



European Intercultural Workplace: Bulgaria



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCCI	Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
BEA	Bulgarian Employers' Association
BGN	Bulgarian Lev (national currency unit)
BIA	Bulgarian Industrial Association
BIBA	Bulgarian International Business Association
BHC	Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
BRC	Bulgarian Red Cross
CIS	Community of independent States
DCU	Dublin City University
EEA	European Economic Area
EIW	European Intercultural Workplace
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMIR	Interntional Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations
NBTAR	National Bureau for Territorial Asylum and Refugees
NCEDI	National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues
NSI	National Statistical Institute
RMS	Refugee-and-Migration Service
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissionary on Refugees
WWII	World War II

GLOSSARY

Alien – a person who is not a citizen of the country they are residing in on a short or long-term basis.

Asylum Seeker – an individual who leaves their own country for their safety, often for political reasons or because of war, and who travels to another country hoping that the government will protect them and allow them to live there: (<http://www.freesearch.co.uk/dictionary/asylum-seeker>). An asylum seeker applies to the State to be recognised as a Convention Refugee under the terms of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Most European countries are signatories of the Geneva Convention. Asylum seekers have the right to remain in such countries while their applications for Refugee Status are being processed, and to continue to live there afterwards, if granted Refugee Status.

Beneficiary – a person, institution or other grouping of people that benefits from the actions described in a case. (<http://www.beep-eu.org/>)

Best practice – the best examples of practice, e.g. which methods, tools, organisation, systems, technology, etc., were used to achieve the excellent performance seen. Such examples should also imply ease of transfer to other situations where users have similar objectives and should facilitate learning by them. Since 'best' is highly subjective and context dependent, as well as implying that no further improvements are possible, the preferred term now used is 'good practice'. (<http://www.beep-eu.org/>)

Bilingual – a person who is competent in two languages

Case (study) – the description of a specific situation and application of methods, typically a programme or project. This may be within a single organisation or may be a pan-European project. A case study must involve one or more objectives and a description of the activities (methods and processes) carried out in pursuit of these objectives. (<http://www.beep-eu.org/>)

Client – the party for which services are rendered (e.g. by a research team). (<http://www.answers.com>). In traditional commerce and in the marketing and provision of services, a client or customer consumes or benefits from a product or service.

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>) Within the remit of the EIW project this can also apply to less traditional examples of a client such as school pupils, for example.

Convention Refugee – see Refugee below

Cross-cultural – the term cross-cultural is generally used to describe comparative data and studies of a limited number of cultures. For example, when examining attitudes towards work in the US and in Japan, then that is a cross-cultural study. (<http://intermundo.net/glossary>). It is sometimes used interchangeably with the „Intercultural” (see Intercultural).

Cultural diversity – variety and richness of communities with distinct systems of norms, beliefs, practices, and values. (http://www.cadi.ph/glossary_of_terms.htm)

Discrimination – involves formally or informally classifying people into different groups and according the members of each group distinct, and typically unequal, treatments, rights and obligations without a rational justification for the different treatment. If there is rational justification for the different treatment, then the discrimination is not invidious. The criteria delineating the groups, such as gender, race, or class, determine the kind of discrimination. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>)

Education sector – The education sector includes primary, secondary and third-level educational institutions such as colleges and universities which are organised on a regional / national basis or independently such as tuition companies.

Equal opportunities – two key elements of the general principle of equal opportunities are the ban on discrimination on grounds of nationality (Article 12 of the EC Treaty, formerly Article 6) and equal pay for men and women (Article 141 of the EC Treaty, formerly Article 119). It is intended to apply to all fields, particularly economic, social, cultural and family life.

The Treaty of Amsterdam added a new Article 13 to the Treaty, reinforcing the principle of non-discrimination, which is closely linked to equal opportunities. Under this new Article, the Council has the power to take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Adopted in December 2000, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union includes a chapter entitled „Equality“ which sets out the

principles of non-discrimination, equality between men and women, and cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. It also covers the rights of the child, the elderly and persons with disabilities. On the subject of non-discrimination, the Charter states that: „Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.“ (EU glossary of terms)

Ethnic group – a group of people who identify with one another, or are so identified by others, on the basis of a boundary that distinguishes them from other groups. This boundary may take any of a number of forms -- racial, cultural, linguistic, religious -- and may be more or less porous. Because of this boundary, members of an ethnic group are often presumed to be culturally or biologically similar, although this is not in fact necessarily the case. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>)

First generation immigrant – see Immigrant

Foreign descent – being descended from a foreigner (see below)

Foreigner – a person born in or coming from a foreign country (OED)

Good practice – the use of a method, tool, technology etc. which is generally regarded as 'practices which are good for learning', i.e. practices which either achieve their own objectives and/or have a beneficial impact on their environment, or (and more important) provide useful learning experiences which are likely to stimulate creativity, ingenuity and self reflexivity on the part of the user. Contrast with best practice that has been shown to be the 'best' in a given situation as a result of benchmarking and other analyses. (<http://www.beep-eu.org/>)

Immigrant – a person who comes as a permanent or long-term resident to a country from one's own native land (OED) and intends to reside permanently, and not as a casual visitor or traveller. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>)

Intercultural – the term intercultural is generally used to describe comparative data and studies of a large number of cultures, or studies that try to identify dimensions that are not culture specific. For example Hofstede's work is intercultural, as it describes cultural dimensions applicable for all cultures. Intercultural is also used to describe

interactional data from members of different cultural backgrounds (normally more than two). (<http://intermundo.net/glossary>)

Intercultural communication – communication between persons who have different cultural backgrounds.

Intercultural company – an enterprise that employs people from different nationalities, cultures and/or racial backgrounds.

Intercultural communication education – includes learning about different cultures, both culture general and culture specific information. The focus is not so much on habits and religious customs, but rather on cultural similarities and differences in communication patterns, including body language; as well as in attitudes, values and norms in areas such as relation to authority and showing respect and politeness; time orientation; gender roles; collectivism and individualism.

Intercultural workplace – a working environment in which people of different nationalities, cultures and racial backgrounds are employed. Also a work environment that deals with clients / customers from different cultures.

International worker – A term used by some organisations to refer to workers from minority ethnic communities, who have come from overseas to work in the country. This term is considered more interculturally sensitive than other terms such as terms 'non-national' or 'foreign national'.

Life-long learning – continuous acquirement of knowledge, skills and competencies in an environment of constant change

Migrant Worker – an economic migrant is a person who voluntarily leaves his or her country of origin for economic reasons. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>)

Minority – a group within a country that differs in culture, ethnicity, race, religion or national origin from the larger part of the population specialized.peoriaud.k12.az.us/psychgloss.htm

Multinational – a business organisation which operates in many countries

Multiculturalism – Multiculturalism or cultural pluralism is a policy, ideal, or reality that emphasizes the unique characteristics of different cultures in the world, especially as

they relate to one another in immigrant receiving nations.

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>)

National minority – A minority within a particular country or nation (often with a long history in the country).

Non-national – a person who is not a citizen of the country they are residing in on a short or long-term basis

On-the-job training – the process of being taught a specific skill in the workplace

Prejudice – unequal power relations reinforced by economic and social differences between individuals and groups

Private sector – the part of the economy not under direct state control (OED)

Public sector –

- (i) The Public Sector is the part of the economy concerned with providing basic government services. In most countries the public sector includes such services as the police, military, public roads, public transit, primary education and healthcare for the poor. The public sector might provide services that non-payers cannot be excluded from (such as street lighting), services which benefit all of society rather than just the individual who uses the service (such as public education), and services that encourage equal opportunity.
- (ii) The Public Sector is made up of national government, local governments, government-owned or controlled corporations and government monetary institutions.
- (iii) Local, state, and federal government agencies and services, such as schools and libraries.

Racism – any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. (http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/d_icerd.htm)

Refugee – The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as a person who is outside the country of his/her nationality and unable or unwilling to

return to it, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights www.unhcr.org); „A person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.” (Article 1 of the Geneva Convention)

SME (Small to Medium Enterprise) – enterprises with fewer than 250 employees and a turnover of less than 40 million Euro. Divided into micro enterprises (fewer than 10 employees), small size (11-50 employees) and medium (51-250). (<http://www.beep-eu.org/>)

Social inclusion – commitment to an ethos of fairness and equality within a given society. www.inspire.edin.org/pages/glossary.htm

Social partner – a term used by the European Commission for employer and employee organisations who engage with the Commission in a dialogue with a view to developing a common approach to EU economic and social policies. It encompasses Trade Unions, Trade Associations, Chamber of Commerce, and (peripherally) Professional Associations. (<http://www.beep-eu.org/>)

Study – an analytical piece of work that may include surveys or analysis of a group of case studies. Contrast with case study which is an individual situation or programme. (<http://www.beep-eu.org/>)

Workplace education – education in the workplace – e.g. systematic instruction to furnish or acquire further knowledge about the working environment and ways in which to apply good practice.

INTRODUCTION

European workplaces are experiencing major transformation. Economic and political changes in Europe over the past decades have resulted in a vast increase in the cultural diversity of those living, working and being educated within its borders. The expansion of the EU coupled with labour shortages in many parts of the continent have brought about a steady increase in mobility both within and from outside the EEA. This trend is likely to continue and expand, as workplaces grow into microcosms of a culturally diverse society.

Cultural diversity is fast becoming the norm in most areas of life in Europe. Even for those with little interest in foreign cultures or in mixing with others culturally different from themselves, many everyday situations now necessitate intercultural interactions, whether in the workplace, public services or educational institutions. In this new context, people at all levels of the workforce – managers, employees, customers – from host and migrant communities, find themselves in new roles with new challenges for which they have not necessarily been prepared or trained to deal with. Such interactions require a new mindset and a repertoire of skills beyond what was adequate for interaction within one's own cultural group. Organizations often need to re-think existing policies and procedures, in order to better meet the needs of and benefit from the opportunities offered by a new culturally diverse workforce. Questions of equality and racism, identity and values assume a new importance and urgency, as intercultural communicative competence becomes a vital priority in all areas of life.

So, how well are workplaces in Europe responding to this new reality? How similar are the challenges and opportunities presented in different sectors and states? What pitfalls to be avoided and examples of good practice can be shared between EU countries? What intercultural training needs exist and how best can these be addressed? These are some of the key questions that inspired the development of the European Intercultural Workplace (EIW) Project (2004-7). Originally conceptualised in DCU, Ireland, EIW was developed and expanded through a network of 10 European partners, and its implementation was made possible by funding granted by the EU Leonardo da Vinci Programme. A core outcome of the project is the establishment of an overview of work practice across Europe based on national situational analyses and workplace case studies. The identification of intercultural

training needs and good practice responses will inform the production of effective intercultural training materials to a common European standard.

The European Intercultural Workplace (EIW) partnership draws together 10 institutions from northern and southern Europe, established EU members and more recent Member States, countries with a long experience of integrating foreigners into the workforce and others for whom this is a new situation. This complexity allows us to have a wide-ranging, experienced and fresh perspective on the issues involved.

The current publication is divided into two parts: (1) National Situational Analysis and (2) Case Studies. The Situational Analysis examines the current intercultural workplace in Bulgaria, investigating issues such as the context of cultural diversity in Bulgaria, areas where minorities and immigrants are most likely to be employed, the status of asylum seekers and refugees, as well as government, business and civic responses to these changes. The Case Studies are designed to assess the situation and conditions on the ground. In Bulgaria we have examined the areas of Primary Education, Secondary Education, Health, Construction, Tourism, Transport. We have tried to review workplace issues from the perspective of Management, Employees and Customers.

The primary aim of this report is to identify examples of good practice and make recommendations that will assist policy makers and practitioners in their attempts to create a harmonious intercultural workplace and foster a culture of learning. It also aims to provide information for workers intending to move to Bulgaria and local employers in need of foreign labour of the policies and steps that need to be taken for an easier and more effective process of integration into the workplace.

