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Sixth Report submitted by Bulgaria

Pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities – received on 22 October 2026

REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

SIXTH REPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

PURSUANT TO ART. 25. PARA. 2 OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

Sofia, 2026

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INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Bulgaria ratified the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (hereinafter referred to as the "Framework Convention") on 7 May 1999 with a declaration[1]. The Framework Convention entered into force for the country on 1 September 1999.

The sixth state report of the Republic of Bulgaria is prepared on the grounds of Art. 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention. It has been prepared in accordance with the requirements laid down in the Outline for state reports to be submitted under the sixth monitoring cycle of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities[2] . The report is structured in two parts, according to the Outline, with the second part including the provisions of the Framework Convention on which the Committee of Ministers[3] and the Advisory Committee[4] have made recommendations.

The Sixth State Report of the Republic of Bulgaria covers the period from May 2024 to May 2026. The information provided in the previous state reports under the Framework Convention and in the comments of the Government, in particular in response to the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee[5], is presumed to be already known and will not be repeated.

The preparation of the Sixth State Report is coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Contributions to the preparation were received from all departments related to the topic – National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues (NCCEII) to the Council of Ministers, incl. Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Supreme Prosecutor's Office of Cassation, National Institute of Justice, National Statistical Institute, Council for Electronic Media and Commission for Protection against Discrimination. The information provided by the NCCEII Secretariat is coordinated with the non-governmental organizations that are members of the advisory body and contains a reference to their activities (*see Annex No.3*). The draft report has been consulted with the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Ombudsman. The document is published for public consultation in the Public Discussion section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs page[6], on the NCCEII page[7], as well as in the Advisory Councils section of the Public Consultation Portal[8].

The Sixth State Report of the Republic of Bulgaria reflects the national approach followed in the implementation of the Framework Convention, taking into account the fact that the

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[1] Full text of the declaration: "*Reaffirming its attachment to the values of the Council of Europe and the desire for Bulgaria's integration into European structures, Committed to the policy of protection of human rights and tolerance of persons belonging to minorities and their full integration into Bulgarian society, the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria declares: The ratification and implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in no way gives the right to activity that violates the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the unified Bulgarian state, its internal and international security.*"

[2] Seehttps://rm.coe.int/acfc-2022-002-6th-cycle-outline-for-state-reports-2769-4106-6758-v-1/1680a73892 .

[3] See Doc. CM/ResCMN(2026)4.

[4] See Doc. ACFC/OP/V(2024)2.

[5] See Doc. GVT/COM/V(2024)003.

[6] See here: https://www.mfa.bg/bg/ministerstvo/obshtestveno-obsajdane/aktualno

[7] See here: https://www.strategy.bg/bg/advisory-boards/news/24408/details

[8] See here: https://www.strategy.bg/bg/public-consultations/12522

concept of "national minority" is not defined in the national legislation. The Republic of Bulgaria adheres to the understanding of individual rights, which a group of persons exercises jointly, and Bulgarian citizens are given the opportunity to declare their affiliation to a particular ethnic, religious or linguistic group. The protection of their rights and freedoms shall be carried out in accordance with the Constitution, the national legislation and the international legal obligations assumed by the Republic of Bulgaria. The principle of non-discrimination and equality for all citizens before the law are strictly monitored.

The Republic of Bulgaria applies the Framework Convention to persons with Bulgarian citizenship living on its territory, for whom there are both subjective and objective criteria, according to the Explanatory Report to the Framework Convention. According to the last population census of the Republic of Bulgaria, as of 7 September 2021, following the Bulgarian ethnicity, the other two largest ethnic groups are Turkish and Roma, respectively 8.4% and 4.4% of the population. 1.3% of respondents have declared belonging to other ethnic groups. The final data on the ethno-cultural characteristics of the population according to the 2021 Census are available online[9].

Delay in the submission of the report

The Sixth State Report shall be submitted later than the scheduled date of 1 September 2025. The Bulgarian authorities recall that one of the elements that should be taken into account in the preparation of the state reports is the final resolution of the Committee of Ministers on the implementation of the Framework Convention on the previous monitoring cycle. The resolution on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Bulgaria[10] (hereinafter referred to as the "Resolution") under the Fifth Monitoring Cycle was adopted on 4 March 2026. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Council of Europe about the delay and the progress in finalizing the Sixth State Report. The Bulgarian authorities appreciate the understanding.

[9] Final data are available at: https://www.nsi.bg/file/24016/Census2021-ethnos.pdf
[10] The text is available at:
https://search.coe.int/cm#{%22CoEIdentifier%22:[%2209125948802acda9%22],%22sort%22:[%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22]}

PART I: MEASURES TAKEN TO RAISE AWARENESS ON THE RESULTS OF THE FIFTH MONITORING CYCLE AND ON THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES (FCPNM)

Publishing of the opinion of the Advisory Committee and the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers in the Fifth Cycle

The opinion of the Advisory Committee and the Committee of Ministers resolution in the Fifth Cycle have been published:

- on the page of the Public Consultation Portal, section Advisory Councils, the section of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues (NCCEII) at: https://strategy.bg/bg/advisory-boards/12/view/7716/section

- on the website of the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria at: https://www.namrb.org/bg/aktualno/savetat-na-evropa-prie-rezolyutsiya-s-preporaki-kam-balgariya-po-ramkovata-konventsiya-za-zashtita-na-natsionalnite-maltsinstva-19728

Other awareness-raising measures

The members of the NCCEII, institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been informed of all stages of all monitoring cycles under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Internal follow-up activities including those organised jointly with the Council of Europe

The opinion of the Advisory Committee in the Fifth Cycle and the related resolution of the Committee of Ministers were discussed by the NCCEII.

During the reporting period (May 2024-May 2026), activities were carried out in over 60 municipalities under the joint Programme of the Council of Europe and the European Commission – ROMACT. Within the framework of the Council of Europe campaign "*Opre Roma: Defending Dignity and Rights!*", dedicated to celebrating Roma history and culture and the contribution of Roma to the European cultural and historical heritage, NCCEII organized the following events:

- Opening of the exhibition "*Roma literature and culture, part of the richness of Bulgarian culture*", opened on 8 April 2025 at the National Library "St. St. Kiril and Metodii“ in Sofia;
- A sspecial event titled "*With memory of the past, with hope for the future*", held on 29 April 2026, together with the 75th Primary School "Todor Kableshkov", city of Sofia.

PART II: MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FIFTH CYCLE RECOMMENDATION

ARTICLE 3 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

Personal scope of implementation of the Framework Convention

§ 6 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 14 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

The position of the Republic of Bulgarian on the personal scope of the Framework Convention has been duly clarified in the previous monitoring cycles (*see all state reports of the Republic of Bulgaria and comments of the Government on the opinions of the Advisory Committee*).

ARTICLE 4 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

Legal and institutional framework for protection against discrimination

In October 2025, the institution of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Bulgaria was re-accredited for a new five-year period as a national human rights institution with "A" status under the UN Paris Principles.

In March 2026, the National Assembly adopted amendments to the Protection against Discrimination Act. They introduce the provisions of two European directives[11] on equality bodies standards. The changes strengthen the work of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, guaranteeing a higher degree of its freedoms and independence from external influence in the course of g acting within its powers and procedures when reviewing cases of violations. The amendments are in line with the recommendation of the Advisory Committee in § 54 related to granting functional immunity to the members of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination. It also updates the level of sanctions in case of established infringements, which contributes both to unleashing the full potential of the Commission and to countering discrimination even more effectively.

§ 1 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 9 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

In October 2024, the Law on Amendment and Supplement to the Civil Registration Act was promulgated, introducing facilitation of registration at permanent and current addresses of citizens who are unable to provide the required documents, such as a document for ownership

[11] Council Directive (EU) 2024/1499 of 7 May 2024 on standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, equal treatment of persons in matters of employment and occupation irrespective of their religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, equal treatment of women and men in matters of social security and access to and supply of goods and services, and amending Directives 2000/43/EC and 2004/113/EC (OJ L, 2024/1499 of 29.05.2024);
Directive (EU) 2024/1500 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men in matters of employment and occupation and amending Directives 2006/54/EC and 2010/41/EU (OJ, L, 2024/1500 of 29.05.2024).

or use of the property for residential purposes, as well as other documents certifying ownership.

According to the changes, the mayor of the municipality determines the so-called "service address", which is the address of a real estate property, owned by the municipality and used exclusively for performing permanent and current address registrations in cases in which a person does not own or rent a property. Citizens registered at a service address may obtain an identity document. For their part, the municipalities provide information on the conditions and the necessary documents in connection with the registration and provide assistance to all persons in need, in accordance with the legislation in force.

After the entry into force of the changes, information was published on the sites of the municipalities about the obligations of the persons registered at a service address under the Bulgarian Personal Documents Act, and the respective mayoral offices to the municipalities were notified. Information materials have been prepared and distributed to the population. Health mediators also assist in providing the relevant information to the citizens. Some municipalities (Nikola Kozlevo, Lukovit, Popovo, Kaspichan, Borovo, the municipalities in Pleven Region) indicate that as a result of the changes introduced, there is an improvement in the access to applications for municipal housing and social services.

Regarding the number of issued personal documents after the regulatory amendments, from 6 January 2025 (*date of entry into force of the provision*) to May 2026, the number of Bulgarian personal documents issued at a service address throughout the country is a total of 3,931. Most of them were issued in Sofia Region (846), Blagoevgrad Region (836) and Kardzhali Region (499).

§ 7 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 16 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

A sustainable system of interaction between national institutions, regional administrations, municipal authorities and the civil sector has been established within the NCCEII. Coordination mechanisms and strengthening the partnership approach at all levels of government have been upgraded. The contribution of the regional councils for cooperation on ethnic and integration issues, which include representatives of the local government, the territorial structures of the state administration, as well as non-governmental organizations, is significant. This work format creates conditions for regular dialogue, identification of specific local needs and coordinated implementation of measures tailored to the characteristics of the individual regions.

After the adoption by the Council of Ministers of the National Action Plan for the period 2024-2027 for the implementation of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma 2021-2030, the municipalities approved their respective action plans for the said period.

The monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy in 2024 and 2025 shows that the trend towards an integrated approach in the implementation of policies in key areas such as education, health, employment and housing continues. There is sustainability of the measures taken, including by expansion of the network of educational and health mediators, implementation of complex social inclusion programs and the strengthening of the

partnership between institutions, municipalities and the non-governmental sector. Improvement of coordination in the planning and financing of measures, including through the use of funds from the state budget and European funds, such as the Human Resources Development Programme 2021-2027 and the Regional Development Programme 2021-2027 has also been reported (*see information provided under Art. 12 and Art. 15).*

Raising awareness of legal remedies

§ 7 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 15 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

The Minister of Justice is assisted by a specialized National Legal Aid Bureau (the Bureau), which has an independent budget. In the period 2020-2025, 139,000 people received free legal advice and protection of their rights in criminal, civil and administrative proceedings. In 2025, the Bulgarian government increased by 50% the financing of activities under the Legal Aid Act, which funds the protection of the rights of Bulgarian citizens with the lowest incomes. On average, the Bureau makes between 30,000 and 33,000 decisions per year on applications for the payment of public defences.

The National Legal Aid Bureau is involved in the implementation of the project "*Improving Access to Justice for Persons Living Below the Poverty Threshold with a Special Focus on Women, Children and the Roma Community",* funded under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, as well as the Equal Access to Justice Partnership Initiative. During the implementation of the project for the period between November 2024 and April 2025, the following activities were carried out:

- 251 information sessions were held with persons living in remote and isolated areas, where they were informed about their rights, access to legal aid and justice, and mechanisms for protection against discrimination and violence;
- 12 Roma mediators, lawyers and other professionals have received training on human rights, the functioning of institutions and the legal aid system in Bulgaria, the role of the Roma mediators in ensuring equal access to legal aid and justice;
- Rules and Code of Ethics for the work of Roma legal (community) mediators have been developed;
- Legal consultations have been received by 500 women, children and representatives of persons belonging to the Roma ethnic group and persons in a vulnerable situation;
- 7 online publications on the project, its implementation and results have been prepared and announced.

