

Delegation of the Republic of Bulgaria

**On the Elaboration of the New Framework Programme for Equal Integration
of Roma in the Bulgarian Society**

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During the supplementary meeting in Vienna in July, I had the opportunity to inform about the activities in Bulgaria aimed at elaborating a **new Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society**, and an **Action Plan** for its implementation in the period 2009-2010.

The deadline for receiving proposals was 20 August 2008. About 10 proposals were received by that deadline which, of course, is insufficient, but we continue to receive new proposals, thanks to the efforts of Roma Integration Department in Ethnic and Demographic Issues, Directorate to the Council of Ministers of Republic of Bulgaria, as well as of some NGOs, which are members of National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCCEDI).

In order to speed up the process and make it more effective overall, we plan to conduct – already as from the end of this week, an information and discussion campaign in 6 districts, thus covering all parts of the country. Many representatives of local state and municipality authorities will be invited. Following the principles *for Roma with Roma* and *for Roma by Roma*, much more representatives of NGO and of local Roma communities will be involved in the discussions.

The scope of the new Framework Program will be wider than the previous one. The current programme covers the so-called “traditional” aspects of integration policy, such as anti-discrimination, housing policy, social assistance and employment issues, housing policy, healthcare, improving the situation of Roma women. Now we propose to include also subjects such as “integration in social relationships”, especially in public order and in law-enforcement activities. Other new important themes are “administrative capacity”, “providing financial resources”, “involvement and participation of municipality authorities” and, of course, more effective involvement and participation of NGO and local leaders – formal and/or informal.

Before concluding, I would also like to refer shortly to the case of violent attacks on Roma in August 2007 in Sofia, mentioned in the statements of the US and others. A special session of NCCEDI was immediately convened, during which a special report by the Ministry of Interior on these events was presented, followed by a thorough discussion of all aspects of the issue. The Council adopted a declaration in connection with the events and planned, together with the Roma leaders, specific security measures, including the provision of a reinforced constant police presence in the areas concerned.

It should be added that we particularly rely on and support the capacity of the District Councils for Ethnic and Demographic Issues to serve as a forum for open discussion on the possible causes of potential social tensions, in order to prevent any such incidents.

Finally, referring to allegations contained in a statement made by “Amalipe”, relevant (though not exhaustive) information on the activities undertaken by the Bulgarian Government in the implementation of the current Framework Programme Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma in the Bulgarian Society, and on the funds spent on various projects, is included in the latest Status Report issued by ODIHR.

2 October 2008.