This report is by no means exhaustive; in the inevitable selection process we faced constraints that will have left a lot of relevant material unearthed. The EIW Project partners would like to hear feedback from you, the reader and final user, on the information presented. Please visit the European Intercultural Workplace website for further discussions and consultations (www.eiworkplace.net)

PART 1: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

1. General Background – National Context

1.1 The Context of Cultural Diversity in Bulgaria

1.1.1 Historical Development

As Anna Krasteva stated in a research in *South-East Europe Review* 2/2006, as a typical communist society, Bulgaria used to be a closed country. The state strictly controlled movements from and to the country. Preventing emigration was a top priority: there were several willing to emigrate but few inclined to immigrate and the rare exceptions were politically inspired:

- several waves of emigration of Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin to Turkey
- students from third world countries, with the specific purpose of providing higher education to left-wing intellectuals as part of a long-term strategy for the preparation of world revolution
- activists with left-wing ideological beliefs from neighbouring countries, such as Turkey and Greece.

An exception to this dominating political logic was the acceptance during the 1980s of Vietnamese immigration in response to the demand for labour in certain economic sectors like construction. The Vietnamese was the only *gastarbeiter* figure.

After the democratic changes, the picture has been modified significantly – freedom of movement (at the beginning still restricted by visa requirements) was one of the first and eagerly consumed freedoms.

Migration develops in three main forms. The first, the most numerous and the most consequential, is emigration, which features three main varieties:

- the emigration of representatives of the Turkish minority, which was repressed by the communist authorities. 350 000 people left Bulgaria in 1989, the biggest migration wave in Europe after WWII before the wars in former Yugoslavia, which reached new record figures, although an estimated 150 000 later returned. The emigration of Bulgarian Turks thereafter continued in much lower numbers and due to economic

rather than to political reasons. On the threshold of the transition, they were expelled by the communist state as part of the violent politics of name changes, while a few years later, the economic crisis and unemployment, which was particularly high in areas populated by the Turkish minority, pushed several of its representatives to join their families in Turkey or to try their chances in a more dynamic economic environment

- the emigration of highly educated and/or young Bulgarians to western Europe, USA and Canada
- the seasonal migration of workers employed in agriculture in Greece, Spain and other mainly southern countries.

The second form is immigration:

- new and visible groups, such as Chinese, settled in Bulgaria for the first time and their numbers are growing fast (from practically zero at the beginning of the changes to over 10 000 today)
- groups like Vietnamese, which had drastically diminished but which have started growing anew
- new immigrants have started adding to traditional communities, like Armenians in search of a more stable political and economic situation than their native Armenia and who have been attracted by the modest but very well integrated community of Armenians in Bulgaria. Similar phenomena could be observed with Macedonians, Russians, etc.

The third is the flow of refugees, whose numbers have increased ten-fold in ten years, albeit that these are still at a low level (there were 276 applications for refugee status in 1993; 2 888 in 2002). This relatively small group has great public visibility – both because of the developed network of governmental and non-governmental organizations and due to the media coverage, which has nourished the fear of waves of refugees with each new crisis – in Afghanistan, in Iraq, etc

A short comparison of three groups – Chinese, Africans and Lebanese – can give an idea of the ethno-cultural variety of immigration in Bulgaria.

The three groups differ in a number of characteristics. Chinese immigration is the newest – there were practically no Chinese people during the communist period. The roots of African and Arab immigration are relatively old, going back to the 60s – they were the main beneficiaries of grants for third world students. The mid 70s (the period of the war between Iraq and Iran) marked a boom in Arab immigration. A joke of that time tells that the students' neighbourhood of Sofia in summer resembled Iraq. Africans are the single 'racial' group in Bulgaria, a country without a colonial tradition and absolutely no historical experience of this type of intercultural contact.

In terms of numbers, the ratio is in reverse: the Chinese group is growing in the most dynamic way - about 10 000 (Krasteva, 2005), while the African one (a few hundred) is limited and newcomers are mostly asylum-seekers. Arab immigration (about 20 000) is the most numerous.

The sociological portrait also varies: Chinese immigrants are people of lower education, occupied mainly in two sectors – restaurants and retail. The Africans form the other extreme, being highly-educated doctors, economists, etc. Arabs form the major competition for the Chinese in the two niches in which they have nestled. However, the Chinese are more aggressive and have succeeded in pushing the Arabs out of certain economic positions they easily occupied at the beginning of the post-communist transition period. At the same time, due to their longer-lasting presence in Bulgaria, Arabs have penetrated more economic activities: Arabs are doctors, engineers, editors, accountants. Several are middle entrepreneurs, others are employed and a few are business leaders. The sociological portrait is diverse. In contrast, the portrait of Chinese is (still) uniform – small entrepreneurs in trade and restaurant businesses.

Integration strategies also follow a different logic: some Africans come from mixed marriages and, at least according to this indicator, are integrated. In Sofia, there is no Chinatown but the spirit of a Chinatown dominates the structuring and self-organisation of the Chinese community.

Community is most structured within the Arab group, which has an association, a magazine – in both Bulgarian and Arab languages – a cultural life (exhibitions, clubs, forums for discussion, etc.), commemorations of political figures and other events which strengthen the links of the diaspora with the homeland.

None of the communities has demonstrated an explicit desire to launch a public debate over its rights.

Immigration is less studied than emigration. Immigration in Bulgaria (Krasteva, 2005) is the first attempt at acquainting the reader with the new groups in Bulgaria – Chinese, Kurds, Vietnamese, Russians and immigrants from the Middle East. The book asks the important question as to whether the newly-developed democratic culture of Bulgaria would be able to face the challenge of immigration. So far, immigration in Bulgaria has not been politicised. However, the contributors to the book underline that it is necessary to develop responsible policies on the integration of refugees and migrants. Bulgaria may be able to avoid many of the failures of west European countries which have tried to integrate foreigners from different races and religions in the last fifty years. The UNHCR branch office in Bulgaria, in conjunction with the State Agency for Refugees, has published several volumes on refugees in Bulgaria but these can be treated mainly as reference books.

Bulgaria, as for the whole of Central and Eastern Europe, has experienced a rapid transition from being a refugee-producing area towards being a refugee-hosting one. For several asylum seekers, Bulgaria is still a transit point on their way to western European countries.

Contemporary ethnic Bulgarians, nearly 85 % of the population, are a mixture of the Slavs already settled in the Balkans and the Bulgars who came to the area from Central Asia during the Western Roman Empire and established a strong state in the land of the Thracians. They are almost exclusively Bulgarian Orthodox Christians, and speak Bulgarian, a Slavic language written with the Cyrillic alphabet. Muslim ethnic Turks, the human residue of 500 years of Ottoman rule, are the largest minority, making up 9 % of the population. Many consider Turkish to be their first language.

About 4.6% of the population is Roma (Gypsies), about half of whom are Christian and half Muslim. There are small ethnic groups of Armenians, Macedonians, Jews, Russians and Greeks making up for the remainder.

Bulgaria is not a country of immigration. The process of emigration is much more manifested. In the present century there have been several big migration waves. However, the ethnic composition of the population has remained relatively constant. Around 5/6 is the Bulgarian majority; the biggest minority groups are the Turks, Roma/Gypsies and Muslim

Bulgarians (named however “Pomaks”). The policy of the Bulgarian State towards the minority groups has been varying from a positive attitude to highly restrictive measures. The ethno-cultural communities have worked out modules of co-existence, avoiding the escalation of conflicts.

1.1.2 Ethnic, Religious and Culture Groups in Bulgaria

1.1.2.1 Ethnicity

In ethnic and cultural terms the population is mainly Bulgarian. The community of Bulgarian Turks is some 9 % of the population; the Roma's (or Tzigans, or Gypsies) constitute some 4.6 % while the percentage of the other ethnic communities is estimated at about 2 % of the total population of the country. More of 25 ethnic, religious and ethnographic groups are living together in Bulgaria. Variety of ethnic and religious identifications is the dominant characteristic in the local and regional level. More of 20 different languages exist in the Roma group. Bulgarian Turks have been defined by the two major different religious identities of the Islam. There are also the Bulgarian Karakatcans, the Vlachs and other cultural and ethnographic groups living in the different regions of country.

The sociological interpretation of ethnicity is not exhausted with the description of the subjects. In re-defining the past sociological practice, the possibility of modeling the process of building up the national community should be examined; this community must not be in conflict when integrating the ethnic cultural and religious differences. Under the conditions of a relatively completed process of institutionalization of the ethnic difference, the model of national community may be considered on the basis of the ethnicity interpretation. The resistance to this process is real because its development means a re-structuring of the ideological and symbolic resources and a practical re-arrangement of the main social subjects. The possibilities to surmount this resistance are contained also in the de-ethnisation of the social conflicts in Bulgarian society. The rejection of exploitation of the ethnic religious differences as a form of presentation of corporate interests create real chances for a democratic development based on the mutually accepted difference.

1.1.2.2 Religion

The official religion in Bulgaria is Eastern Orthodox Christianity. In the Republic of Bulgaria there is full freedom of religion. This democratic concept is also written in the Bulgarian Constitution.

Religious institutions are separate from the state. Religious communities and institutions as well as religious beliefs cannot be used for political purposes according to the Constitution of Bulgaria.

Traditionally Bulgaria has stood out for its lower level of religiousness compared to the countries of Central Europe and Russia, a Balkans distinction. This could probably account for the great atheistic pressure exercised in the postwar period. The census in 1992 demonstrated that formally religiousness in Bulgaria had been re-instated at its traditional level: 86,6% are Christians and 13,1% are Muslims. The sociological study conducted by Petar-Emil Mitev carried out in 1994 clarified the essence of the process that had occurred. The majority of the Bulgarian Christians (80%) identify with the Eastern Orthodox faith. One out of five, however, declares his adherence to “Christian culture as a whole”. We can here maintain that we are faced with a characteristic phenomenon for the post-totalitarian society, a specific new type of religiousness. Apparently the structures of self-determination according to the degree of religiousness are similar for the two types of identification. The most frequent answer appears to be “religious up to a point”, the groups of the deeply devout are small in number, and the groups of the non-religious – significant in number. It is only feasible to suppose that the more religious ones are from the ranks of those who have identified themselves as Eastern Orthodox.

1.1.2.3 Cross-Presentation: Ethnic, Religious and Mother Tongue in Bulgaria

Fig.1 Population by 01/03/2001 by ethnic group

Ethnic group	numbers	%
Bulgarian	6 655 210	84.0
Turkish	746 664	9.4
Roma	370 908	4.6
Russian	15 595	0.2
Armenian	10 832	0.1
Vlach	10 566	0.1
Macedonian	5 071	>0.1
Greek	3 408	>0.1
Ukranian	2 489	>0.1
Jewish	1 363	>0.1
Romanian	1 088	>0.1
Other	18 792	2.0
Total	7 928 901	100

Fig.2 Population by religion and years in numbers

Religion	1910	1920	1926	1934	1946	1992	2001
	Numbers						
Total	4 337 513	4 846 971	5 478 741	6 077 939	7 029 349	8 487 317	7 928 901
Christian							
Orthodox	3 643 918	4 062 097	4 569 074	5 128 890	5 967 992	7 274 592	6 552 751
Muslim	602 078	690 734	789 296	821 298	938 418	1 110 295	966 978
Catholic	32 150	34 072	40 347	45 704	-	53 074	43 811
Protestant	6 335	5 617	6 735	8 371	-	21 878	42 308
Jewish	40 067	43 232	46 431	48 398	43 335	2 580	653
Armenian-Gregorian	12 259	10 848	25 402	23 476	-	9 672	6 500
Other and unidentified	706	371	1 456	1 802	79 604	15 226	7 784
Not self-defined	-	-	-	-	-	-	308 116

Fig.3 Population by religion and years in percent

Religion	1910	1920	1926	1934	1946	1992	2001
	Structure - %						
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Christian							
Orthodox	84.0	83.8	83.4	84.4	84.9	85.7	82.6