The Bureau keeps a National Registry for legal assistance, containing information about lawyers appointed to provide legal assistance in each respective judicial district. In addition, Regional Counseling Centres have been established as an appendage to the Lawyers' Councils across the country in order to facilitate the access to justice and legal defenders for individuals from vulnerable social groups. The total number of Regional Counseling Centres is 27, and in 2025, 4 more were opened at the Lawyers' Councils in Burgas, in Dobrich and in the municipality of Sliven – specifically in the city of Kotel and in the city of Nova Zagora.

Each person deprived of liberty is provided with access to applicable laws, the right to meet with a legal defender at any time, the right to a telephone call with a legal defender at any time of the day, the opportunity to have a telephone conversation with a legal defender in the event that the detainee does not have funds in their personal account, the opportunity to meet with the prosecutor monitoring the legality of the activities carried out in the prison. Many specialized programs aimed at controlling the aggression and re-socialization of individuals are implemented in the places for detention. According to the detainees' specific needs, there is also an opportunity to increase their education through vocational training in schools at prisons under the guidance of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Justice. Graduates of the courses are awarded certificates, and the time of study is counted as working days.

Training of employees in state institutions

Information on the training activities organized by the National Institute of Justice is contained in Annex 2.

Information on the training of police officers is provided in the response under the section dedicated to Article 6 of the Framework Convention.

Raising awareness regarding the mandates of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination and the Ombudsman's Institution

The Ombudsman's institution, together with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, held an exchange of good practices with the Defender of Rights of the French Republic with a view to improving the awareness of persons self-identifying as belonging to the Roma ethnic group. Specific mechanisms to improve communication and the provision of information in relation to different categories of rights were explored.

In 2025, the Ombudsman continued the practice of outreach reception offices in small living areas in order to communicate directly with local communities, including Roma. Nine outreach reception events were held, within which a special focus was placed on persons belonging to the Roma ethnic group.

The institution of the Ombudsman conducts annual open-door campaigns for persons representing the Roma ethnic group. As part of them, meetings were held with the ombudsmen for children (Amalipe Association), the Roma Women's Network (ROMACT), local Roma organizations.

An information material on the rights of Roma and the possibilities for their protection has been prepared in the Roma language. Its dissemination is pending. In 2025, the Ombudsman signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (BTA), which complements the communication policy of the institution by using the network of BTA's national press clubs to disseminate information on human rights among local communities living in smaller areas. BTA publishes daily materials on the Ombudsman's practice in relation to the protection of the rights of different communities and social groups.

The Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) organizes national campaigns to raise public awareness about the protection against discrimination. The CPD has a good partnership with the Bulgarian National Radio and the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, which promote its activities. The latter enables Bulgarian citizens to get acquainted with the opportunities for protection against discrimination and unequal treatment. The regional representatives of the CPD hold information meetings throughout the year with representatives of the municipal directors of schools, kindergartens and social homes, representatives of community centres, children's pedagogical rooms, regional departments of education, NGOs and others.

In 2025, six information campaigns were implemented in the cities of Vratsa, Burgas, Stara Zagora, Veliko Tarnovo, Plovdiv and Shumen, aimed at training specialists in the rights and principles of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Leaflets have been prepared in connection with the Charter, which are aimed at employers and the target community to inform them of their rights and the mechanisms for their protection, under the legislation.

Since June 2025, the Chairperson of the CPD has been organizing so-called "open reception rooms" outside the capital, during which meetings are held with representatives of state bodies and organizations and current problems related to discriminatory practices are discussed, including in terms of access to quality education, health care, and the labour market. In 2025, the CPD also took action to hold direct meetings with representatives of the Roma community, which also incorporated consultations on dealing with current problems.

ARTICLE 5 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

Protecting and promoting the culture, language and traditions of persons self-identifying as belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups

The Ministry of Culture, through its programs in various fields (cultural heritage, performing arts, amateur art, library and publishing), annually provides equal access and participation in cultural life. The funds under the programs are provided on a competitive basis, and are applied for by state, municipal and private organizations working in the field of culture. 2,000 projects have been implemented under the library programs in the period 2024-2026, with an estimated value of EUR 2.04 million. Under the Publishing Support Program in the period 2024-2026, 276 projects worth EUR 409,000 were implemented.

Information campaigns are carried out to help applicants. In the field of arts and culture education, the admission of students is carried out by guaranteeing equal access. Students receive scholarships for educational achievements, to support access to education and prevention of dropping out, to support students with permanent disabilities and students without parents. Students from art and culture schools are provided with specialized scholarships for children with outstanding gifts, as well as one-time financial support for participation in master classes and courses. Performing Arts programs of the Ministry of Culture are common for all applicants.

The funds under the funding schemes, which are administered by the Executive Agency "National Film Centre", are provided on a competitive basis, and candidates can be private

organizations working in the field of culture. In recent years, among the projects supported by the Executive Agency are:

- the feature film "My Happy Family", with prod. Ginger Light EOOD, which is a Turkish-language project of a Bulgarian director of Turkish ethnic origin, with an approved funding amount of EUR 352,791;

- a project for a short feature film "Stop the Car", with prod. Atik Films EOOD, director from the Republic of North Macedonia, with Bulgarian citizenship, supported in 2025 by the amount of EUR 38,346;

- 5th International Festival of Ethnographic Cinema "OKO" (2024), which shows ethnographic and anthropological, documentaries and feature films of small and large nations, communities, residents of villages and cities. Traditionally, the festival is held in Bulgaria and Ukraine and is supported by the sum of about EUR 20,451.

The Ministry of Culture finances projects in the field of movable cultural heritage and visual arts. The total value of funds under funding programs for 2024 amounts to about EUR 997,000. The total number of beneficiaries in these sessions is 139.

§ 2 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 10 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

The National Culture Fund provides grants to projects in the field of arts and culture on a competitive basis. For the reporting period, the following have been realized:

Code	Amount allocated to projects financed under the NCF Regular Programmes for 2024 and 2025.	Number of projects
Code 1 - Project submitted by an organization self-identified as Roma	€13,873	2
Code 2 - Project with activity(ies) with Roma community	€28,852	4
Code 3 - Project with activity(ies) with Turkish-speaking community	€13,037	2
Code 4 - Project with activity(ies), directed at multi-ethnic communities	€24,278	3
Code 5 - Project with activity(ies) with Vlach community	€6,391	1
Total	€86,431	12

Most funds are allocated to projects with activity(ies) targeting individuals belonging to the Roma ethnic group, followed by projects with activity(ies) targeting multiple ethnic communities. The number of projects under these codes is also the largest - respectively 4 projects with activity(ies) with Roma communities and 3 projects with activity(ies) with multiple ethnic communities.

The distribution of projects under the NCF's regular programs for 2024 and 2025 is as follows:

Program	Number of projects	Amount granted
Dissemination 2024	3	EUR 18,731
Creation and/or dissemination 2025	3	EUR 20,707
Amateur Art 2024	4	EUR 26,587
Amateur Art 2025	2	EUR 20,408
TOTAL:		EUR 86,433

The most numerous are the projects funded under the Amateur Art Program 2024 worth EUR 26,587, followed by those under the Dissemination Programs 2024 and Creation and/or Dissemination 2025. In aggregating the data, the leading role of the Amateur Art Program in the May 2024-May 2025 focus period is clear, emphasizing its function as the main tool for promoting the cultural life of ethnic communities in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The other main conclusion from the data is that the “Dissemination” and “Creation and/or Dissemination” programs are also a key conductor for the cultural participation of Bulgarian citizens belonging to different ethnic communities. These programs provide the necessary financial resources for the non-commercial dissemination of cultural products in living areas with a limited access to culture.

In the cultural calendars of the municipalities, activities are established and implemented that promote the traditions, culture, religion and language of persons belonging to various ethnic groups and encourage their further development and dissemination. The activities are implemented by cultural institutions, creating conditions for active dialogue between representatives of different ethnicities. Extracurricular activities and language talks are held in schools. A number of municipalities (e.g. Berkovitsa, Valchi Dol, Dolni Chiflik, Venets) allocate annual funds for cultural and educational initiatives aimed at supporting persons belonging to different ethnic groups.

The community centres – “Chitalishta” are a major factor in the development of local culture, non-formal education and information, especially in small municipalities where there are no other cultural institutions and centres. Traditionally, dance ensembles have been established and functioned at the “Chitalishta”, including folk dance groups of diverse ethnic groups (Turkish, Roma, etc.). Major holidays are widely celebrated, to which representatives of different communities are invited, such as the Roma New Year, International Roma Day, International Mother Language Day, the Day of Tolerance, public iftars on the occasion of Ramadan Bayram and Eid al-Adha, Ashure and others. The Tryavna Municipality organized the International Festival "I chose Bulgaria", under the motto "Different roots, one home", in order to unite different cultures and traditions. During the reporting period, the "Free Sprint Art" project was implemented in the municipality of Yablanitsa – improving inter-cultural cooperation through stage and screen arts", funded by the Ministry of Culture.

In areas where representatives of smaller ethnic groups live, sustainable partnerships have been established with municipal authorities and cultural institutions. Traditional celebrations

of individual ethnicities are organized as common urban and municipal events. Traditional annual events can be cited as a good example: Festival of Ethnicities, Colours and Kotel Carpet (Municipality of Kotel), International Children's Folklore Dance Festival "Friendship without Borders" (Municipality of Sliven) and Traditional Folklore Festival of the Karakachans. A rich cultural program with over 700 events involving representatives of different minority communities continues to be implemented annually in the Municipality of Vidin. The National „Chitalishta“ in Stara Zagora District organize: folklore festivals of Roma, Turkish and Armenian culture, courses in traditional dances, music and crafts, holidays and re-enactments of customs. The Armenian community in the country maintains community centres and organizations that work to preserve the historical memory, traditions and language of the community, representatives of the municipalities participate in the organized events.

The financing of the activities is carried out through various sources: the budget of cultural institutions, national and international programs, state transfers and municipal co-financing. As an example for good practice municipalities point to Procedure "Promoting inter-cultural education through culture, science and sport" under the Programme “Education” 2021-2027, which enables municipalities to implement successful models for the promotion and development of multicultural education and the creation of a positive attitude towards different cultural identities. In the period 2018-2025 the Ministry of Culture is a program operator of the Cultural Entrepreneurship, Heritage and Cooperation Program, funded by the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area (EEA FM).

On 30 October 2024 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Bulgarian Diplomatic Institute organized a seminar on "Unity of Religions and Communities in Bulgaria: dimensions of publicity and diplomacy with universal applicability”[12], which took place with the participation of religious organizations, state institutions, scientists and intellectuals. A collection of presentations and speeches within its framework was published and translated into English and Arabic.

ARTICLE 6 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

Tolerance and inter-cultural dialogue

§ 10 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 21 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

The structure and composition of the NCCEII have been clarified in detail in previous state reports under the Framework Convention.

For the reporting period, no changes have been made to the Rules of Procedure of the NCCEII at the Council of Ministers (hereinafter the "Rules"). The work organization with respect to the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma (2021-2030) is carried out through expert working groups and support units, in accordance with Article 8 of the Rules.

