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ECRI CONCLUSIONS
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS
IN RESPECT OF BULGARIA
SUBJECT TO INTERIM FOLLOW-UP

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¹ Unless otherwise indicated, this analysis does not take into account any developments that occurred after 26 July 2024, the date on which the response of the authorities of Bulgaria to ECRI's request for information on measures taken to implement the recommendations chosen for interim follow-up was received.

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FOREWORD

As part of its sixth round of monitoring work, ECRI has renewed its process of interim follow-up with respect to two specific recommendations made in each of its country reports.

In line with the Information Document on ECRI's sixth monitoring cycle brought to the attention of the Ministers' Deputies on 9 May 2018¹, not later than two years following the publication of each report, ECRI addresses a communication to the Government concerned asking what has been done in respect of the specific recommendations for which priority follow-up was requested.

At the same time, ECRI gathers relevant information itself. On the basis of this information and the response from the Government, ECRI draws up its conclusions on the way in which its recommendations have been followed up.

It should be noted that these conclusions concern only the specific interim follow-up recommendations and do not aim at providing a comprehensive analysis of all developments in the fight against racism and intolerance in the State concerned.

¹ [CM/Del/Dec\(2018\)1316/4.1](#); [CM\(2018\)62-add10](#).

1) *In its report on Bulgaria (sixth monitoring cycle) published on 4 October 2022, ECRI recommended that the Bulgarian authorities set up an LGBTI working group, which should include relevant organisations from the LGBTI community, to carry out research into existing forms of discrimination against LGBTI persons with a view to developing a national strategy and action plan to combat intolerance and discrimination against LGBTI persons.*

The information ECRI received from the authorities does not include any indication that the recommended LGBTI working group has been set up or that the recommended research into existing forms of discrimination against this group of persons has been conducted with a view to developing a national LGBTI strategy and action plan. Information received from Bulgarian civil society leads ECRI to reach the same conclusion.

The authorities point out that the Bulgarian National Assembly (Parliament) adopted amendments to the country's Penal Code on 28 July 2023, including the explicit mention of sexual orientation as a ground for aggravating circumstances in the context of a number of violent offences (e.g. murder, causing bodily harm). While this is a positive step, it is not directly related to the priority recommendation made in ECRI's 2022 report.

Furthermore, ECRI notes with concern that an amendment of the Pre-School and School Education Act was adopted on 7 August 2024 by the Bulgarian Parliament, adding to Article 11(2) a new provision stipulating that the pre-school and school education system shall not allow activities related to "any propaganda, promotion, or any other direct or indirect inducement to ideas and views related to non-traditional sexual orientation and/or designating a gender identity other than the biological one." This development indicates that this priority recommendation made by ECRI in 2022 is even more relevant.

ECRI concludes that this recommendation has not been implemented.

2) *In its report on Bulgaria (sixth monitoring cycle), ECRI recommended that the authorities increase the number and scale up the successful work of Roma mediators in the areas of health, education and employment.*

According to the authorities, the National Action Plans for the implementation of the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of the Roma (2021-2030), for the periods 2022-2023 and 2024-2025, focused on the increase of health mediators. Their number increased from 290 in 2021, to 307 in 2022, 322 and 2023, and 332 in 2024. The number of Roma education mediators increased from 940 in 2022, to 1 110 in 2023, and 1 184 in 2024. For labour mediators, a similar positive trend has been observed: their number increased from 78 in 2022, to 88 in 2023, and to 104 in 2024.³

ECRI also notes with satisfaction that, according to the authorities, each year, funds from the Bulgarian state budget are earmarked to increase the wages of Roma mediators in order to avoid a high turnover of staff and create sufficiently attractive conditions to facilitate recruitment. In 2024, for example, the remuneration of Roma labour mediators was increased by some 20% compared to the previous year.

In 2024, financial resources amounting to BGN 17 903 (approximately € 9 150) – or about 14% above the minimum wage – are provided for each Roma health mediator over a 12-month period. In 2022, this figure stood at BGN 13 523. ECRI is particularly pleased that these positive measures are financed from the state budget and do not rely on external resources. Thus, ECRI trusts that the authorities will continue these efforts and ensure their sustainability.

ECRI concludes that the recommendation has been implemented.

³ According to the information received from the authorities, the numbers for 2024 are those planned and to be expected by the end of the year.