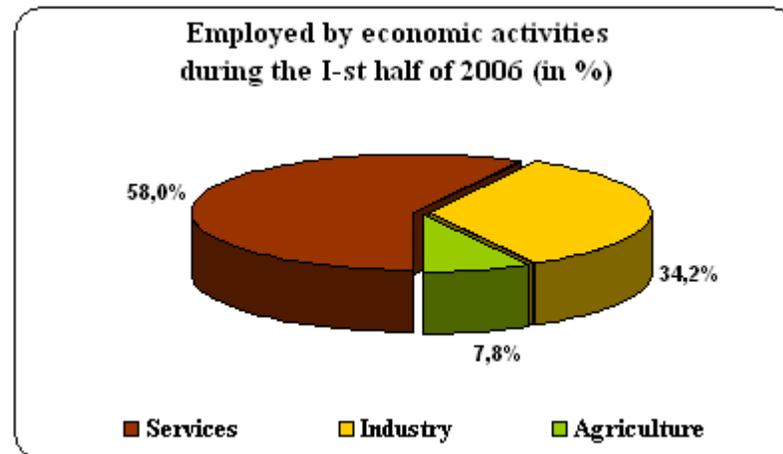
Muslim	13.9	14.3	14.4	13.5	13.3	13.1	12.2
Catholic	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.8	-	0.6	0.6
Protestant	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	-	0.3	0.5
Jewish	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.6	0.0	0.0
Armenian-Gregorian	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.4	-	0.1	0.1
Other and unidentified	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.2	0.1
Not self-defined	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.9

Fig.4 Population by 01/03/2001 by mother tongue

Country	Total	Mother tongue				Not self-defined	Unidentified
		Bulgarian	Turkish	Roma	Other		
Bulgaria	7 928 901	6 697 158	762 516	327 882	71 084	45 454	24 807

1.1.3 The Bulgarian Labour Market

Unemployment has an ethnic dimension, with higher rates of impoverishment found among Roma and Turks. 25% of Bulgaria's poor come from ethnic minorities, and of those two-thirds are of Roma origin. Indeed some of the highest rates of unemployment are in regions with large Roma communities, with the national unemployment rate among the Roma population reaching 71% in 2000. The higher level of unemployment among ethnic minorities (particularly the Roma) reflects, among other things, the fewer educational opportunities offered to these groups, and as a result the low educational standards generally attained by ethnic minorities. Another feature has been the concentration of poverty, whereby ethnic minority communities are concentrated in specific regions.

Fig.5 Employment by economic activity**1.1.3.1 Immigration and changes to workplace**

There is a growing tendency for further internationalization of workplace, re accommodation of immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees. The immigration pressure on Bulgaria as a transit country for migration remains. The main regions of origin are Turkey, Romania, Iraq, Iran, the CIS and the African countries. The bulk of migrants want to go to Western Europe but many immigrants settle in the country; liberal immigration legislation allows easy access to the labour and investment markets, thus providing a variety of grounds to regularize the alien's residence permit. More and more foreigners also settle in the country as a result of globalisation, multinationalisation of business and foreign investments, and international trade.

Fig.6 Immigrants who have settled in the country

1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
4,418	7,418	11,840	18,804	20,403

Source: Ministry of the Interior, January 1998

From 1993 to 2001 the number of applications for asylum in Bulgaria were 8,366. For the first 3 months of 2002, the number of applications for asylum was 1,091. From January to the end of March 2002 the number of refugees who were granted refugee status or humanitarian protection was 328 of whom 33 were women and 34 were children.

In 2002 the refugee profile changed from a majority with education or professional experience, an urban background, and families to a majority of single men with little or no education or professional experience, mainly from rural areas.

Further, from 1993 to September 2001, there were only a few unaccompanied minors, while during the first three months of 2002, 21 unaccompanied minors were registered.

Fig.7 Asylum-seekers for the period 01/01/1993 – 30/11/2006



1.1.3.2 Employment integration of refugees

The process of employment and social integration starts with the process of registration of foreign citizens but still many refugees prefer to stay “in the dark” and this is quite individual. It is possible for a person to have stayed illegally in the country for some time before officially applying for refugee status. Meanwhile, they may have worked illegally if not in possession of their own funds. Obviously, in these cases the state cannot and does not provide for them. In many cases there is lack of motivation for employment and social integration in the country on the part of the individuals in question, since they often cross the Bulgarian border on a transit basis on route to other Central and Western European countries. There are two

types of existing legal procedures associated with the post-registration period, before receiving formal approval of refugee status and afterwards.

1.1.3.3 Motivation for employment integration

Within the refugee status determination procedure, the problems of employment and social integration, with the entailing costs, seem easier to outline more clearly.

The motivation for employment and social integration is closely related with the necessity to provide a means of living. The variety of individual cases can be grouped as follows:

- Individuals intending to study in Bulgaria;
- Individuals intending to go on their way as refugees, only waiting here until they are granted refugee status, with a view to ensuring their legal travel to Central and Western European countries;
- Individuals intending to stay permanently in Bulgaria, who have already been in the country or have relatives here.

The variety of motivations for coming to Bulgaria and of future intentions shows that part of the refugees consider employment and social integration not to be essential, since their intentions to stay in the country are rather indefinite. Hence, their attitude toward the possibilities for employment and social integration will be different from that of people intending to settle permanently in the country. As far as motivation and intentions are associated with personal decisions and are not liable to legal classifications, the costs should be considered uniform for all cases. In this respect, part of the state's costs for the employment and social integration of refugees is not economically justifiable. For another part of the refugees, the funds provided by the state for their employment and social integration are of essential importance, which may even predetermine some of their actions in the future. (Institute for Market Economics, 2000).

1.2 Government Response

The representation of the minorities in State institutions and local governments by ethnic origin is increasing and the statistics is as follows: vice prime minister - 1 of Turkish origin; ministers - 3 of Turkish origin; deputy ministers - 8 of Turkish origin and 2 of Roma origin; members of Parliament of Turkish origin – 28; members of Parliament of Roma origin – 1;

members of Parliament of Jewish origin – 1; members of Parliament of Armenian origin – 1; Commission for Protection against Discrimination – Chairperson of Turkish origin, Deputy Chairperson of Roma origin; Ombudsman of the Republic of Bulgaria – Deputy Chairperson of Turkish origin; State Agency for Child Protection – President of Turkish origin; regional experts of Roma origin – 12; members of Municipal councils of Roma origin – 120; Mayors of municipalities of Roma origin – 23; Deputy Mayors of municipalities of Roma origin – 6; secretaries of municipalities of Roma origin – 3; Mayor substitutes of Roma origin – 7.

In the spirit of decentralization there are Regional Councils on Ethnic and Demographic Issues in the regional administrations. Regional councils have been established in Smolyan, Pazardzhik, Vratsa, Sliven, Varna, Plovdiv, Pernik, Montana, Ruse, Targovishte, Kyustendil, Dobrich, Razgrad, Blagoevgrad, Burgas, Vidin, Yambol, Veliko Tarnovo, Shumen. No regional councils have been established in the Region of Sofia and the City of Sofia. In the City of Sofia a public council was established and a Programme and its Action Plan were developed. In 23 of 28 regions 25 experts on ethnic and demographic issues were appointed. Municipal experts on ethnic and demographic issues have been appointed in more than half of all 264 municipalities in Bulgaria.

With regard to the ethnic minorities integration a number of strategies and programmes on regional level have been adopted. Health Strategy for Disadvantaged Persons Belonging to the Ethnic Minorities was adopted in Dobrich. Regional Strategy and a Programme for Ethnic Minorities Integration were adopted in Targovishte. Regional Strategy for Minorities Integration was adopted in Ruse. Programme for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities was adopted in Lovech. Strategy for Educational Integration of Children from Ethnic Minorities and Health Strategy for Disadvantaged Persons Belonging to the Ethnic Minorities and their Action Plans were adopted in Pernik. Varna has Regional Programme for Demographic Development and Integration of Ethnic Minorities and Plan for Support for implementation of the Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma in the Bulgarian Society. Strategy for Overcoming of Roma Children Lagging Behind in the Educational Integration System and Guaranteed Access to Quality Education was adopted in Vratsa. Programme for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities was adopted in Pazardzhik. Strategy for Child Protection and Programme for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities were adopted in

Smolyan. There is Programme for Minorities Integration in Sliven. Regional Programme for Minorities Integration was adopted in Razgrad.

The Law for the Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for its application determine the status of stay of foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The integration of immigrants and refugees is part of the process of democratization of the society, of the development and strengthening of human rights and freedoms.

The development and implementation of an integration policy is a key condition for immigrants and refugees to become an integral part of the civil society in Bulgaria.

1.2.1 New legislation re work permits

The present situation re work permits after the changes is as follows:

- Foreigners with a permanent resident's permit and refugees who receive sanctuary in Bulgaria are entitled, like other Bulgarian citizens, to work in Bulgaria.
- Temporary work permits are issued to foreigners and bear the name of the foreign worker, the name of the employee and the period for which the permit is valid.
- A work permit is not granted if the work can be undertaken by a Bulgarian citizen.
- An employer cannot hire foreign workers in excess of 10% of his total work force.
- Foreigners who work in Bulgaria as self employed individuals or as partners in a business must take out the relevant insurance cover. The insurance premium is between 29% - 32% of income.

Due to its geographical situation, Bulgaria is one of the main gateways to Europe and westward migration flows remain steady. Tightened border controls and stricter visa policy, with a computerized system since 1995, have significantly reduced illegal immigration both to Bulgaria and from Bulgaria to the EU Member States, although inward and outward bound human trafficking still constitutes a problem.

The integration of immigrants and refugees is an ongoing, dynamic and multi-dimensional process whose purpose is to ensure their social inclusion and involvement in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the country.

Equal rights and opportunities can be achieved only by means of a complex integration strategy aimed at:

- Development of an adequate legal framework;
- Efficient implementation of the legislation and access to rights, freedoms and legal remedies;
- Involvement of refugees in the development of this policy;
- Raising the awareness of the civil society in relation to the goals and principles of the integration policy;
- Respect for the cultural and religious differences and observation of the human rights of any individual residing in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Legislation and Programs were undertaken with a view to ensuring that legal immigrants and refugees have equal access to rights, opportunities for developing their individual potential, active and equal participation in the development of the Bulgarian society.

The program for the integration of refugees for instance targets any aliens who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Article 6, paragraph 2 of the Constitution of Bulgaria, prohibits any limitations of rights or privileges on grounds of race, nationality, ethnic background, gender, origin, religion, education, beliefs, belonging to a political party, personal and public status or property status.

Refugees recognised under the Geneva Convention by the Bulgarian authorities are provided with the Refugee Convention Travel Document that enables holders to travel abroad and a Refugee Identity Card. In order to obtain identity documents, refugees must shortly find appropriate housing and notify their address to the competent police station. Registered asylum-seekers are provided with an Interim Refugee Card. After 3 years of residence in Bulgaria recognised refugees may apply for Bulgarian citizenship.

In the legislation, two categories of foreigners willing to settle in the country are set out permanently residing and temporarily residing.

Immigration in Bulgaria remains limited. Even with the liberalised visa and frontier regime, following the beginning of systematic changes, Bulgaria does not meet the problems of other countries that are recipients of immigration.

There is a need:

- To work out a migration policy in view of the peculiarities of the emigration and immigration processes under way in the country, and in Europe as a whole
- To work out successful integration models for those who, due to different reasons, have chosen Bulgaria as their second homeland.

1.2.2 The progress of Bulgaria in the process of integrating of Roma people into the labour market: latest results

A lot will be said in this report about the Roma and the Roma discrimination phenomenon. A big number of Bulgarians still describe the Roma people as the ones who have poor education, no social skills and anti-social behaviour .

Unfortunately, Roma are discriminated on unofficial and official level as well. Roma seem to be the most rejected community, at the bottom of social hierarchy. A striking result is the highly negative attitude towards Roma not only by the representative of the majority group, but Turks and Pomaks as well have a high level of intolerance towards Roma. The result is striking because usually minorities are more tolerant to other minorities than the majority.