Representatives of non-profit legal entities that have statutory purposes and at least three years of activity for public benefit corresponding to the objectives of the NCCEII, participate

[12] Вж. https://mfa.bg/bg/news/42760

as its members. According to the Rules, the membership of non-profit legal entities in the Council shall be for a period of 3 years, after which, if they wish to do so, it shall be renewed for another 3-year period. On 8 December 2025, an invitation was published to the willing non-profit legal entities to apply for membership in the NCCEII for the period 2026 – 2028.[13]

Information on the initiatives implemented by non-governmental organizations which are members of the NCCEII is presented in Annex No. 3.

Promotion of trust, mutual respect and understanding

§ 3 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 11 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

Municipalities are implementing a number of initiatives aimed at promoting trust, mutual respect and understanding between different communities, promoting tolerance and non-violence, preventing aggression among young people, domestic violence, etc. Partnerships have been established with educational institutions – schools, kindergartens through the implementation of joint educational, cultural, sports activities.

With the implementation of activities for the prevention and intervention of bullying and violence, as well as with the celebration of the Day of Tolerance, the Day of Kindness, the Day of Patience, etc., positive attitudes towards differences from an early age are formed and taught in the spirit of tolerance, formation of sociocultural competence and effective socialization. Through media initiatives, broadcasts and campaigns, respect, tolerance are being promoted, along with combatting stereotypes, presenting positive examples of coexistence, and emphasizing the successful realization of individuals of different ethnicities. Partnerships between institutions and NGOs are encouraged (Roma Lom Foundation, Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation, Amalipe Centre for Inter-ethnic Dialogue and Tolerance, Trust for Social Alternative Foundation, Integro Association, Hayachi Association, Roma Academy for Culture and Education Association, Shelter for Humanity Foundation, S.E.G.A. Foundation. - Start for effective civic alternatives", etc.), which work to prevent and overcome discrimination and promote mutual respect and understanding with regard to persons belonging to different ethnic, religious and linguistic groups.

Explanatory campaigns are carried out to overcome ignorance and prejudice, to increase the awareness and sensitivity of children and students. The regional representations of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination promote the principles of equality and tolerance and overcoming stereotypes. The activities carried out by the Local Commissions for Combating Antisocial Actions of Minors also have initiatives: sports events to promote tolerant inter-ethnic relations, information campaigns aimed at preventing discrimination based on race, ethnic origin or religion, talks, initiatives and training with teachers, students and parents.

The Ministry of Culture contributes to the promotion of media literacy through the Permanent Expert Council on Media Literacy of the Minister of Culture, established by order of the Minister of Culture in 2025. The Permanent Expert Council is an advisory and expert body to assist the Minister in the exercise of his powers and for coordination between stakeholders

[13] The invitation is published at: https://www.strategy.bg/bg/advisory-boards/news/24381/details

on national media literacy policy issues. The Council brings together representatives of the executive branch, academic, scientific and research units, private and public media, civil sector organisations, public libraries and other cultural institutes, and cultural and creative industries organisations. Its activity is aimed at effective cooperation, structured dialogue and communication between stakeholders, as well as the limitation of the impact of stereotypes and prejudices and the strengthening of the inter-cultural dialogue involving representatives of different ethnic, religious and linguistic groups.

Information on the projects implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science to promote tolerance, combat prejudice and stereotypes is available in Annex No. 4.

In the draft Concept for Change of Curricula published on the Ministry of Education and Science website, one of the main goals of the change is the strengthening of the educational function and the development of the socio-emotional intelligence of students. Greater emphasis is placed on the formation of human virtues and civic values. This emphasis directly relates to the stated effective measures to promote mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation between all individuals, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious identity.

Police training

Trainings for front-line police officers focused on working in a multi-ethnic environment have been taking place for many years. Human rights issues are also part of police's daily briefings.

The Academy of the Ministry of Interior (MI) provides vocational education and training to the employees of the Ministry of Interior, and for the period May 2024 to May 2026 (three school years) the following courses have been conducted, including disciplines dedicated to human rights:

- Bachelor programs in the specialities "Countering crime and preserving public order" (500 people have received training in full-time and part-time form for the specified period) and "Border Police" (34 people have received training in full-time form) contain trainings in "Criminal law" and "Human rights and police ethics";
- The Professional Training Courses for Police Officers teach the subjects “Police Protection of Human Rights” and “Police Ethics” (126 people have undergone training). Special attention is paid to hate crimes and hate speech in the training of investigative police officers;
- The Master's program in Human Rights Protection teaches the disciplines of Criminal Law Protection of Fundamental Human Rights and Protection against Discrimination in the Republic of Bulgaria. In this speciality, in the academic year 2024-2025 (with a training period from August 6, 2024 to November 13, 2025), a class of 30 people graduated, and in the current academic year 2025-2026, 26 people are being trained.

Since March 2024, lecturers of Roma origin have also participated in the Master's Program "Protection of Human Rights" at the Academy of the Ministry of Interior, which deepens the activity of the police in a multi-ethnic environment.

On the website of the Academy of the Ministry of Interior, the following four manuals are published to increase the capacity of police officers working in a multi-ethnic environment, including in Roma communities: “Creating speech skills and overcoming the language barrier between police officers and the Roma population”, “Human Rights. Lawful application of force and police powers", "Prevention among the Roma population as victims of crime” and "Disciplinary responsibility of civil servants in the Ministry of Interior".

In the period 2023-2025 the General Directorate "National Police" implemented the project "Improving the coordination and dialogue between the police and the Roma society" (under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2022 and the Operational Programme "Home Affairs"), within which several events were held with children and parents to overcome anti-Roma stereotypes and discrimination. 240 police officers have been trained to prevent and detect radicalisation, violent extremism and hate speech, in particular towards the Roma community. A handbook and other informative brochures have been developed that are used throughout the country. In order to improve the conditions for the reception and dialogue of the police with the Roma communities, 19 reception rooms have been renovated and an additional new one was established. In the final study of the project among Roma adults, there was a 13% increase in trust in the police. The proportion of adult Roma who have confidence in the police and its officers is higher than the proportion of those who do not.

Within the framework of a project of the General Directorate for National Police on "Improving the Effectiveness of Police Activities in the Field of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence" (under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2022 and the Operational Program "Home Affairs"), implemented in the period 2023-2024, a number of activities were carried out to improve the situation of the Roma population and raise the awareness of their rights. An automated information system has been introduced, as well as an algorithm for risk assessment and victim identification.

Statistics from the Supreme Prosecutor's Office of Cassation on hate crimes under Articles of the Criminal Code for the period 2024-2025 are presented in Annex No. 1.

ARTICLE 7 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

Freedom of association

§ 10 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 18 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

The position of the Republic of Bulgaria on ensuring freedom of association under the European Convention on Human Rights has been duly clarified in previous monitoring cycles. (*See all state reports of the Republic of Bulgaria and comments of the government on the opinions of the Advisory Committee).*

Since the beginning of 2018, a new administrative procedure for the registration of non-governmental organizations has been applied in the Republic of Bulgaria, replacing the court procedure. It provides for a user-friendly regime allowing registration in compliance with formal legal requirements. In 2025, in cooperation with the Council of Europe Secretariat, Methodological Guidelines on Registration Proceedings were developed and published, as well as additional practical guidelines for completing registration documents. The

methodological guidelines have been further improved in 2026. In June 2025, a number of trainings were conducted for the employees of the Registry Agency to improve their qualifications and effectively implement the new provisions.

A comparative analysis of the Ministry of Justice for 2025, covering information about all EU Member States, clearly shows that the procedures for registration of non-profit legal entities in the Republic of Bulgaria are among the most liberal ones.

ARTICLE 8 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

Freedom of religion

In this area, the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers on the Fifth Monitoring Cycle of the Framework Convention does not contain recommendations for the Republic of Bulgaria.

The position of the Bulgarian side regarding the provision of freedom of religion under the Convention has been duly clarified in the previous monitoring cycles.

As of May 2026, 252 religious institutions representing all major world religions and a number of new religious movements are registered.

ARTICLE 9 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

Radio and TV broadcasting, print media in mother tongue

The Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) and the Bulgarian National Television (BNT), as national public providers, provide media services to all citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria, contribute to the development and promotion of Bulgarian culture and the Bulgarian language, as well as to the culture and language of citizens in accordance with their ethnicity.

The financing of public media service providers is carried out by a subsidy from the state budget, own advertising and sponsorship revenues, as well as additional activities related to the radio and television sphere. The subsidy from the state budget, allocated to BNR and BNT is meant for the preparation, creation and distribution of national and regional programs. It is determined on the basis of a pre-set standard, calculated for one hour of programming and is approved by the Council of Ministers. The state budget subsidy is also a targeted subsidy, meant for use for the acquisition and thorough renovation of long-term assets, according to a list approved annually by the Minister of Finance.

The Republic of Bulgaria does not apply geo-blocking on its territory, which is why radio and television channels are available to all citizens in the country. Internet access to live broadcast radio and TV channels is also seamless, with a large number of municipalities on the territory of the country providing free high-speed internet in public places.

In the BNT 1 program of the public provider Bulgarian National Television, it continues to broadcast every weekday the column "Around the World and in Bulgaria" in Turkish. The show "Around the World and in Bulgaria" is available online and in Ukrainian since June 2023 on the website of the Bulgarian National Television – bnt.bg. The following specialized content

can be derived from the BNT program, bearing in mind that the ethnic theme is regularly present in a number of other information programs:

- Weekly one-hour show "Small Stories", which since 2011 presents different stories of Roma, Ukrainian and other persons who have successfully integrated in the country;
- Weekday morning slot "Kultura.BG", in which some of the episodes present the Roma culture as part of the European cultural heritage.
- Weekday show "Bulgaria in 60 Minutes", which includes reports on the major traditional holidays of ethnic communities in Bulgaria, such as Bango Vasil, Ramadan Bayram, Catholic and Orthodox celebrations, etc.
- Documentary series "Bulgaria from end to end", which in the period 2024-2025 was dedicated to the lifestyle of the ethnic groups living in North-Western Bulgaria and the Rhodope Mountains.
- Content on the integration of refugees in Bulgaria can be found in materials of the morning block "The Day Begins" and in the weekly news programs "Speak Now" and "Panorama".

The following specialized content can be derived from the BNR program, along with the ethnic theme, which is regularly present in a number of other information programs:

- In the program of the Bulgarian National Radio - Radio Kardzhali there is a one-hour information block three times a day – "Radio Bulgaria Program in Turkish". Other programs in the BNR - Kardzhali program include "After the First Coffee" and "Colourful Rug", which reflect the ethnic diversity in the region.
- The "Hristo Botev" Program broadcasts "The Other Next to Me", dedicated to various minority groups and "Voices of the Earth", dedicated to the communities building the image of Bulgaria.
- In cooperation with the Shalom Organization of Bulgarian Jews, the Hristo Botev Program organized national programs related to the commemoration of the Holocaust and the rescue of Bulgarian Jews during World War II.
- Regional radio stations in Burgas, Varna, Vidin, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora and Shumen. In particular, Radio Shumen has a section titled "Novite Nashentsi", which is implemented in cooperation witha non-governmental organization to present the stories of foreigners who have chosen to live and work in Bulgaria.
- From the month of October, 2022, the Bulgarian National Radio expanded its website with a section of the Radio Bulgaria program in Romanian as well. The programme also presents information materials and radio broadcasts (podcasts) in English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Greek, Serbian, Turkish, Albanian.

Regional news broadcasts, including specialized news in Turkish, as well as social-integration shows broadcast in the BNR programs, provide information clarity about the life of ethnic communities. Their religious and cultural calendar, their contribution to public life and to local government are systematically reflected.

