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The National Council for Cooperation on
Ethnic and Demographic Issues
in Bulgaria

Institutional framework for Roma integration policy

- Its main principle is not to establish new special institutions but to make use of the existing system through adding some new competencies
- There are only two types of possible exceptions from this principle:
 - forming small units (branches) at the lower levels of the administrative hierarchy of different ministries. These units have Roma (and minority) integration as part of their main responsibility: in Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
 - introducing units at middle level of the administrative hierarchy that play a coordinating role among the institutions. Such middle-level coordinating body is the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues with its Ethnic and Demographic Issues Directorate

Main Functions

- The National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCCEDI) “is consultative and coordinating body that helps the Council of Ministers in the implementation of state policy about ethnic and demographic issues ”.
- It coordinates the efforts:
 - among different central institutions of the executive power
 - between state institutions and Roma NGOs (as well as other public organizations)

Structure

- The Council does not have own permanent set of representatives but these are defined by institutions which deal with minority issues:
 - deputy ministers from 13 ministries, heads of 6 State agencies,
 - representatives of Bulgarian Academy of Science and National Association of the Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria,
 - representatives of NGOs: they are approved every year following certain criteria. The vast majority of them are Roma NGOs
- The Council has Commission for Roma Integration composed by Roma NGOs and representatives of institutions
- Chair of the Council is deputy Prime-Minister Emel Etem. There are two Deputy chairs: one (Miroslav Popov at present) is defined by the Prime minister, the other is elected by NGOs (Deyan Kolev at present)
- Ethnic and Demographic Issues Directorate within the administration of the Council of Ministers is Secretariat of NCCEDI

Strengths

- *The existence of NCCEDI raises the importance of ethnic issues and Roma integration within the system of Bulgarian administration*
- *The existence of NCCEDI raises the necessity of cooperation among all stakeholders – institutions and civil society actors – in the decision-making process*

Weaknesses

- The structure is unfunctional: members (big number) and chairmanship without intermediate working bodies (such as sub-committees in different fields – education, health, etc.)
- The *modus operandi* is not efficient: meetings once a three months without other opportunities for the members to participate
- The distribution of responsibilities is unclear: this provides opportunities for the Chair of the Council to take operative decisions without consultations with the Council members and for the Secretariat (Ethnic and Demographic Issues Directorate) to replace the Council from certain operative functions

Threats

- The Council could “imitate” activities and to not take important operative decisions
- NGOs could alienate themselves from the Council’s work because of the lack of practical opportunity to take part in forming operative decisions
- Political and administrative pressure on the NGOs – members of the Council is possible

Opportunities

- The Council composition provides opportunity for Roma NGOs to advocate for Roma claims before the institutions of the executive power
- Following the principle of consensus in taking decisions, the Council provides opportunities for Roma participation in decision-making process
- The Council could become an working body that fosters the process of Roma / minority integration

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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