After 1989 the transition period was accompanied with side effects like an increase in crime, high unemployment. The group that suffered most were and continue to be Roma. To the economic difficulties that the group experienced is added strong anti-Roma propaganda. The media also played a special role in the first years after the change. On one side Roma problems were addressed and were presented to the broad public. On the other media, and especially the press created and spread various negative stereotypes about that minority.

The most spread stereotypes are:

- Roma are lazy and irresponsible; they are unable to pursue long-term objectives
- Roma are bad parents; they abuse their wives and abandon their children
- Roma have low morality; they are brothel-keepers, prostitutes and drug dealers;

- Roma are a criminal group; they are murders, burglars, rapists and thieves

Attention deserves the last expressed stereotype. The survey by the National Institute of Youth Studies on public opinion at that time illustrated the view that Roma are the main vehicle for crime in the country. "Gypsies were described by 89% of respondents as thieves, by 76% as bullies, by 75% as black marketers, by 70% as liars, and by 67% as drifters".

Fortunately a lot has changed in recent years both as personal and institutional attitudes. No one of the leading political priorities of the Bulgarian government in eliminating the risk of social isolation of the Roma and their integration into the Bulgarian society is solving the problems related to their employment. In this regard the measures that have been undertaken are directed to the implementation of programs for qualification and employment that are in compliance with the labour market needs as well as the specificity of some traditional work attitudes of the Roma population.

One of the important mechanisms for implementation of these priorities is the international initiative "Decade for Roma inclusion 2005-2015" under which there is a plan elaborated by the Employment Agency for 2006. The plan provides for activities related to improving the adaptability of employment of the Roma people on the labour market and promoting of entrepreneurship.

The results for the period January – 20 August 2006 as follows:

- More than 12 000 Roma people were included in employment and training whereas 2/3 of them are in employment, the rest - in training. Additionally, 7 500 Roma people are motivated and directed to job seeking and inclusion in courses for vocational qualification.
- The process of social integration and improvement of the economic status of the Roma finds its application in diverse initiatives and instruments:
- The specialized employment exchanges organized by the Employment Agency in the period May – August 2006 in different regions of the country. They establish direct and fast contacts between employers and job seekers and aim at the selection of suitable candidates for the vacancies or for training before employment.

- 10 employment exchanges that have been planned were conducted till 21 August 2006 in the towns of: Targovishte, Plovdiv, Pazardjik, Vidin, Sliven, Kameno, Stara Zagora, Dobrich, Montana and Haskovo. 1 955 job seekers and 164 employers took part in them whereas 2 445 vacancies were announced. Most of the vacancies were of a seasonal character (mainly in agriculture and manufacturing industry) and they were opened gradually. For each vacancy a selection amongst the unemployed Roma is made according to the requirements of the employers. Most of the vacancies were announced in Targovishte (867), Stara Zagora (421) and Pazardjik (252). The respective Labour Offices Directorates directed 1 387 unemployed Roma people to the vacancies announced by the 10 employment exchanges. Of them 640 persons were employed.
- The initial literacy training and raising of the qualification of the Roma people is another important measure with a long-term effect and benefit for the individual and the family to which belongs, the Roma community and the society in general.

A National Program for Initial Literacy and Qualification of Roma people was launched in the beginning of May 2006 for the implementation of which there are funds at the amount of BGN 1.65 million from the state budget and BGN 17 000 ensured by the Institute for International Cooperation of the Association of the German people's universities. 2 639 unemployed Roma people were included in the initial literacy training till the end of August. A specialized training in andragogy was successfully completed by 72 teachers.

- The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy approved Methodical instructions on "Provision of specialized individual consultation directed to solving of specific problems of Roma ethnic community". The implementation of the Instruction aims at better targeting of work of the labour offices with the unemployed Roma people. This will raise the active attitude of Roma to participate in literacy and vocational training and employment through the mediation of the labour offices.
- A big part of the Roma population is subject to monthly social assistance. The majority of it is illiterate or with primary or lower education, without vocational qualification. With a view to acquire professional skills, permanent work discipline as well as income and increase of income, and last but not least, to reduce the

marginalization of that group, 6 464 unemployed Roma were included in the National Program “From social assistance to provision of employment”.

On the occasion of the peer-review of the European Commission, Haskovo municipal administration Project has been elaborated under the National program “From social assistance to provision of employment”. 300 jobs were created for the implementation of activities for improvement of infrastructure in settlements with compact Roma population on the territory of Samokov municipality and activities related to forestation of municipal terrains. 198 unemployed Roma people were employed under the Project till 21 August 2006.

In June the Employment Agency approved for financing 65 projects for the creation of 912 jobs in activities for improvement of infrastructure of quarters and villages with compact Roma population. The activities envisaged by the projects are for the period July – November 2006.

- Of particular importance for the education of Roma children is the training of unemployed Roma in the new speciality “assistant to the teacher”. 95 unemployed Roma people have been trained till 21 August to acquire vocational qualification in bringing up children. The labour offices made a selection of training institutions and unemployed Roma to form the groups for training.
- In the framework of the component “Employment for Roma” within the project “Job opportunities for business support” two Roma business centres (in Burgas and in Pazardjik) have been established. These centres provide a grant scheme (free amount of up to BGN 2 000) which is combined with financial leasing of up to BGN 25 000 and 9 months grace period and 48 months on deferred payments. The centres also provide training for acquiring vocational qualification for starting up of own business; training of private agricultural producers and entrepreneurs in EU requirements and opportunities for receiving EU funds; motivation training for job seeking and taking up a job; qualification training. Over the period 1 January – 11 August 2006 in the framework of the component “Employment for Roma”, 301 Roma people were included in training, 185 were employed, 26 were self-employed and 9 firms received financial leasing.

- Besides the initiatives listed above, the unemployed Roma as part of the priority groups on the labour market (long-term unemployed, women, youths, unemployed persons above the age of 50 and others) are provided with employment and training in all other programs and measures for employment and training.

1.3 Civic response

The NGO sector in Bulgaria has been actively directed to tackle with ethnic, religious, cultural and philosophic traditions. Over the last few years the number of the non-governmental and civil organizations and associations registered in compliance with the Persons and Families Act (Civil Law) has risen strongly. Currently, they outnumber 3400, including sports, religious and syndicate organizations. According to the “BULSTAT” Uniform State Register of Economic Entities in the Republic of Bulgaria, which was introduced in 1996, there is total of 4530 NGOs.

The National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCEDI) is a relatively new structure established in 1998 by a Decree of the Council of Ministers. The NCEDI is composed of representatives of all government ministers and agencies and associative members from NGO s of all ethnic, religious and ethnographical groups.

The NCEDI play a focal role, coordinating Government adopted a Framework Program for Equal Integration of the Roma in the Bulgarian Society, which will further develop and enhance the public administration capacities for the integration of the various minority groups and the Roma in particular. The NCEDI has developed an effective interaction and cooperation with relevant government ministries and agencies and the network of NGO s active in this field.

The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee Programme for Refugee and Migrant Protection provides asylum seekers with free legal advice at all stages of the refugee status determination procedure, including with legal representation in the court and other institutions. A number of asylum seekers prefer only contact UNHCR, the National Bureau for Territorial Asylum and Refugees (NBTAR) or NGOs in order to avoid expulsion from Bulgaria. The first registration/reception centre was set up in the village of Banya near the town of Nova Zagora in 1997. In three cities at the Romanian, Turkish and Greek borders, small transit centres have been opened by UNHCR through an NGO. The idea was to assist the border police

who very often do not know how to deal with asylum seekers. These centres give the border police the possibility of finding a place where initial help (shelter, food and transport to NBTAR in Sofia) can be provided. This experience has proved to be both very successful and to facilitate access to territory and eventually procedure.

Another good example for cooperation is the Refugee Integration Centre and the non-governmental organizations working with refugees facilitate organizing training courses for refugee children in their mother tongue with a view to preserving the national culture and customs. Representatives of the refugee communities in Bulgaria who have teaching experience and skills are involved in this process.

There are organisations specifically created by the different ethnic groups themselves. Each ethnic group has at least one organisation to represent it and each has its own publications and media presentations. There are also a number of NGOs, such as the Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, the Intercultural Initiative for Human Rights and others, which are helping ethnic groups financially and working for the creation of a multi-cultural ethnic environment in the country. In addition to the government's National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues, a new organisation, Euroroma, aimed at integrating and supporting the Roma population, has been established with the support of the Euroleft Social Democratic Party. The first branch has been opened in the city of Veliko Tarnovo. These organisations receive financial support from abroad, from Bulgarian members and from wealthy representatives of the ethnic group, as well as by renting out their buildings, offices, recreation houses, etc. The NGOs have an increasing role both in organizing various initiatives and campaigns in support of ethnic, religious and intercultural tolerance and understanding, and in intercultural awareness and training initiatives. They took active part in the discussions re the Ethnic Equality Act and other anti-discrimination legislation.

The most recent legislative changes have encouraged the dialogue between public authorities and the civil sector by regulating the right to consultative participation of NGOs in the work of various public bodies at the three levels of governance - national, regional and local.

NGOs have played an important role in the monitoring and advocacy of human and minority rights. They have made particular efforts in raising awareness, sensitising and informing

both the wider public and the specialised public administration about the rights of persons belonging to various minorities. Their activities contribute to the mobilization of the civil resources of ethnic communities and their more active representation on the public scene.

1.4 Business Community Response

The Bulgarian business seems perfectly aware of the new challenges re globalisation, multinationalisation of business and foreign investments, and international trade, and seems to be more and more aware of the internationalisation of the workplace. Traditionally some vocations have been considered typical and done by representatives of different communities: jewelry by Jews; goldsmiths - Armenians; traders/merchants – Greeks, etc. There is a tendency of growing number of foreigners to be employed in recent years, and mainly: Palestinians, Afghani, Iraqi, Syrian, Vietnamese, Chinese, etc. There have been some very active employers' organisations operating on the labour market and advising on the government decisions, such as BIBA (Bulgarian International Business Association), BCCI (Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry), BEA (Bulgarian Employers' Association), etc. The business community has contributed a great deal to the development of the Law for the Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for its application, the Law for Encouragement of Employment and the Regulation for the Terms and Conditions for Issuance, Refusal and Withdrawal of Work Permits to Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria. Still some foreigner complain about restrictions that foreign persons cannot own land in Bulgaria because of a constitutional prohibition, but foreign-owned companies registered in Bulgaria are considered to be Bulgarian persons. Foreign persons may acquire ownership of buildings and limited property rights, and may lease land, which is considered positive.

Local companies where foreign partners have controlling interests must obtain prior approval (licenses) to engage in certain activities: production and export of arms/ammunition; banking and insurance; exploration, development and exploitation of natural resources; and acquisition of property in certain geographic areas. There are neither specific export performance requirements nor specific restrictions on hiring expatriate personnel, but residence permits are often difficult to obtain.

It is also the business community that was the first to recognize the need for intercultural competencies and training. A good example of non-formal initiatives is the ethnic luncheons and other intercultural awareness activities.

1.5 Academic Community Response

The academic community also seems to be more actively involved in analyzing the trends on the labour market paying special attention to its internationalization and multicultural nature, as well as the challenges, via studies and research, looking into the dynamics of international migration and responses (comparative analysis re to other countries), which have proved to be very useful with regard to trends, good practice, needs to be addressed and challenges. Pointing out the manifest need for intercultural education the Academic Community has initiated various cultural awareness activities such as travelogues, talks on history, exhibits.

Ethnic differences are a crucial category for understanding Bulgarian society. From an interethnic point of view, the main goal is integration, but official powers as well as society are still far from accepting the idea of creating a multicultural environment.

The opening of Shoumen University and the Kurdjali Pedagogical College, both of which are located in areas with compact Turkish population can be regarded as good practice of bringing education closer to potential beneficiaries and drawing their attention to the opportunity for higher education and better employment perspectives.