ARTICLE 10 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

Use of mother tongue in contacts with the administration

§ 14 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 22 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

The position of the Republic of Bulgaria on the use of mother tongue is duly clarified in the first state report of 9 April 2003. The constitutional and legal framework governing the use of the official language, including by citizens for whom Bulgarian is not their mother tongue, remains in force.

ARTICLE 11 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

Use of bilingual signs

§ 11 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 19 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

The position of the Republic of Bulgaria on the use of mother tongue has been duly clarified in the previous monitoring cycles (*See all state reports of the Republic of Bulgaria in the previous monitoring cycles and comments of the government on the opinions of the Advisory Committee*).

ARTICLE 12 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

Educating teachers and promoting diversity in schools

§ 12 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 20 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

The legislative framework for providing access to education to children and students whose mother tongue is different from Bulgarian is set out in the previous reports of the Republic of Bulgaria under the Framework Convention.

The State position regarding the collection of data on the ethnic origin of children and the danger of the so-called “segregation” has been duly clarified in previous monitoring cycles (*See all government reports and comments on Advisory Committee opinions*).

Mechanism for joint work of institutions on coverage and inclusion in pre-school and school education – current developments

Since 2018, a permanent Mechanism for joint work of institutions on the coverage, inclusion and prevention of dropping out of the education system of children and pupils of compulsory pre-school and school age (hereinafter referred to as the "Mechanism") has been in place and it is especially significant for some of the persons belonging to ethnic groups. Information on the mechanism is contained in the Fifth State Report of the Republic of Bulgaria under the Framework Convention.

The General Directorate "Civil Registration and Administrative Services" (GRAO) at the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works provides the necessary information for

the functioning of the Mechanism under a scope and structure defined by the Ministry of Education and Science for children and students of compulsory school age who are subject to coverage in the educational system. The Ministry of Education and Science ensures the inclusion of data from the National Electronic Information System for Pre-school and School Education to the Information System for the Implementation of the Mechanism (hereinafter "Information System"), and the data are compared with the data from the GRAO for the identification of children and students who are enrolled, not enrolled or have dropped out of the education system.

Every year by November, the coverage teams on the territory of the country apply measures to:

- cover and enroll children in compulsory preschool and school age who are not enrolled in kindergarten or first grade;

- cover and include children and students who have attended school or kindergarten in the previous school year, but have not been enrolled in the current one;

- cover and include children and pupils who have attended school or kindergarten but have dropped out during the previous school year.

On a regular basis, the coverage teams provide information through the Municipal Mayors' Information System on established violations of the obligations of parents, guardians or carers. In cases where children cannot be found for 10 days at their permanent address, the mayors of the municipalities use the Information System to notify the respective heads of the regional departments of education.

Team leaders in all areas in the country periodically organize work meetings with team members from all institutions, included in the Coverage Mechanism. Organizational issues are discussed in order to achieve better efficiency in carrying out physical visits.

Meetings of the regional coordination centres for the implementation of the Mechanism are held every month with the participation of the Regional Departments of Education, representatives of the municipalities, the regional directorates for social assistance, representatives of the Regional Directorates of the Ministry of Interior, representatives of the regional health inspectorates and in other areas in the country. The meetings present information on the current situation with the coverage and inclusion of children and students at the district and municipal level, analyse the main reasons for dropping out of students and identify measures on a case-by-case basis.

Work consultations are held with the directors of educational institutions in all regions, issues related to forthcoming specific actions on the inclusion of children and pupils of compulsory pre-school and school age are being discussed.

Participants in the coverage teams of the educational institutions work in cooperation with all pedagogical specialists in the kindergartens/schools on the implementation of a set of measures to prevent children from dropping out. Systematic links and joint activities are carried out with the representatives of the local authorities, the Child Protection Department, the Social Assistance Directorate, the Ministry of Interior. Visits to students' homes are performed and conversations with parents are maintained about the benefits and advantages of attending school, prospects, future realization, as well as social integration. Effective use is

made of educational and health mediators, parent clubs and numerous institutional initiatives involving families. Cooperation is implemented at all levels – from the regional and district coordination units to the field coverage teams. The efforts of all participants in the process are aimed at reducing the risks of dropping out of children and students and supporting disadvantaged families.

Statistics on children and pupils aged up to 18 years in the education system

Academic year	Returned children to the education system	Children who have dropped out again (not retained)	Newly dropped out of the education system	Balance
2024/2025	14,328	235	2692	11,401
2025/2026	13,261	281	2826	10,154
Total values for the period 2024-2026	27,589	516	5518	21,555

The functioning of the Mechanism also depends on external factors such as migration outside the country. As can be seen from the statistical information provided, during individual school years it is possible to increase the number of children who have dropped out of the education system. This is a consequence of the moving of families together with their children abroad or to other living areas within the country and their subsequent return after a certain period of time. In some cases, upon returning from a foreign country, parents want the child to continue attending school, but have not obtained the necessary documents for the recognition of the education received abroad, and although isolated, there are cases in which such children remain outside the education system.

Information on the projects implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science in the field of inclusive education is available in Annex No. 4.

Educational mediators

Since 2018, funds have been provided for educational institutions with a concentration of persons in a vulnerable situation (kindergartens and schools), and additional funds are provided according to the educational status of parents – institutions with low educational status of parents receive more funds.

In 2025, amendments to the Regulation on the Funding of Institutions in the Preschool and School Education System provided additional funding for kindergartens and schools that primarily serve children and students from vulnerable situation. The introduced amendments aim to further support the funding of small educational institutions, which will have more significant resources to implement social and educational policies. To receive funding for

educational mediators, institutions should have appointed them and registered them in the National Electronic Information System.

As of May 2026, 1662 educational mediators have been appointed in the system of pre-school and school education, financed by funds from the state budget and/or by projects.

ARTICLE 13 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

Education and teaching in the mother tongue

No recommendation was made during the Fifth Monitoring Cycle of the Framework Convention.

The constitutional and regulatory framework in the field of pre-school and school education, including with regard to the opening and functioning of private educational institutions, ensures compliance with the principles of equality, non-discrimination and inclusive education. All educational institutions are obliged to provide equal access to education and conditions for the full participation of each child and student in the educational process.

The regulatory framework describing the possibility of establishing and maintaining private schools that offer an option for learning foreign languages is clarified in the Fifth State Report of the Republic of Bulgaria under the Framework Convention.

ARTICLE 14 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

Learning of mother tongue

§ 4 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 12 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

The normative framework providing for the study of mother tongue by children and students for whom the Bulgarian language is not their mother tongue is unchanged. Regarding the recommendation of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee on "promoting the teaching and learning of the languages of persons belonging to minority groups", the position of the country is set out in all the State reports of the Republic of Bulgaria under the Framework Convention, as well as in the comments of the government on the opinions of the Advisory Committee.

By Decree No. 25 of the Council of Ministers of 22 April 2024, additional transfers were approved to the budgets of the municipalities for the purchase of free educational kits for students who study the subject of Turkish mother tongue.

From the academic year 2024 – 2025, educational kits for students who study the subject of mother tongue, sets for I grade, II grade, III grade, IV grade, V grade, VI grade and VII grade in the subject of mother tongue – Turkish language are purchased. Additional funds are also provided for the purchase of electronically readable textbooks.

The number of students from I grade to XII grade in all schools studying mother tongue – Turkish language and mother tongue – Armenian language for the school year 2024 – 2025 and for the school year 2025 – 2026 is:

During the academic year 2024 – 2025:	
Mother tongue:	Number of students:
Turkish language	3368
Armenian language	111
During the academic year 2025 – 2026:	
Mother tongue:	Number of students:
Turkish language	2925
Armenian language	110

It should be borne in mind that mother tongue training does not exclude the presence of persons learning the above languages in other programmes (e.g. as foreigner languages) as part of the primary, secondary and higher education.

ARTICLE 15 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

Political representation and participation

According to the Constitution, the official language of the Republic of Bulgaria is Bulgarian (Art. 3), and the Electoral Code regulates the election campaign to be conducted in Bulgarian language (Art. 181, para. 2). The purpose of the provisions of the Electoral Code is to guarantee the right of every citizen to send or receive political messages in compliance with the principles of non-discrimination and equality during an election campaign, which will reach all Bulgarian citizens.

Effective participation in socio-economic life

§ 15 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 23 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

According to a study by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights published in 2025.[14], the Republic of Bulgaria ranks first among the surveyed countries in terms of the potential to achieve the widest range of goals set at EU level in terms of tackling poverty and social exclusion, education and employment. According to the 2024 survey in Bulgaria, 62% of Roma indicated that they had a paid job (against a common EU target of 60% for 2030) and 49% of Roma women indicated that they had a paid job (against a common EU target of 45% for 2030).

[14] The study is entitled "Rights of Roma and travellers in 13 European countries – perspectives from Roma survey – perspective" and is available at:
https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2025/roma-survey-2024

According to data from the Employment Agency, unemployed Bulgarian citizens self-identified as Roma who started work in the period January 2024 – May 2026 are as follows:

Unemployed persons, self-identified as Roma, who started work through the mediation of labour offices			
	2024	2025	January-May 2026
Subsidized employment	4,538	3,879	551
Non-subsidized employment	13,275	12,201	4985

The lower number of unemployed self-identified Roma who started work in 2025 compared to the number of the same demographic in 2024 can be partly explained by the overall lower number of unemployed self-identified Roma registered in labour offices in 2025. Compared to 2024, the average monthly number of unemployed self-identified Roma registered at the labour offices decreased by 982, with the rate of decrease in the number of registered Roma (-3.4%) being the same as the rate of decrease in the total number of unemployed persons for the same period.

Projects financed with EU funds make a significant contribution to improving integration in the field of employment. The Human Resources Development Programme 2021-2027 supports the implementation of operations aimed at providing general and targeted support to persons in vulnerable situations in order to promote social inclusion and their full participation in social and economic life.

Labour mediators

In 2025, 80 Roma labour mediators worked in the labour offices (for comparison – in 2021 there were 73 mediators). Their activity is funded by the state budget for active labour market policy under the National Program "Activation of Inactive Persons". In their activity in 2025, they are supported by 81 youth mediators, as well as by about 140 activation specialists hired under the Activation component of the I Start Working project under the Human Resources Development Program. In 2025, Roma mediators activated 8,172 Roma people and held 520 meetings with Roma leaders, NGOs and social partners and 1,732 meetings with employers to promote Roma employment.

Information on the projects implemented to promote employment is presented in Annex 5.

Health mediators

The Ministry of Health implements and supports a number of measures aimed at improving the health status and access to health care of persons in vulnerable situations of the population, including the Roma community. Measures have been taken to implement the "Health" priority of the National Action Plan for the period 2024-2027 to the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma 2021-2030, which contribute to improving the overall well-being and quality of life of the affected groups. These include ensuring access to primary and specialised medical care through mobile medical teams in remote communities, conducting health education campaigns aimed at the

prevention of socially significant diseases, raising health culture and awareness of health rights, and supporting and developing the network of health mediators who play a key role in facilitating access to health services.

Information on the activities of health mediators is presented in Annex 6.

Measures taken to improve housing conditions

§ 5 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 13 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

NCCEII data for 2025 show that in a significant part of the municipalities there is an improvement in the housing environment and infrastructure. Some municipalities are already implementing or planning actions to establish the actual spatial and property status of existing dwellings and neighbourhoods, including through geodetic surveying, analysis of land ownership, development or updating of detailed spatial plans, creating a cadastral basis and searching for opportunities to certify the tolerance of buildings when the legal prerequisites are present.

Examples for good practices can be given e.g. in the following municipalities:

Gotse Delchev Municipality and Kresna Municipality, where the Roma population lives in relatively good housing conditions with access to electricity, water and built sewerage systems, as well as improved and maintained infrastructure. A project for social housing has also been implemented in the municipality of Gotse Delchev, which provides an opportunity for temporary accommodation of persons in a vulnerable situation.

