidin Municipality, 10 May, Vidin.

⁴⁹² Interview with Valya Nikolova, chief accountant of Vidin Municipality, 10 May, Vidin.

⁴⁹³ The equal treatment is stipulated in the Council of Ministers' Decision No. 21 from 19/01/2006.

⁴⁹⁴ Interview with Ventsislav Stanev, principal of the Tsar Simeon Veliki Upper Secondary School, 10 March 2006, Vidin; interview with Silvia Pradoeva, deputy principal of the Mathematical Upper Secondary School, 9 March 2006, Vidin; interview with A. Gerasimov, principal of the Otec Paisii Lower Secondary School, 7 March 2006, Vidin.

- Conduct of State policy in the field of education;
- Control for implementation of State education standards in the schools;
- Methodical support for education;
- Teacher qualification activity;
- Organisation and control of the education process.

According to regulations, the Regional Inspectorate of Education is bound to conduct two inspections of the schools (complex and specific in Bulgarian literature, mathematics or another subject) on an annual basis.

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