More will be seen in the case studies tackling with issues such as Specialised Roma schools vs integrated schools; The problem with drop-outs; Teacher-assistants; Minority languages; Practical aspects of the education of aliens who seek or have been granted protection; Extracurricular activities at the Integration Centre for Refugees.

The introduction in Bulgarian schools of Teacher Assistants of ethnic origin was a great step, as well as the introduction of a thematic course on human rights, which was one of the major subjects of the National Conference on the European Year of Democratic Citizenship through Education-2005 proclaimed by the Council of Europe.

A priority of the Ministry of Education during the Decade for Roma Inclusion /2005-2015/ is to work out the necessary documents and conduct the respective policy so that the process of integration and adaptation of Roma children becomes a lasting and irreversible one.

After graduating from secondary schools, refugees have the right to continue their education at higher educational establishments under the same conditions and procedure as Bulgarian nationals.

The Ordinance Laying down the State Requirements for the Enrolment and Training of Doctoral Students regulates the possibility for refugees to apply for Ph.D. programs under the same conditions and procedure as Bulgarian nationals.

Some individuals insist on this, but their influence is weak and time will have to pass before this approach becomes prevalent. In the last decade, an increasing number of publications have been devoted to this problem. In the social science literature, ethnic diversity is seen as a norm of social practice as well as a potentially destructive phenomenon. It is analysed as related to interests or to identities; tolerance or conflicts are seen as arising from ethnic differences oriented against the state or developing between different cultural groups loyal to particularistic or universalistic values. In the social science publications, it is argued that identities can be negotiated or struggled for. There is no shortage of analyses on these problems, however a consensual theory has not yet been agreed upon.

1.6 Media Response

In theory, the media should play a crucial role in the development and the encouragement of different ethnic cultures, and of mutual understanding between the majority and minority communities. In practice, however, there is no intercultural dialogue in the media and minority access to the media is limited.

Events are presented and interpreted exclusively from the viewpoint of the ethnic majority. Therefore, the state and local authorities need to implement policies that will ensure the participation of minorities in the media and promote inter-ethnic dialogue rather than the monolithic representation of individual ethnic communities. This participation has to account both for programmes addressing minorities and for the involvement of journalists of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Examples of programmes by and on minorities exist at a local level. They are supported by local radio stations, cable televisions and NGOs.

Some of the local radio stations have been broadcasting in Turkish since 1990. The National Radio has transmitted such programmes since 1993. There is a programme for minorities on national television. Private TV channels have also allocated time to minority issues. A

Turkish-language programme has recently been launched in regions with compact minority populations.

Nine newspapers have been published in Turkish during the transition period. Some of them have closed down due to funding problems. The Armenian and the Jewish communities each have an independent press. In the case of the Roma, eleven periodicals were designed for publication after 1989. Some of them barely managed to release one or two issues. Nonetheless, for the past six years, the local media space has included the Roma publication, *Drom Dromendar*, released in Sliven (a city with a high Roma population).

Aided by sponsors, NGOs active in some neighbourhoods with compact minority populations have been able to publish information bulletins or newspapers. They publicise the activities of NGOs among the local community and provide information on the initiatives of municipal authorities, which address minority problems.

The Bulgarian media have been doing a very good job in recent years, focusing their attention to both the 'old' minorities/foreigners (historically settled here for years) and the 'new' minorities/foreigners (foreign investors and business people, immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers). It is very positive that competitions have been organized and special awards (incl. international) have been given each year to media and media representatives representing the intercultural issues and challenges in the best way. The media has proved in recent years as one of the most powerful tools for developing cultural sensitivity and in emphasizing on things cultures have in common and what is positive in all cultures.

1.7 Conclusion

The workplace in Bulgaria is becoming more and more intercultural. It is based on the already existing ethnic, religious and cultural diversity due to historical development, on the trend on growing migration to the country, and the globalisation of the labour market

Bulgaria made a significant step forward in recent years and has adopted legislation that targets both direct and indirect discrimination in the areas of employment, education, social protection, healthcare and other aspects of public life.

A great contribution to all recent developments has been made by all sectors: public, private, business, academic, and the media.

As a result the Bulgarian society experiences a significant shift from ethnocentricity to ethnorelativism.

Still there is a lot to be done in the field of

- Social and economic integration
- Intercultural awareness
- Intercultural education

2. Private, Public, Education Sectors

2.1 Overview, facts and figures

Many studies, including the Bulgarian Integrated Household Survey, show that on average the working people from Roma minority group have less prestigious jobs and receive lower wages than the rest of the Bulgarian population. Only people who are 16 or above are included in the employment file. The people in the survey from Roma origin who work for a salary or commission for an employer are usually performing physical labour related professions that are worse paid. These include construction, wood yielding and processing, tailoring, agriculture and others. There are no representatives of the Roma ethnic group in the data set who have leadership positions or jobs requiring higher education such as managers, technical experts, research and development experts, economists. There is only one Roma person who works as a legal staff. In comparison 34.5% of the Bulgarians in the

survey that are working have professions that are considered more intellectual. These include professions that require higher education and specific skills. For the Turkish minority the percentage of people who have better paid intellectual professions is 4%. In the sociological survey by ASA (Agency for Social Analyses) 10% of the Bulgarians respond that they monitor the work of other people. This answer is given by only 3% of Turks and 1.9% of Roma minority. The fact that Roma and Turkish population usually has less prestigious jobs plays a major role in creating large income gap between the two minority groups and the rest of the Bulgarian population. The average wage for the working Roma minority in the survey is 143 levs. For Bulgarians the average wage is 226, and for Turkish minority-166.2 levs. The length of employment also differs among the ethnic groups.

Fig.8 Type of employment that the working individuals in the survey had

% of working individuals			
Type of employment	Roma	Bulgarian	Turk
Permanent Dependent Job	42.30769	72.2335	40
Temporary Job	47.11538	18.73096	42.6087
Own Business	8.653846	8.426396	6.086957
Other (farm or helping friends)	0.961538	0.507614	11.30435
Refusal to answer	0.961538	0.101523	0
Total	100	100	100

The percentage of Roma and Turks who have permanent jobs is very small compared to the Bulgarians. Most of the representatives of the two minority groups have temporary jobs, which often lack employment contracts. This tendency is shown also by the survey completed by the ASA where 40.3% of the Bulgarians aged 15 and older have a full time job (page 15). For Roma this number is 15.8% and for Turks-25%. The temporary employment dominates among 0.9% of Bulgarians and 2.5% of Roma (These numbers are quoted as a percentage of all people in the survey and should not be confused with the numbers given in the table above that represent percentage of working people with different type of employment). This, of course, makes securing the income necessary for the survival of the minority households more uncertain. Because of that the environment, in which the minority group lives, is much more stressful. Roma households concentrate mainly on the basic

needs for the survival of their family. In these conditions investing in improvement of living conditions or the education of their children is unthinkable because no long term budgeting is possible. This constitutes one more reason for the Roma and Turkish households to be less willing to invest in their children's education. Concentrated on the basic needs of the every day life, education seems a luxury that has no place in the constantly fluctuating household budget.

The lower level of education of the two main minority groups (Roma and Turks) results not only in concentration of the minority in less paid and lower qualified job, but also in greater unemployment and poverty among these ethnic groups. (*Costs of Discrimination*, Philip Gounev, 2004). Only 13.7% of Roma aged above 16 in the survey respond that they have worked in the last 7 days. This number is 38% for Bulgarians in this age group and 29.6% for Turks.

Fig.9 Major reasons indicated by the respondents for not working in the last week

Reason for not working	% of nonworking individuals		
	Roma	Bulgarian	Turk
Temporary interruption	0.45	3.03	1.76
Sickness/disability	3.06	1.94	4.24
Education	2.14	8.82	3.88
Retirement	13.47	57.51	28.97
No job	15.16	1.84	3.53
Maternity/Housekeeping	5.81	2.78	9.54
Currently looking for work	58.19	20.66	44.87
Other reason	1.68	3.38	3.18
Total	100	100	100

From the Roma who have not been working in the last week, only 19% indicate as a major reason for not participating in the labour force either temporary sick leave, maternity leave or vacation (0.46%), or more long-term reason such as sickness, disability, education or retirement (18.6%). For Bulgarians the percentage of people who are not working because they are involved in education activities is four times higher than for Roma minority (2.27 times greater than the Turkish minority). The major reason for the Bulgarians not to work is retirement, which is not surprising considering the demographic characteristics of the Bulgarian population. The percentage of Roma that is discouraged from the labour market

conditions and responds that the reason for not working is that there are no jobs available, is much higher than the Bulgarians and the Turks who give similar response. This means that in general Roma population's evaluation of its own chances of finding a job is lower than Bulgarians' and Turks' assessment of their own working opportunities. Nevertheless, the majority of nonworking Roma responds that they are currently looking for a job (58.19%). The high percentage of nonworking Roma who are looking for a job compared to the percentage of nonworking Bulgarians who give the same response is partially due to the fact that Roma minority consists of more people who are at a working age. 64% of the Roma who are looking for a job are also registered with the Labour office. This percentage for Bulgarians is 51% and for Turks-50.4%. The greater percentage of Roma registered with the Labour office might be due to the fact that Roma are more dependent on unemployment benefits for their survival. 42.5% of the registered Roma receive some form of unemployment benefits (Bulgarians-37%; Turks-20.3%). The average length of job search also varies greatly among the ethnic groups. For Roma minority it is 48.23 months, For Bulgarians-22.72 and for Turks-42.7.

People with refugee status on the labour market

As soon as refugee status has been granted, foreign citizens have equal rights with Bulgarian citizens, as far as labour issues are concerned. Their employment and legal relations are regulated by the existing labour legislation in the country.

Under the conditions of a market economy the refugees, like all Bulgarian citizens, have to search for and find jobs on their own. There are many difficulties to face, and they are very much the same for all people, as long as the labour supply is rather limited in an economy in stagnation. People with refugee status encounter even greater difficulties, and we would go too far if we claimed that they are equally placed in the labour market. This is due to several factors:

- As foreigners they have to grapple with the language barrier and the original lack of a social network to rely on;
- The possibilities for receiving the support of relatives and friends in a job search are smaller in comparison with those of most Bulgarian citizens, taking into account that operating through relatives and friends is a common practice in the country;

- These people have no accumulated local employment experience, and while other conditions are more or less the same, Bulgarian employers would prefer their future employees to have relevant local experience and good knowledge of existing institutional relations.

Hence, however equal vis-à-vis the law, recognized refugees may be considered as one of the marginal groups on the labour market. They should be supported and encouraged through specialized programs or general refugee policies for their employment integration.

Facts and figures: the Bulgarian labour market and employment (2006)

Fig.10 Employment

Employment (thousands)	First half	
	2006	2005
Employed persons	3039.8	2923.7
<i>Incl.:</i>		
Hired persons	2644.3	2521.3
• in private enterprises	1786.8	1659.4
• in state owned enterprises	857.4	861.9
Employers	117.6	110.2
Self-employed persons	241.4	244.1

Fig.11 Active Labour Market Measures

Active Labour Market Measures	First half	
	2006	2005
Included in programmes and measures for employment and training (number)	108257	111475

<i>Incl. in:</i>		
Programmes	96725	96426
<i>Incl.:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in the National Programme “From Social Assistance to Employment” 	68930	72885
Measures	11529	15049
<i>Incl.:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unemployed youths up to 29 years 	2 966	4740
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> started own business 	345	647
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> people with disabilities 	1182	941
Working people under programmes and measures (average monthly number)	91852	102307
Started training courses for vocational training (number)	19581	17233
<i>Incl.:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unemployed 	17087	14931
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> employed 	2494	2302

Fig.12 Resources spent on employment programmes and vocational training

2.2 Cultural Diversity in the Private Sector

2.2.1 Important notice

There is no relevant data re interculturality and cultural diversity in the different sectors and branches which posed a serious problem to this research to follow the requested format and review the various sector. This is for two main reasons:

Providing statistical information on minorities, their employment and workplace problems is a quite sensitive issue and may lead to ethnic and religious tensions given their disadvantaged position on the labour market.