Peshtera Municipality, where the Trust for Social Achievement Foundation's Regulation and Housing Conditions Program is being implemented, aimed at regulating and legalizing non-regulated neighbourhoods.

The municipalities of Satovcha and Simitli, where a good degree of integration is reported, as well as a relatively good condition of the housing stock. In a number of municipalities, including Suvorovo, Rodopi, Petrich and Sandanski, actions are being taken to develop the technical infrastructure and legalize existing residential buildings, which creates prerequisites for sustainable improvement of the living environment. As a result of the improvement in the economic situation of some Roma households, especially those working abroad, there is a process of buying housing outside the traditional compact neighbourhoods and gradually integrating into other parts of the living area.

In the period of June 2025 - July 2027, the project "Home Equals – Improving Housing Conditions in Illegal Neighbourhoods" was implemented in the municipalities of Kyustendil and Berkovitsa. It aims to grant housing status, improve basic infrastructure and create a sustainable model for social integration and development of the affected communities. It is part of the global Home Equals campaign aimed at improving living conditions in illegal neighbourhoods around the world.

Kyustendil Municipality has an approved Detailed Development Plan for its quarter "Iztok". It is currently in the process of issuing "certificates of tolerance" which serve as exemptions from demolition for housing in the neighbourhood. Within the project, two residential

mediators will assist the local residents to go through this procedure. In addition, funds will be provided for the development of a project for a water supply and sewerage network on several streets with a total length of 800 m, which will help provide access to clean water for about 100 households (over 400 people). Kyustendil is an example of a successful model of legalization and modernization of the infrastructure in an unregulated neighbourhood.

The municipality of Berkovitsa is also joining these efforts. With the preparation of a plan for the street network in its quarter “Rakovitsa”, opportunities for the construction of plumbing, electricity and street lighting in the neighbourhood will open, as well as for the acquisition of legal ownership of about 800 homes. The project will use the experience and good practices from quarter “Iztok” in Kyustendil to multiply the whole process of planning, regulation, infrastructure construction and social inclusion.

In the course of the implementation of the project "Home Equals – Improving housing conditions in illegal neighbourhoods", a working visit to Romania was organized in April 2026 with the participation of a Bulgarian delegation of representatives of national and local authorities. The purpose of the visit is to exchange experience, discuss real policies and practical solutions in the field of housing policy and social inclusion.

In addition, under the Programme "Development of the Regions" 2021-2027, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), funds in the amount of EUR 1.8 billion have been earmarked for infrastructure investments with a focus on the territory of urban municipalities in the country.

Other relevant Information

On 12 February 2026, the topic of Roma housing was discussed at the meeting of the Commission assisting the NCCEII in formulating, implementing and monitoring the National Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation (2021-2030). Organizations with expertise on the topic, which are not members of the NCCEII, also took part in the meeting: Trust for Social Alternative Foundation, Association “Integro”, as well as representatives of the Sofia Municipality.

On 17 March 2026 the Forum "A Decent Home, a Secure Future: Housing conditions as a key factor for the rights of the child" was held, organized within the framework of the Joint Programme of the European Commission and the Council of Europe ROMACT, in partnership with the NCCEII at the Council of Ministers. National and local authority representatives, civil society, international organizations and representatives of the Roma community discussed the topic of housing insecurity and its impact on the rights of the child, outlining good practices in the field[15].

Removal of illegal structures

In cases of removal of illegal structures, it is important to keep in mind that these involve buildings completed without the necessary permits and posing a significant threat to the safety of their occupants. Such structures do not meet any urban planning, fire safety or sanitary requirements, which is why they need to be removed. This procedure is carried out in full compliance with the applicable legal requirements, valid for all illegal structures, with no discrimination against the persons who built them or live in them. The process is no

[15] https://coe-romact.org/sites/default/files/National%20Forum%20-%20Key%20Takeaways.pdf

different from those existing in other Member States of the European Union and the Council of Europe. In cases of filed complaints, the administrative authorities as well as the courts examine the compliance of the measures with the applicable international standards and apply strictly the principle of proportionality, enshrined *inter alia* in the Administrative Procedure Code of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The occupants of the buildings are notified in advance and duly informed regarding the structure's pending removal as well as regarding the applicable procedures and possibilities for receiving support. Where legal prerequisites exist, alternative accommodation may be offered within the existing municipal housing stock in accordance with the applicable legislation. The Bulgarian institutions provide further support to the affected persons through social services, medical assistance and employment opportunities tailored to their individual needs.

ARTICLE 16 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

§ 9 of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers and § 17 of the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee:

See the information under Art. 4 on the legal changes and the introduction of "service address".

ARTICLE 17 AND 18 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION

From 31 March 2024 the Republic of Bulgaria is a full member of the Schengen area by air and sea, and as of 1 January 2025 - by land.

The Ministry of Interior facilitates contacts between residents in the border regions of the Republic of Bulgaria with the Republic of Serbia by opening temporary border checkpoints in connection with the holding of joint gatherings. Between 5 and 6 gatherings, mainly in the period of June-September, are held each year.

Negotiations are under way with the Republic of Serbia for the construction of a new border checkpoint between the two states near the Kalotina-Gradina border checkpoint, in order to facilitate border crossings by residents of each of the countries who are habitually working on the territory of the other state. The current proposal is for a seasonally operated border checkpoint, intended for the passage of persons and cars.

At the initiative of Osogovo Tourist Association of the city of Kyustendil, with participants from the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of North Macedonia, a traditional ascent of pyramid 106 (Bulgaria) is carried out – the point, where the three borders meet.

PART III: SPECIFIC ISSUES

At the time of preparation of the Sixth State Report, no questions were received.

PART IV: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Annex No.1 – Statistics of the Supreme Prosecutor's Office of Cassation on Hate Crimes for the period 2024 – 2025

Annex No.2 – Information on the training activities of the NIJ

Annex No.3 – Information on the activities of non-governmental organizations, members of the NCCEII

Annex No.4 – Information on the projects implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science in the field of inclusive education and prevention of discrimination

Annex No.5 – Information from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on projects promoting employment among Roma

Annex No.6 – Information from the Ministry of Health on the activities of health mediators

ANNEX NO. 1

STATISTICS FROM THE SUPREME PROSECUTOR 'S OFFICE OF CASSATION ON HATE CRIMES UNDER ARTICLES OF THE CRIMINAL CODE FOR THE PERIOD 2024-2025

As of January 1, 2022, information on crimes containing a discriminatory element, including those committed out of hatred, are collected and summarized according to the motives, demonstrated in the commission of the crimes with a discriminatory element.
The data, encompassing the period between January 1, 2024 and March 31, 2026, concerning the initiation, development and results in each of the casefiles and criminal proceedings on racially-motived crimes or crimes with xenophobic motives, introduced as qualifying elements in certain portions of the Special Part of the Criminal Code (such as murder, causation of bodily harm; kidnapping; unlawful imprisonment, coercion; threat; surveillance; insult; crimes against the equality of citizens; crimes against religious faiths; crimes against the labour rights of the citizens; unlawful destruction or damage of foreign property; crimes committed in a manner or via means endangering the general public) is as follows:

I. In 2024:

1. Under Art. 131, para. 1, item 12, proposal 2 (causing bodily harm on racist grounds): monitored - 7 pretrial proceedings (PTP); newly formed - 4 PTP.

2. Under Art. 131, para. 1, item 12, proposal 3 of the Criminal Code (causation of bodily harm on xenophobic grounds): monitored - 8 PTP; newly formed - 2 PTP.

3. Under Art. 162, para. 1 of the Criminal Code (preaching or inciting discrimination, violence or hatred based on race, skin colour, origin, nationality or ethnicity or sexual orientation, through speech, press or other mass media, through electronic information systems or otherwise):

- monitored - 9 PTP; newly formed 2 PTP;
- convicted and sanctioned persons with a court decision entered into force - 1.

4. Under Art. 172, para. 1 of the Criminal Code (crimes against labour rights based on nationality or ethnicity, race, skin colour, religion, social origin, sexual orientation, membership or non-membership in a trade union or other organization, political party, organization, movement or coalition with a political purpose or due to political or other beliefs)

- monitored - 1 PTP;

II. In 2025

1. Under Art. 131, para. 1, item 12, proposal 2 of the Criminal Code (causation of bodily harm on racist grounds):

- monitored - 6 pretrial proceedings (PTP);
- convicted and sanctioned persons with an effective court decision - 7.

2. Under Art. 131, para. 1, item 12, proposal 3 of the Criminal Code (causation of bodily harm on xenophobic grounds):

- monitored - 3 PTP; newly formed — 1 PTP.
- convicted and sanctioned persons with a court decision entered into force - 1.

3. Under Art. 144, para. 3, item 4, proposal 1 of the Criminal Code (a criminal threat against a person or property or against the person or property of relatives with a racist motivation)

- monitored - 1 PTP;

3. Under Art. 144, para. 3, item 4, proposal 2 of the Criminal Code (a criminal threat against a person or property or against the person or property of relatives with a xenophobic motivation)

- monitored - 1 PTP; newly formed - 1 PTP.

4. Under Art. 162, para. 1 of the Criminal Code (preaching or incitement of discrimination, violence or hatred based on race, skin colour, origin, nationality or ethnicity or sexual orientation, through speech, press or other mass media, through electronic information systems or otherwise)

- monitored - 14 PTP; newly formed - 8 PTP;

5. Under Art. 216, para. 5, item 4, proposal 2 of the Criminal Code (unlawful destruction or damage to foreign property on xenophobic grounds)

- monitored - 1 PTP;

III. In 2026 - 1st quarter:

1. Under Art. 131, para. 1, item 12, proposal 2 of the Criminal Code (causation of bodily harm on racist grounds):

- monitored - 6 pretrial proceedings (PTP);
- convicted and sanctioned persons with a court decision entered into force - 1

2. Under Art. 131, para. 1, item 12, proposal 3 of the Criminal Code (causation of bodily harm on xenophobic grounds):

- monitored - 1 PTP;
- convicted and sanctioned persons with a court decision entered into force - 2

3. Under Art. 144, para. 3, item 4, proposal 1 of the Criminal Code (a criminal threat against a person or property or against the person or property of relatives with a racist motivation):

- monitored - 2 PTP;

4. Under Art. 144, para. 3, item 4, proposal 2 of the Criminal Code (a criminal threat against ar person or property or against the person or property of relatives with a xenophobic motivation):

- monitored - 1 PTP;

5. Under Art. 162, para. 1 of the Criminal Code (preaching or incitement of discrimination, violence or hatred based on race, skin colour, origin, nationality or ethnicity or sexual orientation, through speech, press or other mass media, through electronic information systems or otherwise):

- monitored - 8 PTP.

ANNEX NO. 2

INFORMATION ON THE TRAINING ACTIVITIES OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE CARRIED OUT IN THE PERIOD OF MAY 2024 – MAY 2026

Trainings organized by the National Institute of Justice, which are relevant to the subject of the Sixth State Report under the Framework Convention for the period May 2024 - May 2026:

I. The course of mandatory initial training of candidates for junior judges, junior prosecutors and junior investigators includes topics related to different types of discrimination, including racial or ethnic, hate speech and hate crimes, as well as modules that are aimed at preventing and counteracting various forms of discrimination.

In accordance with *Recommendation Rec (2019)* 5/16.10.2019 of the Committee of Ministers (CM) of the Council of Europe, further developing and complementing CM Recommendation Rec (2004) 4/12.05.2004, the topics are horizontally integrated into the training content, as well as within the specialized training on the implementation of the European Convention for Human Rights (ECHR).

Questions from the following thematic areas are integrated into study modules from the content of the compulsory initial training course for candidates for junior judges, junior prosecutors and junior investigators:

- Protection from discrimination, investigation and prosecution of hate crimes and hate speech motivated by racial or ethnic origin;
- Investigation of other crimes against the person: qualified murder committed on racist, xenophobic grounds; qualified bodily harm committed on racist, xenophobic grounds; defamation; kidnapping and unlawful imprisonment; coercion; insult and defamation;
- Investigation and prosecution of trafficking in human beings and the specific vulnerabilities of victims of trafficking, especially those belonging to racial or ethnic communities;
- Prevention and protection from domestic and gender-based violence (including protection of the rights of Roma women and children – victims of the abovementioned forms of violence);
- Respect for the rights and interests of children when participating in court proceedings in various procedural capacity (as victims, witnesses or perpetrators of crimes) and their specific vulnerability arising from their belonging to racial or ethnic communities and other vulnerable groups.

For the period of May 2024 to May 2026, 58 candidates for junior judges, 51 candidates for junior prosecutors and 28 candidates for junior investigators received training on these topics.

The compulsory initial training course for candidates for junior magistrates also provides a systematic review of the ECtHR's practice in the priority areas under consideration. In this regard, Mr. Yonko Grozev (judge at the ECtHR with a mandate 2015-2024), as well as lawyer Zlatka Stefanova – an active human rights defender and expert with extensive practical experience participated in the course as temporary educators.

Candidates for junior magistrates are also provided with *training materials and self-education resources* dedicated to the interpretation and application of the ECHR, including the *training manual "Human Rights and the Criminal Process. The Practice of the European Court of Human Rights"* with author - lawyer Jeremy McBride, issued by the Council of Europe, as well as the training material *"Concept of hate crime. Legal framework and guidelines for the prevention and criminal counteraction of hate crimes"*, prepared by a prosecutor at the Supreme Prosecutor's Office of Cassation, in the framework of the e-learning of the NIJ on "Practical aspects of the detection of hate crimes".

- *Participation of the team of the National Institute of Justice in the international competition for junior magistrates TEMIS of the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN):*

In the period 16-19.07.2024 in the city of Trier/Federal Republic of Germany, the Bulgarian NIJ team presented the topic "The judiciary between international treaties, the Constitution and public opinion. Is there a danger of discriminatory justice in Bulgaria?".

II. In the framework of the mandatory induction training of newly appointed judges in the district courts:

- In the module "Criminal process" from the training conducted in the period March 10-28, 2025 for the specified target group, as a sub-topic is included the proceedings under the Law on Combating Antisocial Behaviour of Minors. 32 originally appointed district judges were trained.
- In the module "Criminal Law" from the mandatory introductory training in the period March 31-April 17, 2025 as a sub-topic is considered "Attacks against gender inviolability. Trafficking in human beings". 38 judges initially appointed to the regional courts have been trained.

III. Within the framework of the mandatory induction training of newly appointed prosecutors in the regional prosecutor's offices:

In the module "Criminal Law – Substantive Aspects" from the training conducted in the period 16.03.-09.04.2026 for the specified target group, sub-topics include: "Special Rules for Minors"; "Crimes Against Gender Integrity"; "Crimes Against Citizens' Political Rights"; "Smuggling of Persons" and "Trafficking in human beings". 30 initially appointed prosecutors in the regional prosecutor's offices have been trained.

IV. In the framework of the mandatory induction training of newly appointed judges in administrative courts:

The course "Mandatory Qualification at Initial Appointment in Administrative Courts - Part 2", held in the period April 6-May 10, 2026, includes sub-topics: "Legal regime of protection against discrimination, peculiarities of administrative proceedings, acts issued under the Law on Protection against Discrimination, proceedings before a court"; "Claims against the state for damages for violation of EU law"; "Protection against torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment under Art. 276 et seq. of the Execution of Penalties and Custody Act (EPCA). Proceedings for challenging orders for imposing a disciplinary sanction "isolation in a penal cell" (Article 111 of the EPCA). Proceedings for contesting transfer orders or orders for refusal

of transfer of prisoners (Art. 62 et seq. of the EPCA)". 19 initially appointed judges in the administrative courts were trained.

V. Within the current qualification of magistrates:

In the NIJ program for ongoing training of magistrates, issues related to the prevention and counteraction of unequal treatment, hostility and violence based on racial, ethnic or religious affiliation and protection of the rights of national minorities *are addressed in an integrated manner in the specialized trainings on issues of discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech, as well as within the framework of the more general topics in the field of the rule of law and the protection of fundamental rights within the scope of application of Art. 2-6, Art. 8-11, Art. 13 and 14 ECHR and the protocols thereto.*

During the reporting period, the following training activities aimed at maintaining and improving the qualification of judges, prosecutors and investigators for the effective prevention, counteraction and protection against ethnically motivated discrimination and violence were carried out within the scope of this strand of the Institute's activities:

1. From May 28 to June 28, 2024 the National Institute of Justice, with the support of the Council of Europe (CoE)[16], organized a pilot, nationally-adapted edition of the HELP e-learning course on "Hate Speech" for a mixed group of 29 judges and prosecutors.

The training provides an opportunity to deepen the knowledge and improve the skills of Bulgarian magistrates to recognize and limit hate speech, discrimination and freedom of expression and to better understand the interrelations between these concepts, as well as the need to apply a comprehensive, multifaceted and proportional approach to counteract and prevent the negative social phenomenon under consideration. The learning course provides a systematic review of international standards for combating hate speech (incl. online) and the ECtHR's key practice in this area, with a focus on hate speech motivated by racial and ethnic origin. The Bulgarian judge at the ECtHR with term of office 2015-2024 Mr. Yonko Grozev, made an analytical review of the development of the case law of the Court of Justice in Strasbourg on issues related to hate speech, as well as of the violations found by the Court of Justice in the effective judgements against Bulgaria in the cases *"Budinova and Chaprazov"* and *"Packetova and others",* and Bulgarian experts from the Department for the Execution of Judgements of the ECtHR acquainted the participants in the training with the challenges related to the implementation of the said judgements.

The course also addressed the criminal, administrative and civil law aspects of the protection against hate speech, provided by the national legislation, as well as the relevant practice of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, the Commission for Journalistic Ethics and the national courts.

2. In-person training "Introduction to the protection of human rights at the international and regional level", April 14-15, 2025, organized on a budget, with the participation of 16 representatives of the target groups of the Institute.

The training provides a systematic review of the main international and European legal instruments and mechanisms for the protection of fundamental rights, with a focus on the

[16] The training course is organized under the project "Judicial training on issues of the rule of law and fundamental rights", implemented by the Council of Europe and funded by the EU Justice Programme.

ECHR, including the obligations of Member States to provide protection, the safeguards established under Art. 5, Art. 6 and Art. 8-10 of the ECHR and the permissible limitations of rights.

3. Training in hybrid format "Current practice of the ECtHR in connection with Art. 6 and Art. 4 of the ECHR. Social media posts in light of the balance between Art. 8 and 10 of the ECHR, May 14, 2025, organized on a budget under the direction of the Bulgarian judge at the ECtHR with a mandate 2015-2024, Mr. Yonko Grozev, with the participation of 56 judges, prosecutors, investigators and other representatives of the target groups of the NIJ.

In his presentation, Mr. Grozev presents and analyses the current practice of the ECtHR under the said provisions of the ECHR, incl. in cases against Bulgaria, focusing on the criteria established by the Court in Strasbourg to achieve a fair balance between freedom of expression (Art. 10) and the right to personal integrity and good reputation (Art. 8), as well as on the positive obligations of the state to effectively prevent and counteract trafficking in human beings and protect victims of trafficking, especially in cases of abuse of vulnerabilities.

4. Regional training "The requirement for an independent and impartial court as a fundamental prerequisite for a fair trial. Restrictions and Protection of Judges. Case law and international standards – criminal and civil aspects", May 22, 2025, financed by the budget, with the participation of 16 judges and prosecutors from the Regional and the District Court of Lovech.

5. Attendance training "Investigation and legal remedies for violations of fundamental rights", October 6, 2025, organized on a budget, with the participation of 31 magistrates, representatives of the Ministry of Interior and the administration of the Ombudsman.

6. Attendance training "Guaranteeing Human Rights at the Borders of Europe: Strengthening the protection of children and vulnerable asylum seekers under the European Convention on Human Rights, December 4, 2025, organized jointly with UNHCR - Bulgaria and the Council of Europe, with the participation of 25 representatives of the target groups of NIJ and legal experts.

7. Bilingual training "International legal order, basic international justice systems and mechanisms for protecting human rights at the supranational level", organized in two editions, on December 9-10, 2025 and April 6-7, 2026, respectively, with the participation of a total of 51 judges, prosecutors and investigators.

8. Attendance training "Art. 8 ECHR - some aspects of the right to private and family life and protection of correspondence through the practice of the ECtHR", February 16-17, 2026, organized on a budget, under the guidance of the Bulgarian judge in the ECtHR in 2015-2024 and established national experts in the field, with the participation of 31 magistrates and other representatives of the target groups of the Institute.

Inter-sectional discrimination and the multi-factorial vulnerability of representatives of racial and ethnic minority groups in the country are also addressed in the trainings organized by NIJ on issues of trafficking in human beings, gender-based violence and domestic violence and child-friendly justice. Regardless of their specific focus, the trainings carried out within the framework of the current qualification of magistrates in

these thematic areas contribute to the formation of a conceptual understanding of discrimination and violence among law enforcement authorities, increasing their sensitivity to the specific needs of protection and support of victims of trafficking, domestic and gender-based violence (especially women and children belonging to racial/ethnic and other vulnerable groups), as well as to overcoming existing stereotypes, with an emphasis on the multidisciplinary work of the various specialists involved in these areas as a necessary standard.

Through its e-learning platform, the National Institute of Justice provides free online access to a rich catalogue of self-learning resources (manuals, self-learning courses, analytical materials, etc.) related to the protection of the rights of representatives of minority and other vulnerable groups, which complement the special training offered in this field within the mandatory initial, introductory and ongoing training of magistrates.

During the reviewed period, NIJ also coordinated the participation of 170 Bulgarian magistrates (judges, prosecutors and investigators) in 44 trainings organized by EJTN, the Academy of European Law in Trier and other judicial schools in the EU, relevant to the protection against discrimination, hostility and violence, including representatives of various vulnerable groups. The participation of national magistrates in international training on issues related to the prevention of unequal treatment and other attacks on fundamental rights (including ethnic communities) provides them with the opportunity to exchange experience and good practices with their colleagues from other EU Member States, strengthen mutual trust and more effective implementation of European standards in the field.

VI. Within the initial and current qualifications of court staff:

- The curriculum of the introductory training for new court staff in the judiciary, along with the specialized topic, includes modules dedicated to the ethical behaviour of court staff and the administrative service of citizens. Within these modules, the topic of protection against discrimination occupies an important place, with an emphasis on building professional skills to prevent discrimination in the administrative service of citizens, and good practices of inter-cultural communication and service based on respect, equality and non-discriminatory treatment are considered. During the reporting period, the National Institute of Justice held five editions of the introductory training for court staff, within which a total of 266 representatives of the administration of the courts and the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Bulgaria were trained.
- NIJ also held a training on "Judicial and administrative services to citizens. Inclusion of minority communities, vulnerable groups and disadvantaged persons" (December 2-3, 2025), aimed at enhancing the ongoing professional development of court administration staff in the aforementioned region. The training builds on the relevant modules of the introductory trainings for new court staff, allowing deeper penetration into the issue and wider sharing of practices. 35 representatives of the courts' administration from around the country took part in the training.