With regard to migrants the situation is merely the same and we would quote a UN report *International Migration and Related Problems in the Statistical System Of Bulgaria* (Geneva, 13-15 June 2005) reading: During recent years, the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria was not able to provide trustworthy and reliable data on international migration in Bulgaria. This was due to the fact that there was no information system available to the different institutions at the time to aggregate those data. It was necessary to create a relevant mechanism to receive these data from all possible sources and to improve the primary information on the statistical coverage of international migration according to the international requirements and recommendations.

One of the biggest problems in the scope of the migrants is the lack of precise statistical data. Because of the world-changing situation - economic stagnation, political instability, social violation, yet existing armed conflicts; and at the same time development of the global

net, possibility to travel unrestricted and existing of diaspora-community in the rich countries - it is very difficult to define the board between this people who are asylum seekers, feared of their life and their freedom and those people, who run away of misery in their country.

Nevertheless we have managed to review 6 sectors in Part 2: Case Studies and namely: primary education, secondary and continuing education, health, tourism, construction, transport. (see Part 2: Case Studies)

2.2.2 Key challenges

Ethnic minorities, the long-term unemployed, and people with low education continue to face poverty. Therefore, one of the key challenges is to ensure that growth generates wealth for all groups in society. To realize Bulgaria's potential and meet the aspirations of all, the country needs to stay on course in tackling the remaining challenges in its transition agenda, including creating an efficient and competitive business environment; finalizing second generation economic reforms. The increasing share of the private sector therefore is vital for the economy of the country.

15 years after the transition to a market economy started in Bulgaria, there are still severe obstacles to the development of the country's regions. Significant regional disparities exist, and economic and human factors are highly stagnant in these regions, though on the whole Bulgarian economy has been developing relatively well in recent years. People still tend to rely on the state as the primary source of both economic security and opportunities.

This generally applicable statement is especially valid for regions with ethnically mixed populations. These regions used to rely solely on the state as the main provider of employment opportunities. After the state sector collapsed, economic development there showed extraordinary decline. Poverty and unemployment, combined with ethnic divisions, could become a source of ethnically based conflicts.

Furthermore, the redistribution of land as a result of restitution disenfranchised Roma who were engaged in agricultural work under communism. The land was restored to its pre-collectivisation owners and their heirs, very few of whom were Roma. As a result, Roma have been excluded from all forms of land cultivation since 1989, making the employment situation of Roma villagers even more desperate than that of Roma living in cities.

A step forward is the Law of Protection in the Event of Unemployment and Encouraging of Employment stipulating that 'no restrictions or privileges are allowed based on race, nationality, ethnic belonging, origin, sex, age, religious beliefs, political belonging, membership in trade union organizations and movements, social status, material and health status.'

According to Anna Krusteva (Capital Weekly, Issue 42, 2004) the immigration situation in the country is quite diverse. The most homogeneous group of immigrants is the Chinese one. The most heterogeneous one is the Arab group, which includes Syrians, Lebanese, Iraqi people, Afghans and others. The most ambivalent group is the Kurd group. The group of Russian immigrants is numerous and well-established. Immigrants from China seem to be the most easily adapting people to culture differences. The members of the Chinese immigration group help each other during the adaptation period. Bulgarian people consider immigrants from Lebanon as generally Arabs and Muslims. Immigrants from Africa make the only "racial" group in Bulgaria. Chinese immigrants may be considered as the newcomers in Bulgarian immigration phenomenon. Still, it is the most dynamic group of immigrants. The group of African immigrants is quite small and most of the new immigrants are refugees. The most numerous one is the group of Arab immigrants.

Majority of Chinese immigrants in Bulgaria are of no high education. They work mainly in the restaurants or are engaged in the retail trade. Immigrants from Africa are well educated; they work as engineers, doctors, etc. Arabs are the major rivals of Chinese in both sectors - restaurants and the retail trade but Chinese immigrants are more energetic and gain stronger position.

2.2.3 The agrarian reform and its influence on regional development

The biggest part of the Bulgarian minorities is involved in the agricultural sector. The transition to a market economy had been a complex process where the Agrarian Reform in Bulgaria is based on the restitution of property rights over land, liquidation of the former collectives, privatization of non-land assets (buildings, machinery, equipment, animals), liquidation of the monopolistic structures downstream and upstream of agriculture, and the establishment and development of a private sector in agriculture, adapted to the market economy. Therefore, agrarian reform in Bulgaria includes two major processes carried out in

parallel: land reform and structural reform. The new structure of ownership over land has influenced the structure of operating units in agriculture. The newly emerged structures are individual private farms and farming companies. This process is also important as the prevailing part of the landless have ethnic minority identity.

The structure of household incomes according to a survey in regions with ethnically mixed populations, i.e. regions with large minority populations (Kurdzhali, Sliven and Omurtag) showed that state-owned companies account for 28% (relative share) of the income sources in the municipalities under review. Together with pensions (25.4%), welfare benefits (5.44%) and grants (2.44%), they add up to 60.93% (relative share) of the households in the municipalities that have the government as an income source. Second come incomes from personal activities (19%), including private business, sale of farm produce, land leasing and rents. Income from wages in the private sector makes up 15% (relative share).

A total of 9.8% of respondents in the three municipalities planned to launch their own business. The bulk of people (45.5%) believe that trade offers the best prospects. This matches the existing distribution of sectors in private business, both in the regions covered by the study and in the country in general. The business intentions connected with agriculture are negligibly low (1.2-3.0%). Where they exist, they have to do with trade in farm produce (1.2%). The unattractiveness of farming is particularly striking in the villages. There are still people among the town dwellers (4.1%) who believe that with unemployment remaining the only alternative, agriculture can still bring a profit. We get a different picture in villages (1.2%), where people are fully aware of the state of domestic agriculture.

The hostile macroeconomic environment, poorly operating market mechanisms and restricted access to loans also seem to be major obstacles to developing a private business in the regions in question. Next come high taxes and red tape. Also, sluggish and clandestine privatization puts off foreign investors while favouring circles close to the local authorities according to the respondents.

In terms of business attitudes, the results cannot be assessed as optimistic; business is perceived as an element of the survival strategies. Avoiding unemployment is one of the main motives for starting a private business. The level of business activity, however, is not lower than in other regions of the country. Still, business intentions connected with agriculture are negligibly low. The results of the research confirm the assumption of a

predominant intention to start micro-businesses with a minimum of high-risk investment; mainly small-scale trade.

2.2.4 The private sector and the increasing cultural diversity

The private sector seems to be most widely affected by the increasing cultural diversity in the Bulgarian society. This is due to 3 factors:

- The ethnic structure of the society: 16 % non-ethnic Bulgarians
- The religious structure of the society: 18 % non Christian Orthodox
- The growing number of foreigners living and working in the country (foreign companies operating on the Bulgarian market, growing number of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers).

According to different estimates, which remain rather approximate, the number of legal immigrants is about 108,000, e.g.: naturalised 3600, permanently residing 40,000, long-term temporary residing 64,400. Most numerous among foreigners permanently residing and working in Bulgaria are citizens of Russia, Ukraine, Germany, Check Republic, Afghanistan, and Armenia and temporary residing are from Greece, Turkey and China.

According to Labour and Social Policy Ministry figures released in June 2006, there are about 52 000 foreigners employed in Bulgaria, on the basis of permanent residence, while by mid-2006 more than 1000 foreigners had been granted work permits.

2.2.5 Policy on employment and measures for stimulating the employers

The main objectives of the active policy on employment supported by the government currently are:

- Increase in adaptability of disadvantaged groups with the aim of improving their labour market integration
- Employment sustention and increase

The first objective should be achieved through the following programs:

- Increasing work force adaptability increasing
- Employment and social integration

The second objective should be achieved through the following programs:

- New vacancy openings and employment sustainability
- Entrepreneurship promotion

There are different ways of subsidizing employers, through salary, social security staff qualification improvement funding, in case:

- They open vacancies for particular unemployed groups
- They provide employment to registered unemployed for a 24 month term
- They provide part-time employment for two unemployed individuals for a 24 month term
- They provide employment for five unemployed individuals for a 24 month term (only for micro-enterprises)
- They provide a 6 month internship and/or apprentice qualification course
- Sustain employment while lowering the work/production amount or ceasing it for more than 15 days

Employment and Training measures are aimed at:

- Up to 29 year old unemployed youths, including youths with limited capabilities, those for social institutions, graduates, hired for a 24 month term or up to 6 months interns
- Unemployed individuals with permanent capability limitations, hired for a 24 month term, or for up to 6 months temporary, seasonal or part-time employment
- Unemployed from disadvantages labour market groups, contracted for 24 month term (single parents, up to 3 years old child adopters, individuals that have been released from correctional facilities, above 50 year old women, above 55 males and long term unemployed)

2.2.6 International and national programmes for increasing employment among minority groups

The biggest problem in the society remains the high rate of unemployment.

A great achievement in increasing employment among minority groups is the JOBS project. The development objective of the project is to demonstrate a replicable model for employment generation through stimulation and creation of micro and small enterprises and adopt this model as national policy. The JOBS Project is being strategically managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and is implemented by the United Nations Development Program. The project enhances rural economic development by creating an environment where employment is promoted through support to micro and small enterprises. It is an extension of the successful Business Development and Support Project implemented through the UNDP. This project addresses the problem by supporting development of the private sector (micro and small enterprises). The goal is to increase the level of employment throughout the country by developing business centres, registered as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which will provide technical and financial assistance to the emerging private sector. Thus minorities as a target group are being given more opportunities for jobs and self-sustainable income generation. The project works for the promotion and realization of the rights of minority groups as an integral part of the Bulgarian society. Various minority groups are being provided with the opportunity to receive additional financial support from the project by accessing the special projects fund. Minorities are an integral target group and most of the communities in the project are comprised predominately of minorities.

A number of programmes and projects for overcoming the problems in the different regions in the country have been implemented. The results of some of them are as follows:

- 178 working places were created through 22 completed projects and 72 micro credit loans given under the Sustainable Development of Rural Areas Project
- 51 projects, 42 of which for investments in stock-breeding and 9 for plant-growing projects were funded under the Programme for Agriculture Development in North-West Bulgaria that aims at income increase of the employed in the area and reduction of unemployment in North-West Bulgaria.
- The goal of the Programme for Alternative Agriculture Development in the Rhodopi Mountains is development of effective and sustainable agricultural production in the region thus creating employment and income increase of population. 46 projects for purchasing livestock and buildings for stock-breeding have been implemented under the Programme.

- 7 231 people were employed under the Bulgarian Forest Restoration Programme.
- 179 projects to the total amount of BGN 52 302 064 were approved and funded in the country under the SAPARD Programme – Priority field II: Integrated Development of Rural Areas Aiming at Preservation and Strengthening of Their Economy and Community. The goal of the Programme is development and diversification of economic activities and creating possibilities for different activities and alternative income such as: rural tourism, local craftsmanship and agro-industry, woodworking, carpentry and bio fuels, apiculture, horse-breeding, aquacultures, mushroom-growing, processing of essential oil cultures, herbs and mushrooms.
- One business incubator is already working in Montana. It was started under the “Investing in Business Incubators for Small and Medium Enterprises in Industrially Underdeveloped Regions” Project.
- Contracts have been signed with 27 municipalities, project beneficiaries, under the “Development of Bulgarian Ecotourism” Project.

2.2.7 The foreigners in Bulgaria

In 2004 and 2005, Bulgaria kept making a stable and faster progress. It has been the sixth year now that the country has been experiencing economic growth of more than 4%. In 2005, the country kept generating a high rate of economic growth regardless of the relatively small development rate of the global economy. The estimation of the National Statistical Institute (NSI) shows a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 5.5% in 2005. The expected estimated growth rate for 2006 is not smaller than 5.5%.