In summary, during the reporting period, a total of 1008 representatives of the Institute's target groups were trained, including 137 junior magistrate candidates, 268

judges, 193 prosecutors, 49 investigators and 338 court staff, through the various forms of professional training provided by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) on issues related to the prevention of and response to discrimination, hostility and violence motivated by racial or ethnic origin. In addition, 1,875 representatives of the Institute's target groups have used the opportunity provided to them to increase their professional qualification in the area under consideration by accessing the self-learning resources in the e-learning platform of the NIJ.

ANNEX NO. 3

INFORMATION ON INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, MEMBERS OF NCCEII

I. In the field of anti-discrimination and the rule of law:

- In 2025, Foundation “S.E.G.A.” finalized the implementation of the two-year project "Dream Bravely, Aim High! – integrated community-centered services for the prevention of child marriages among Roma in Bulgaria", (1 March 2023 – 28 February 2025). The project aims to contribute towards ending the practice of child marriages in Bulgaria through a methodology for the prevention of harmful practices. It is focused on the community encourages Roma girls to strive for personal achievement beyond the boundaries of isolation, and aims to change the attitudes towards archaic social norms existing in isolated Roma communities.
- The Foundation “S.E.G.A.” and the Roma-Lom Foundation are implementing the project "Roma Resilience: investment in skills and exchanges” (1 December 2024 – 30 November 2026) in a consortium with international participation of organizations from Hungary, Greece, Albania and Romania. The main objective of the project is to empower young Roma and promote their integration into society by strengthening their identity, enhancing skills and capacity building in local communities.
- The Ethnopalitra Foundation monitors manifestations of hate speech, xenophobia, racism, antisemitism, ethnic and religious intolerance incl. in print and electronic media.
- “Inforoma” Centre seeks to assist local authorities in matters related to urban planning and social services. Representatives of the organization participate in trainings for police officers regarding work in a multi-ethnic environment.
- The Centre for Jewish-Bulgarian Cooperation "Alef" participates in the initiative "Tolerance against Hate – Applying the Values of the EU in the Multicultural Society of the Burgas Region".

II. In the field of education:

- Foundation “S.E.G.A. - Start for Effective Civic Alternatives” finalized the implementation of the project "Inclusion for Schools – Partnership between Schools and Communities to Overcome Inequality and Exclusion", funded by the EU Program “Horizon 2020 – Research and Innovation”. Its implementation period 1 November 2020 – 31 October 2024 (extended to 31 January 2025). The Foundation is in partnership with institutions for higher education and non-governmental organisations from Hungary, Slovakia and Albania. The specific objectives of the project are aimed at supporting schools in communities, creating space and culture which can be shared among different communities by initiating interaction and synergy of experiences at a local, regional and transnational level.
- “Inforoma” Centre works with the management of Primary School "Nikola Vaptsarov", Asenovgrad, to support and motivate families of students from quarter "Loznitsa". The

organization provides contact with social workers for consultations. Children from different ethnic backgrounds (incl. Roma and Turkish) in the municipality of Teteven are engaged through visits to the Academy of the Ministry of Interior, where they are being acquainted with the existing options for future application and training conditions.

- Chitalishte "Romano drom-2002" - Dobrich, in partnership with the Municipality of General Toshevo, is working on the project "Window to NONdifferences", funded by the Education Program 2021-2027. The overall objective of the project is to promote a positive attitude towards diversity by building a model for the sustainable development of intercultural education through activities to support a multicultural learning environment for children and students from educational institutions with different concentrations of vulnerable groups in the city of General Toshevo, the village of Senokos and the village of Spasovo. The duration of the project activities is until June 2027.
- Regional Development Foundation "Roma-Plovdiv", together with Kindergarten "Nezabravka", Vi Art Foundation and Secondary School "Hristo Smirnenski", Gulyantsi all partner under the Project "Intercultural Talks in the City of Roses", funded by the Education Program 2021-2027. The project aims to improve inter-cultural communication for learning in a multicultural educational environment in two educational institutions on the territory of the municipality of Gulyantsi.
- The Centre for the Study of Democracy is expanding its work on educational and social inclusion by supporting initiatives aimed at empowering disadvantaged learners, with a particular focus on women, migrants and minority groups, to move towards more sustainable pathways of learning and training.
- The “Ethnopalitra” Foundation is developing the project "My SOFIA – a city of tolerance, wisdom and success" with the support of the Europe Programme of Sofia Municipality. The project promotes the cultural and historical heritage of Sofia through the digital platform mysofia.eu. The platform includes the podcast "The Successful Ones", presenting personalities from the Roma community, including Dr. Miroslav Angelov, Natalia Tsekova, Rosen Bogomilov and Sandra Tsvetkova. Meetings were also held with students to promote tolerance, positive examples of integration and the prevention of xenophobia, racism and antisemitism.

III. In the field of health services:

- Health and Social Development Foundation continues to develop and implement successful models for early childhood development, health promotion and integrated services. The foundation's multidisciplinary team (researchers, psychologists, social workers, educators and medics) is developing a model for effective integration based on the development of coping skills. The organization has 6 working centres using the model, 4 of which work in the three large Roma communities in Sofia in the quarters. "Fakulteta", "Filipovtsi" and "Hristo Botev". The other two are situated in the quarter “Iztok”, city of Kyustendil, and in the city of Samokov.
- “Health and Social Development” Foundation continues to maintain a medical office in the quarter “Fakulteta”. Monthly medical supplies, tools, medical equipment, sanitary

and hygienic materials are provided to ensure the good and quality work of the engaged specialists in the medical office. In 2025, the foundation launched a pilot innovative initiative on integrated health and social services to meet the complex needs of chronically homeless people.

IV. In the field of housing conditions *(see information in response to Art. 16 of the Framework Convention)*.

- Habitat Bulgaria implemented the project "CODE HOUSING – Community Development and Housing Support for Vulnerable Groups" with funding from Habitat for Humanity International and the Medicor Foundation. The program is implemented in partnership with local organizations in Targovishte, Kyustendil, Botevgrad, Burgas, Sliven and Rakitovo. In 2025, over EUR 97,000 (over 190 000 leva) was granted in the form of interest-free micro-loans for emergency housing repairs to vulnerable families, supporting 262 repairs. There were also trainings on family budget management, home maintenance and energy efficiency, as well as six local community initiatives.
- “INFOROMA” Centre organizes, twice a month, consultations with experts on legal, social and housing issues for citizens in quarter “Stolipinovo”.

V. In the field of employment and social inclusion:

- "Bulgarian Cross-border Mediation Institute" conducts trainings to increase the capacity of over 700 municipal employees and employees of social service centres from across the country, providing advice to social service centres, conducts trainings for pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff of kindergartens in Ruse District.
- "Bulgarian Cross-border Mediation Institute" is among the organizers of a festival for presenting effective social models "Guide to Good", held with the assistance of the Municipality of Razgrad, June 2025. The event gathers over 500 participants from social services from 14 regions of the country, who perform in three panels: competition part for the presentation of an effective social model, an open-air concert and an exhibition-bazaar.
- In April 2025, the “Health and Social Development” Foundation started the implementation of the project "ROMANI - Empowering Roma Women, Improving Access to Health Care and Combating Gender-Based Violence". The project is being implemented in the city of Sofia, quarters "Fakulteta” and "Filipovtsi” and lasts until March 31, 2027.
- As part of the project "Spaces for Early Learning 0-3 years of age", funded by the “Trust for Social Achievement” Foundation, implemented in the city of Kyustendil, quarter “Iztok”, with a duration between March 14, 2025 to June 30, 2027, the “Health and Social Development” Foundation reports that the project covers 46 mothers and 49 children from 0 to 3 years of age. The “Young Roma Educators” Program, funded by the “Trust for Social Achievement”, aims to prepare and support young people from local Roma communities to complete higher education, specialities related to the pre-school and school age education system, as well as their employment in local kindergartens, schools and educational institutions, thus creating role models for young children and providing opportunities for professional development of young people from the community. In 2025, the first student supported by the “Health and Social

Development" Foundation successfully graduated. The support of 6 young people of Roma origin for continuing their education in higher education institutions continues. Participants have received financial support for the payment of application fees and semester fees, each participant is included in a mentoring support program and volunteering activities in the field of early education of children carried out in the centres of the foundation.

- The "Centre for the Study of Democracy" is the initiator of the Diversity Charter in Bulgaria, an initiative that aims to promote diversity management in the country for the creation of more inclusive and diverse workplaces. The Charter Community continued to grow significantly in 2025, reaching a total of 122 signatories. In 2025, for the fifth consecutive year, the Bulgarian Charter for Diversity presents the Diversity@Work Award, which highlights leading practices in building diverse teams, promoting equal opportunities and promoting an inclusive workplace culture.
- During the reporting period, the "Centre for the Study of Democracy" continued to support and promote the "Building Bridges" initiative, implemented jointly with leading Bulgarian businesses in cooperation with the Bulgarian Diversity Charter. The initiative provided targeted support to small and medium-sized enterprises in adopting and strengthening inclusive policies in the workplace.
- Association "For Change" is a partner of the municipality of Sandanski, for the construction of youth centres in cities that are not regional. The initiative is aimed at young people and contributes to the multidisciplinary focus of the Centre and its key role in the implementation of measures at the municipal level aimed at helping to overcome social exclusion and unfitness for the labour market among young people up to 29 years of age.

VI. In the field of preservation of culture and ethnic identity, and development of inter-cultural dialogue:

- In 2025, Chitalishte "Romano Drom-2002", Dobrich continued the maintenance and development of dance and music schools, a vocal group, a school for applied creativity. The schools and clubs at the Chitalishte contribute to the preservation and promotion of the cultural traditions of the Roma community through the annual celebration of traditional holidays such as the Roma New Year, Ederlezi, June 10 – Roma Women's Day, the celebration of International Roma Day, which also includes participants from other Chitalishtas and organizations from Dobrich and neighbouring areas. In 2025, with the financial support of the Municipality of Dobrich, the Chitalishte organized and held the next edition of the Regional Exhibition "Earth–Paradise for All", with the participation of representatives of Chitalishtas, schools, civil organizations from both the region and the country - Varna, Ruse, Elhovo, Blagoevgrad, Sofia and others.
- At the National Press Club of the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, the "Roma World 21st Century" Foundation presented two short films by the author Kremena Budinova, in which Roma women subjected to domestic violence and exploitation manage to overcome their fear and take action to save themselves.

- “Dance Art and Culture” Foundation-Botevgrad develops the talents of the dancers from the Fiery Rhythms ensemble, who with their participation in national and international festivals promote Roma culture and art.
- In 2025, Centre for Jewish-Bulgarian Cooperation "Alef" organized the XIIth International Literary and Film Student Competition "The One Who Saves a Human Life, Saves a Whole Universe" with the participation of 130 young people from 15 countries. In the 12 years since the competition was launched, over 2,200 young people from 15 countries have participated with their own creations.
- At the end of October, 2025, the Centre for Jewish-Bulgarian Cooperation "Alef” presented the magazine "Get to know me", which interweaves the voices, traditions and stories of different ethnicities in the region. The event brings together artists, public figures and representatives of cultural and ethnic communities who have proven that diversity is a strength when living in understanding. The publication includes 12 issues dedicated to the different ethnic communities in the area – Armenians, Greeks, Turks, Jews, Roma, Russians and Ukrainians – and aims to promote mutual knowledge, respect and tolerance between people.
- At the beginning of 2025, the short feature film "Heni. Friendship – meaning and salvation", produced by the Centre for Jewish-Bulgarian Cooperation "Alef", was shown to more than 300 students during the national campaign "An Hour of Dignity", dedicated to the history of the rescue of the Bulgarian Jewry during World War II. The film is among the nominees for Best Short Film at the annual awards of the Union of Bulgarian Film Makers - Vasil Gendov, for 2025.
- The activity of the Armenian School Association "Stepanos Hovagimian", Sofia is aimed at preserving the traditions of the Armenians and promoting them among children and young people. The organization is part of the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations in Sofia and traditionally participates in the preparation of various events in the public life of the Armenians in Sofia, the commemoration of the Genocide of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, the celebration of Vartanants and other traditional and calendar holidays of the Armenian community.
- The Association of Vlachs in Bulgaria continues to maintain contact with similar non-governmental organizations from neighbouring countries, ensuring the participation of amateur groups to the companies in international festivals and other events that promote the culture, traditions and folklore of the Vlachs.
- The Federation of Cultural and Education Societies of the Karakachans in Bulgaria (FCESKB) works to preserve the language, culture and traditions of the ethnicity with initiatives at the national level – the annual National Festival of the Karakachans in Bulgaria, as well as with participation in international initiatives.
- The Association "Vidin Chitalishta Fund" develops activities to promote social cohesion and improve the access to art and culture of the residents of small and isolated settlements in the area by conducting cultural and artistic events. There is a well-established cooperation with the municipality of Vidin in organizing traditional folklore festivals such as "Albotin" and "Badnik", which promote cultural diversity and social inclusion in Northwestern Bulgaria.