Because of the better business environment and the policy of the government oriented to attracting investments, a record inflow of direct foreign investments was experienced in 2004, to the amount of Euro 2.73 billion. The estimated figure for direct foreign investments in Bulgaria in 2005 is Euro 1.8 billion. The 2005 direct foreign investments were “green”; therefore, they are expected to generate conditions for a higher rate of economic growth.

With the development of the market economy more and more foreign companies invest in Bulgaria and are interested in cooperation with Bulgarian companies. Usually, the foreign investor introduces its principles and organization of the work and exchanges the knowledge

and the experience gained with reference to the activity performed. In a number of cases this necessitates foreign nationals to be sent to work in Bulgarian companies, as well as to be sent on business trips by the foreign employer for providing professional services on the territory of Bulgaria. In this regard, it is necessary to be acquainted with the requirements of the Bulgarian legislation for work of foreign nationals in Bulgarian companies and for their stay in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Legal provisions re employment of foreigners

The regime of work in Bulgaria is regulated by the provisions of the Law for Encouragement of Employment and the Regulation for the Terms and Conditions for Issuance, Refusal and Withdrawal of Work Permits to Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria. Irrespective which of the scenarios (see below) is used, the foreigner may work in a Bulgarian company only after a permit for work in Bulgaria is issued to him/her.

The work permit is issued for a certain period/the maximum period is 1 year/, for a certain place of work /company, department, etc./, for a particular position, definite employer and populated area. After the expiry of the terms of the work permit, it can be extended for one more year in case the conditions for the initial issuance of the work permit are available and the employment is not interrupted.

Possible scenario for a foreigner to work in a Bulgarian company

A foreigner could work in a Bulgarian company /the most preferred forms are limited liability company and joint-stock companies/ or a branch of a foreign entity under any of the following scenarios:

1. Court legislation of the foreigner in the Bulgarian company as:

a/ manager of a limited liability company;

b/ member of the Board of Directors or Management Board of a joint-stock company;

c/ manager of a branch of a foreign entity or

d/ procurator

2. Sending the foreigner on a business trip by his/her foreign employer for a period of up to three months, whereas his/her status of a foreigner usually staying abroad is preserved, for accomplishment of:

a/ installation of guarantee repairs of machines and facilities delivered from abroad;

b/ training in the servicing or acceptance of ordered machines and equipment or other facilities;

c/ a training course under the provision of an expert agreement or license agreement.

3. Sending the foreigner on a business trip by his/her foreign employer for a period of more than three months, for providing services on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria

4. Hiring the foreigner under an employment relationship by a Bulgarian employer.

It should be emphasized that in the case under s.1 above, the foreigner works in a Bulgarian company and no work permit is necessary. The foreigner shall obtain only a permit for stay.

Foreigners, working under the terms and conditions of s. 2 above do not need work permit either. The company, which accepts the foreigner, sent to business trip, however, should make the necessary registration of the foreigner in the Labour Bureau at its address of management within 3 days from the starting point of the employment. Usually, foreigners, sent by the term of employment or under visa-free regime, therefore, no permit for a stay should be obtained.

In the other cases s. 3 and 4 able, in order the foreigner to be able to work in a Bulgarian company for a period longer than 3 months, he/she should obtain valid work permit issued by the Bulgarian Employment Agency to the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. In view of observing the regime of stay in Bulgaria, the foreigner should also obtain a permit for stay in the country, the period of which should correspond to the period of the work permit issued. In so far as these two scenarios for hiring a foreigner to work in a Bulgarian company are the most applied ones, the procedure for issuance of the necessary permits is presented hereinbelow.

Requirements for the issuance of work permit

The legal acts quoted determine the requirements for issuance of work permit, namely:

- The foreigner shall have special knowledge, skills and professional experience, necessary for the respective position;
- For the occupation of the position a Bulgarian citizenship shall not be required by law;
- The condition, development and the public interests of the national labour market shall be taken into considerations;
- The number of foreigners working for the Bulgarian company shall not be worse than the conditions for the Bulgarian citizens for the same category;
- The salary of the foreigner shall be enough for his/her maintenance in Bulgaria;
- The employer shall prove that he/she had been looking for the necessary specialist on the labour market for a period of at least one month.

The present situation has proved many foreigners benefit from the legislation taking advantage of the fact that the requirements enumerated hereinabove could be overcome in the following cases:

- The foreign person will occupy a management position /different from manager, executive director or procurator/ in the company or a branch of company, established by a foreign legal entity;
- The foreigner is a specialist with particular professional knowledge and skills as a result of minimum of 1 year work with the foreign company, shareholder in the Bulgarian company;
- Employee of a foreign company is sent on a business trip by the foreign company in connection with coordination of the activity and/or implementation of projects for improvement of the activity of the Bulgarian company or branch established by the foreign one;
- The foreigner is a specialist, who will install, put into operation and repair equipment imported from abroad, implement special technologies, know-how, apply specialized and unique techniques;
- The foreigner has married a Bulgarian national;

Necessary documents

The employer /the Bulgarian company/ shall prepare and submit to the Labour Bureau at the address of management of the company the following documents:

a/ two copies of application-declaration of standard layout approved by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. These documents are signed by the person, representing the company, before a notary and the signature is certified;

b/ motivation of the applicant the employer shall set forth the motives for the work of the foreigner in the Bulgarian company;

c/ copy of the court decision for the registration of the company, certified by a notary and certificate for actual status of the company;

d/ reference-declaration signed by the employer for the foreigners working in the Bulgarian company under employment contracts and under management contracts;

e/ reference-declaration for the average number of the employees, Bulgarian citizens, of the foreigners with permanent stay and of the foreigners, to whom asylum is granted, having status of refugee or humanitarian status for the preceding 12 months, signed by the person, representing the company and the chief accountant;

f/ employment contract of the foreigner, prepared in compliance with the Bulgarian legislation, determining the liabilities of the parties for expenses for accommodation, medication, insurance, transport from and to the country of the permanent residence of the foreigner. The employment contract shall be for fixed term not longer than 1 /one/ year. A provision under which the employment contract shall enter into force after the issuance of the work permit of the foreigner shall be included.

g/ other documents related to the specifics of the working place and the activity performed in accordance with the requirements of the normative acts.

In case the foreigner is sent by his/her employer a foreign company, in addition to the documents under s. 3.1., i. a/, b/, c/, d/, e/, g/ the Bulgarian company shall present also:

h/ a copy of the contract between the Bulgarian and the foreign company employer of the foreigner;

i/ documents for the registration of the foreign company;

j/ confirmation letter, issued by the foreign employer both for sending of the foreigner and for the respective task for the fulfillment of the contract between the companies under provided salary, social security and health insurance.

The foreigner, who will work in the Bulgarian company shall present the following documents:

a/ documents for education, specialty, legal capacity and/or professional qualification, skills and experience;

b/ copy of the passport of the foreigner;

c/ three passport-size photos.

The documents under s. a/ should be originals or copies, certified by a notary.

The other requirements to the certification and legalization of the documents are determined depending on the state, which issued them.

In case the document for education of the foreigner are issued, which is a party to the Hague Convention for the Abolishing the Requirements of Legalization of Foreign Public Documents, they shall be apostilled by the respective competent authority.

In case the documents are issued by a state, which is not a party to the Hague Convention, they shall be certified by the Ministry of Justice of the state /which issued them/, by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in this state.

The so prepared documents will be translated in Bulgarian by a Bulgarian translator authorized by the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and will be certified by the Consular Department of the same ministry.

The documents under s. 3.1. and 3.2. should be submitted in the Labour Bureau. Within 7 days these documents are sent to the executive director of the Bulgarian Employment Agency. Usually, when the set of documents is complete, the Employment Agency announced in writing is decision for the issuance of a work permit within 10 to 15 days.

2.2.8 Recent debates: Bulgaria to introduce quotas for foreign specialists

The latest developments are that in November 2006 the Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA) suggested to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to introduce annual quotas for foreign specialists working in Bulgaria.

The main points are:

- The quotas would be determined by the applications of economic sector and employers' organisations to fill in the gaps in the Bulgarian labour market.
- The quotas will not exceed the 10 per cent share of foreign workers in Bulgaria, determined by legislation.
- Bulgaria to introduce a "green-card" system for foreigners in occupations for which there was a labour shortage.
- Every year, the Labour Minister to approve employment quotas for occupations in deficit in Bulgaria. The quotas to be set on the basis of applications submitted by employers.

The BIA listed four proposed categories of workers.

Under the BIA proposal, priority for jobs should be given to EU citizens. Second would be citizens from countries that have signed onto the European Economic Area agreement. Coming third would be people of Bulgarian descent who are not citizens of the two above-mentioned countries and who have the required professional skills and qualifications. In fourth place would be citizens from the rest of the world.

BIA demanded that the restrictions of the Foreigners Act be dropped, meaning that jobs would be open to foreigners even if there were Bulgarian applicants. The BIA also asked for the abolishment of the so-called 10 per cent limit for companies, which states that only one foreigner may be employed for every 10 Bulgarian employees.

The reason is that the employers' organisations predict lack of qualified Bulgarian engineers, and specialist in some economic sectors, processing industry, construction and tourism. It is also suggested the EU citizens to have an advantage over other foreigners seeking work in Bulgaria.

What was the response and how the debate went on?

After Bulgaria joined the EU on January 1, 2007, foreigners will be able to work in the country under certain conditions. If there were vacancies in Bulgaria, citizens of EU member countries would be given priority, followed by specialists from the countries of the European Economic Area.

Citizens from third countries will be last on the priority list, given that they are not more than 10 per cent of the company's total workforce, Maslarova said.

The main difference between the minister and the BIA was the 10 per cent limit for foreign workers. BIA wants this limit to be replaced by quotas in sectors where there is urgent need for qualified workers in Bulgaria.

BIA's proposal included industries in desperate need of workers, including tourism, energy and informational technology.

Every year the respective employers' organisations in each sector have to propose where there is a lack of qualified labour force and this is how we should set the quotas for foreign workers. Bulgaria did not need people without the right qualifications so BIA has proposed rigorous testing to ensure foreign workers' qualifications.

Both parties agree that Bulgarians will have the absolute advantage when applying for work, though in a sense, Bulgarian already have an advantage. As today an employer has to pay 600 leva (300 euro) for a foreigner's work permit when for a Bulgarian worker this naturally does not apply.

The current 10 per cent limit does not apply for EU citizens from January 1, 2007, since Bulgaria is entering a joint labour market. Some people in Bulgaria share fears that there might be an inflow of EU citizens searching for work in Bulgaria.

If approved, BIA's suggestion will mean that citizens regarded as fourth category will be the final option for every Bulgarian employer. This could put a large number of foreigners from large countries such as the US and Russia in a vulnerable position compared to EU countries.

"We do not think that USA or Russian nationals for example will be discriminated in some way by our ranking," BIA vice-president Tebeyan said. "We think it is only fair when there are no Bulgarian candidates or EU ones for a certain position, nationals from third countries are the next option for an employer".

According to Dimitar Dimitrov, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgaria still had an unused reserve in terms of its labour force.

"I disagree with that," Tebeyan said. "There might be such reserves, but [that is] in the shape of people with little or no qualifications. The large investment projects that laid ahead will make the situation desperate," Tebeyan said. "The construction of the nuclear power plant in Belene alone will need hundreds of extremely well qualified specialists. This is something which Bulgaria can not provide at the moment".

There were several reasons for the lack of qualified employees, he said. The immigration of skilled Bulgarian workers was still high despite restrictions imposed on Bulgarian emigrants by some EU countries. Another reason was the demographic crises.

"This year the children born in the late 1980s will turn 18 and those were the years with the lowest birth rate in Bulgaria," he said. "Many international companies had relocated their call centres from other countries to Bulgaria and the demand for qualified specialists has risen high. That is why we need to attract skilled people but not at the expense of Bulgarian ones". Tebeyan acknowledged his message was bleak for some unemployed workers.