- From 2015 to the end of 2025 “Zaedno” Foundation continues to carry out activities for the inclusion of ethnicities in the modern socio-cultural life of the city by developing appropriate models for communication. Among the larger ones are the Culinary Art Fair "Ethnic Kitchen on Wheels", "Blue Summer Festival for Children and the Family", "Sports Break", "One City, Three Religions, Seven Ethnicities – from the Past to the Future", etc. The organization works and partners with cultural organizations of ethnic communities – Armenian, Jewish, Italian, Turkish, Russian-speaking, Roma, and in the last 2-3 years creative organizations and artists from Ukraine are involved.
- In 2025, the “Zaedno” Foundation implemented the project "Creating an Online Studio – Free Media Lab" – by and for young people, and with the participation of young journalists from all ethnic communities. The creation of a common media platform and a multimedia product related to cultural historical heritage allows young people from the communities to participate in the process of creating the cultural product and to be trained in the field of journalism.
- “Zaedno” Foundation has implemented a project – The Living City, with the support of the Creation Program of Culture National Fund and the voluntary work of dozens of people who support the work and cause of “Zaedno” Foundation. The new cultural and historical project presents both popular and little-known facts about Europe's oldest living city. "The living city. Plovdiv – a story of 8000 years" spans in the period from 6000 BC to the conquest of the city by Lala Shahin Pasha in the 14th century. The series includes an audio series, audio book, e-book and deluxe print edition. It also tells about important events related to the life of the first ethnic communities that settled in these lands.

ANNEX NO. 4

INFORMATION ON PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE IN THE FIELD OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION

During the period 2023-2029 the Ministry of Education and Science is implementing a series of projects and procedures under the Programme “Education”, with the financial support of the European Social Fund (ESF+), aimed at inclusive education, support for children and students in vulnerable situations, including Roma, as well as prevention of discrimination.

In 2025, procedure BG05SFPR001-1.002 "*Access to education for every child*" was launched with application deadline of 12 June 2028. The main goal is to achieve maximum coverage of children and students in the education system and reduce the share of drop-outs and early leavers from education by improving the functioning of the Mechanism for joint work of institutions on coverage and inclusion in pre-school and school education. As of 31 December 2025, 21 contracts were concluded with the regional departments of education for a total value of EUR 3,521,238. Under the contracts, it is planned to cover 32,702 children and students, including representatives of minority communities, as well as the training of 2,298 pedagogical and non-pedagogical specialists.

In procedure BG05SFPR001-1.003 "*General and additional support for personal development in preschool education*", the Strong Start project is being implemented with a total budget of EUR 71,856,331.58 for the period 15 February 2024 – 15 February 2029. The project aims to improve the inclusiveness of pre-school education, increase the capacity of institutions and build a supportive community for active parental participation. By the end of 2025, 38,056 children and pupils from vulnerable groups had received support, including 13,375 representatives of minority communities. 663 pedagogical specialists and representatives of non-pedagogical staff were trained.

In the field of school education, the *Success for You* project is being implemented with a budget of EUR 103,023,717 for the period 27 January 2023 – 31 December 2027. The project aims to improve the inclusiveness of the school system, reduce early school drop-out, increase motivation for learning and strengthen the capacity of pedagogical specialists and support staff. As of 31 December 2025, 86,121 children and pupils in vulnerable situations had received support, including 64,003 representatives of minority communities. 376 pedagogical specialists and representatives of non-pedagogical staff were trained.

In 2025, after a broad public discussion with the participation of NGOs, the Executive Agency “Programme for Education” announced two procedures aimed at promoting equal access to quality education, the inclusion of children and students from different communities, and the prevention of discrimination in the education system. The procedures aim at creating a sustainable and supportive educational environment that guarantees equal learning opportunities and active participation of all children and pupils:

- As of 31 December 2025, 14 contracts with a total value of EUR 3,193,152 had been concluded. The results achieved included support provided to 123 children and pupils from vulnerable groups, coverage of 180 representatives of minority communities and

training of 63 pedagogical and non-pedagogical specialists to work in an inclusive and multicultural educational environment.

- As of 31 December 2025, 25 contracts with a total value of EUR 7,380,224 had been concluded. The planned results of the contracts envisage providing support to 6,375 children and students in vulnerable situations, covering 11,416 representatives of minority communities and training 1,793 pedagogical and non-pedagogical specialists to work in an inclusive educational environment and promoting equal access to education.

ANNEX NO. 5

INFORMATION ON PROJECTS TO PROMOTE EMPLOYMENT AMONG ROMA

Within the framework of measures for the socio-economic integration of Roma, a comprehensive approach is applied, including activities in the field of employment, training, social services, health, as well as initiatives to overcome discrimination, negative attitudes and stereotypes. The projects are implemented through three main approaches – *horizontal* (including all measures), *targeted* (targeting a specific goal) and *territorial* (acting at regional level).

Projects implemented under a horizontal approach

Priority 1 "*Promoting employment and skills development*" supports people in a vulnerable situation on the labour market, including people of Roma origin, by improving access to employment, promoting self-employment and developing the social economy. Trainings for acquiring professional qualifications, key competences and practical skills, on-the-job training, as well as measures for inclusion in employment are funded. As of 23 March 2026, over 11,405 unemployed and inactive persons of Roma origin were included under Priority 1.

The largest number of participants is under Operation "I start work" – component 1 "Activation", in which for the period 2024 – April 2026 nearly 11,746 persons participated.

Under the project "I start work" – component 3 "Employment", for the period 2024 – April 2026, 1,497 persons of Roma origin were included in employment.

Under Priority 3 "*Promoting youth employment*", which provides support to young people through activation, referral to employment, training, internship and apprenticeship, through the assistance of the Employment Agency, 1316 young people up to the age of 29 of Roma origin who have participated in training or employment were included.

Under the *Youth Practices* project, 532 people of Roma origin have been employed.

Under the *Parents in Employment* Project, 149 people of Roma origin have been employed.

Through subsidized employment, 3,494 people have started work on projects implemented by the Employment Agency for the same period, and about 816 people have undergone training to improve professional qualifications or acquire key competences.

Projects implemented under a targeted approach

As of March 2026, 1,924 persons of Roma origin were included in training and employment under Priority 2 "Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities". Operation Support to Vulnerable Communities was also approved, which aims to provide targeted support to improve the quality of life, promote social inclusion and integration into society. It is envisaged to provide comprehensive support to at least 18,000 persons from minority communities, including Roma.

Projects implemented under a territorial approach

During this programming period, an opportunity is provided at the regional level to meet the challenges related to the quality of life of certain persons in society by applying integrated and complex measures and approaches aimed at addressing the special needs of vulnerable groups, including Roma. As of March 2026, 10 concepts of integrated territorial investment were approved, which include measures aimed at the socio-economic integration of Roma. Support will be provided in different areas – training and employment, social inclusion, anti-discrimination measures, access to healthcare.

ANNEX NO. 6

INFORMATION ON THE ACTIVITIES OF HEALTH MEDIATORS

Main area	Indicator	2024	2025	total
Assistance of medical general practitioners	Scheduled immunization campaigns – children	18,215	18,996	37,211
	Scheduled immunization campaigns – adults	3,087	2,803	5,890
	Prophylactic examinations – children	13,583	12,583	26,166
	Prophylactic examinations – adults	8,939	10,046	18,985
Assistance of the Regional Health Inspectorate	Scheduled immunizations – children	2,780	1,212	3,992
	Scheduled immunizations – adults	520	627	1,147
Assistance of dentists	Prophylactic/curative activities	1,026	1,396	2,422
	Prophylactic programs	548	666	1,214
Supporting access to medical care	Consultations	89,874	97,794	187,668
	Filing of documents	8,582	9,912	18,494
	Following procedures	8,370	10,222	18,592
	Accompanying to health institutions	13,276	15,703	28,979
	Restoration of health insurance rights	1,686	2,376	4,062
	Patronage	19,211	20,279	39,490
Health promotion activities	Prevention of infectious diseases, hygiene	4,451	4,573	9,024

	Family planning, sexual and reproductive health	2,289	3,116	5,405
	Dissemination of health education materials	67,626	70,081	137,707
	Collaboration with the Regional Health Inspectorate, etc., trainings, seminars	11,667	13,273	24,940
Complex case solving activities	Consultations	62,318	81,381	143,699
	Filing of documents	44,853	59,549	104,402
	Following procedures	7,734	11,321	19,055
	Accompanying to social institutions	8,314	12,097	20,411
	Patronage	12,476	14,638	27,114

Summary information on the health priority of the National Action Plan to the National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Roma Participation	
Objective / Measure / Activity	Indicators / Results for 2024-2025
Objective 1: Improving maternal and child health	
1.1 OBGYN examinations in mobile cabinets	800 prophylactic examinations; cytological and microbiological examinations; diagnosed gynaecological diseases; referral to treatment; hard-to-reach areas covered
1.2. Immunizations by mobile teams	700 children with incomplete immunization status with a focus on hard-to-reach and mobile community
1.3 Paediatric examinations	about 1,200 children; diagnosed acute respiratory diseases, obesity, dental problems, spinal curvatures
1.4. Breast cancer screening	150 mammography examinations; benign and malignant changes; referral for treatment

Objective 2: Access to healthcare for people in vulnerable situations	
2.1 HIV/AIDS prevention	Teams of the Regional Health Inspectorate and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provided HIV testing in 2024 to 9,453 persons, while in 2025 the same service was provided to 11,304 persons. A total of 7,518 persons were tested for Hepatitis B in 2024, while in 2025 there were 10,192. In 2024, 7,954 people were tested for Hepatitis C, while in 2025, 10,153 were tested. The number of people tested by the Regional Health Inspectorate and NGOs for syphilis was 5,812 in 2024, while in 2025 their number increased to 8,182. All the figures above focus exclusively on people who were tested and subsequently received the result of the tests.
2.2 Tuberculosis control	5,064 persons covered; diagnosed cases of active and latent tuberculosis; free treatment provided
2.3. Examination and appointment of tests for socially significant diseases with mobile offices - fluorographs, ultrasounds and clinical laboratories	557 people were examined and examined with a mobile fluorograph; 540 persons were examined and examined with a mobile ultrasound; 3,216 people have undergone tests with a mobile clinical laboratory
Objective 3: Development of health mediation	
3.1. Increasing the number of health mediators according to a budget delegated by the state	Provided a delegated state budget to increase the number of health mediators: 332 (2024), 352 (2025), 367 (2026).