"It is sad but people in their 30s or 40s with little skills have little chances for finding a good job. Unfortunately 60 per cent of the Bulgarians who had registered themselves as unemployed fall in this category". According to the Government's July 27 report on the migration situation in Bulgaria, more than 12 000 foreigners acquired long-term resident status in 2005. That figure represents an 11 per cent decrease from the previous year.

The greatest number of new long-term citizens were from Macedonia (1909), followed by Turkey (1499), the UK (1152), the Russian Federation (857), Greece (771) and Germany (473).

A total of 3099 foreigners were given permanent residence, most being citizens of Turkey (898), Russia (405), China (353) and Ukraine (223). Permanent residence arises most often from university studies, commercial activity and marriage to Bulgarian citizens.

There is a steady upward tendency for UK and German citizens to apply for long-term residence.

2.2.9 Problems and possibilities for labour activities for refugees

1. Employment in the shadow economy – basic area of labour activities

The labour activities of a considerable part of refugees undergoing the procedure are of a shady character. Most of them work in the Iliyantzi marketplace near Sofia, integrating into trade structures set up by foreign citizens or legally approved refugees. The costs for exercising this type of labour activity are difficult to estimate.

2. Running own business:

- Refugees who organize businesses on their own: a number of refugees have graduated from schools in the country, and they use their former contacts and knowledge to risk self-employment and prosper on their own. In these cases the government does not bear any costs, while society benefits.
- Refugees who receive financial support from UNHCR-sponsored programs to start a small enterprise: there have been a small number of beneficiaries of such grants/loans, recognized refugees who received take-off support to start their own businesses.

2.2.10 Problems in the workplace due to the lack of intercultural skills

There are 4 main areas where intercultural problems arise at the workplace, and namely:

1. Language proficiency

Language (accents, fluency, writing styles, discussion and argumentation styles) is subject to mostly unconscious evaluation (favourable or unfavourable) as are appearance and behaviour. A lot of misunderstanding occurs as a result of insufficient knowledge of Bulgarian (minorities, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees having work permit); dialects and use of idioms. A special case is the language of work or the work jargon making it difficult to express oneself appropriately/effectively.

(More details are to be found in the Case Studies Section.)

2. Communication

Cultural communication styles are definitely an issue. Western Europeans are too direct according to Bulgarian standards, asking personal issues such as family relations, for

example. Bulgarian Christians are too direct speaking about personal issues according to Muslim standards, asking personal issues, for example. Some Bulgarians address their Roma colleagues as 'gypsies' which is offensive. Bulgarians are found rather talkative and also a bit over-passionate by foreign managers. Older Bulgarians do not like to speak openly in their workplace, which is due to the ex-communist 'ethics' not to discuss working conditions, payment, etc. just have to be happy instead.

(More details are to be found in the Case Studies Section.)

3. Cultural codes and practices

Besides the visible or physical characteristics of the intercultural workplace such as race, age, gender, clothing/ornamentation, and language there have been noted other non-verbal communication features that can be regarded as important both to understand and be aware of, and namely gestures, eye contact, posture, voice, space and time concept.

(More details are to be found in the Case Studies Section.)

4. Workspace relationship

The sense of self and space; language and communication; food and feeding habits; time and time consciousness; values and norms; beliefs and attitudes; work habits and practices; etc., may all lead to tension at the intercultural workspace.

(More details are to be found in the Case Studies Section.)

2.2.11 The ethnocentricity of the Bulgarian intercultural workplace

The biggest problem of the Bulgarian intercultural workplace seems to be the ethnocentric attitudes, and namely:

- Limited ability to notice differences. People attribute sub-human qualities to those from different cultures and regard them with prejudice.
- People often feel threatened, and may even denigrate differences or create negative stereotypes in order to promote an internal feeling of superiority.

The solutions to the above problems are seen as:

- Help people begin to recognize differences by non-threatening cultural awareness activities (ethnic luncheons, entertainment, travelogues, talks on history, exhibits).

- Emphasis on things cultures have in common and what is positive in all cultures. It is not appropriate to argue whether cultures are good or bad, but just different, and focus on what is common.

Provide insider perspective that can help people see how behaviour can be variously interpreted.

- Enjoy recognizing and exploring differences. Tolerance of ambiguity and comfort in the absence of unitary correct answers or responses are typical. Recognition of and respect for differences should be emphasized, and diversity should be encouraged. Of particular importance are verbal and nonverbal intercultural communication styles. Entering discussions of values without appropriate reflection, however, should be avoided.
- People to acquire the ability to “step into another person’s pair of shoes” by intentionally shifting their frames of reference. People should be provided with opportunities to practice their interactions with others of another culture. Suggestions of activities for an intercultural training will include simulation exercises, intercultural problem-solving sessions, or other tasks where real-life intercultural situations can be explored.
- People need to become acutely cognizant of cultural diversity to the extent that they are comfortable with multiple and ambiguous cultural conditions. As such, they often readily adapt to variable cultural situations and are able to integrate their identities into other cultures with ease. Effective managers can often function as mediators by facilitating understanding between different cultures.

2.2.12 Challenges in the workplace re intercultural skills that have been seen

- The need for empathy or to be able to see the world as other people see it. To understand the behaviour of others from their perspectives.
- The ability to demonstrate advantages of what one proposes so that counterparts in the negotiation will be willing to change their positions.
- The ability to manage stress and cope with ambiguity, as well as with unpredictable demands.

- The ability to express one's own ideas in ways that the people with whom one negotiates will be able to objectively and fully understand the objectives and intentions at stake.
- The need for sensitivity to the cultural background of others along with an ability to adjust one's objectives and intentions in accordance with existing constraints and limitations.

The interviews conducted both in the public and private sector re intercultural skills confirmed some general tips suggested by *CountryWatch*, and namely:

1. **LEARN and OBSERVE:** Spend time preparing and learning about the country or culture you live and/or work in. Be culturally aware. Observe cultural similarities and differences and use them to understand the behaviour of your foreign counterpart. Adopting an analytical perspective on cultural norms and values is central to crossing cultures.

2. **SOCIAL STRUCTURE:** Expect that the notion of "equality" is not a universal one. Men and women are not treated equally across the world, and likewise, people of differing ethnicity, religious, linguistic and status are often not treated equally either. Learn to suspend judgment in order to function within the host country, and be sure to learn how to distinguish between gender, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious or status differences. Often these factors function in tandem with one another, while being distinct. Understanding the social structure of a country and the intercultural workplace will often help in parsing how the structural elements contribute to the social and cultural distinctions.

3. **SUSPEND VALUES:** Whatever personal values (see 2 in regard to the value of equality) may be held at home, it is very likely that they will not easily translate into other cultures and contexts. Patience, flexibility and tolerance are requisite qualities for all. Respectfully adhere to cultural norms, even if you do not agree with them, and try not to take offence to habits and customs with which you may not be familiar. Try to function "within" the host country's culture and social system rather than approaching it antagonistically. In this regard, the old adage of "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" remains golden advice.

4. **NETWORKS:** Build a network of personal and professional contacts if you plan to be in another country or culture for work or an extended stay. As cross-culture expert Roger Axtell suggests find a mentor with experience who can help socialize you into the new culture, and

in the case of business professionals, even extend your credibility. In many countries, from the most basic functions to the most bureaucratic offices rely upon networks of contacts.

5. **PERSONAL APPEARANCE:** Seriously consider the matter of personal appearance and self-presentation. Often considered a “soft” or insignificant subject, self-presentation can be critical to success by portraying care and professionalism in cultures where appearances are key factors. Pay close attention to how your international counterparts present themselves in the professional and personal domains.

6. **SELF-PRESENTATION:** Thoughtfully take into account the matter of personal behaviour and self-presentation. The old motto “just be yourself” is pleasant rhetoric to the ears of fellow Westerners, and especially Americans. While such naturalness and ease may require little effort, it can be a problematic attitude in the intercultural workplace as it may be considered to demonstrate a gross incognizance of cultural differences. Instead, observe how people in the host country behave and attempt to emulate that behaviour with subtlety. Often, small changes such as modulating one’s voice or behaving more formally in status-oriented cultures are sufficient forms of cultural integration.

7. **PARA-LANGUAGE:** Pay close attention to “para-language,” that is, gestures and body language in the intercultural workplace. The way in which Americans nod “yes” (up and down) means the opposite thing in other countries such as Bulgaria. Hand movements are also critical as they can often denote epithets and other colourful meanings. Do not assume universal meanings as something as seemingly ubiquitous as a smile may not translate the same meaning in other cultures. Westerners assume the smile transmits positive feelings, however, in Eastern cultures, smiling may often connote discomfort or embarrassment. In still other cultures, smiling demonstrates weakness or shallowness. Close attention should also be paid to eye contact, hand shaking and spatial relationships.

8. **PROTOCOL:** Give some thought and attention to the matter of protocol which is often very important especially in the public sector, as well as in business. In written communication with people from other countries and cultures, distinctive practices are the norm. Take time to find out about appropriate and polite customs of written communication. In-person communication and etiquette is also a key. Westerners, and especially North Americans, tend to adhere to informality in greetings and introductions, often preferring to interact on a first name basis. Other cultures such as Middle Easterners, preference is given

to more formal interactions, while Latin Americans pay close attention to titles. Beyond the realm of communication, take time to learn about the status hierarchy. As noted in 3 above, equality is not a universal value and many cultures tend to be status-oriented. Many cross-cultural experts recommend using bilingual business cards where titles favorably denote status.

9. PUNCTUALITY: Remember that the notion of time is a culturally constructed one. Try to adhere to culturally-appropriate norms of punctuality. Some North European countries have a high regard for the issue and demand precise attention to punctuality, while others expect and appreciate promptness. In contrast, the Mediterranean countries tend to have a more relaxed attitude toward promptness and in Latin America and Africa, time is a very fluid consideration!

10. DRINKING AND DINING: Think about culturally distinct norms of dining when working or living in another country. Table etiquette should be considered. Although many Bulgarians tend to cut meat with the right hand and then move the fork in the right hand to start eating, Europeans use the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right hand. In Asian cultures where chopsticks are used, learning how to efficiently use these utensils is advisable. Pay attention to where utensils are placed on the plate during and after eating as the cues of etiquette evolved in order to signal to waiters and attendants when more food was requested or when one is finished with a meal. Travel also involves consuming foreign and exotic foods. Although your first impulse may be to refuse to eat e.g. tripe soup, brain or intestines, remember that these foods are considered delicacies at home and are likely offered in the spirit of honour. When ordering meals to people of other cultures, remember to consider religious restrictions (Muslims and Jews do not eat pork; Hindus do not eat beef; and various denominations of Christianity and Islam do not drink alcohol). If you are the person with a religious or dietary restriction, simply explain that fact to your host while noting that you have no objection to others partaking the particular food or drink.

2.3 Cultural Diversity in the Public Sector

2.3.1 Important notice

There is no relevant data re multiculturalism and cultural diversity in the different sectors and branches which posed a serious problem to this research to follow the requested format and review the various sector. This is for two main reasons:

Providing statistical information on minorities, their employment and workplace problems is a quite sensitive issue and may lead to ethnic and religious tensions given their disadvantaged position on the labour market.

With regard to migrants the situation is merely the same and we would quote a UN report *International Migration and Related Problems in the Statistical System Of Bulgaria* (Geneva, 13-15 June 2005) reading: During recent years, the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria was not able to provide trustworthy and reliable data on international migration in Bulgaria. This was due to the fact that there was no information system available to the different institutions at the time to aggregate those data. It was necessary to create a relevant mechanism to receive these data from all possible sources and to improve the primary information on the statistical coverage of international migration according to the international requirements and recommendations.

One of the biggest problems in the scope of the migrants is the lack of precise statistical data. Because of the world-changing situation - economic stagnation, political instability, social violation, yet existing armed conflicts; and at the same time development of the global net, possibility to travel unrestricted and existing of diaspora-community in the rich countries - it is very difficult to define the board between this people who are asylum seekers, feared of their life and their freedom and those people, who run away of misery in their country.

Nevertheless we have managed to review 6 sectors in Part 2: Case Studies and namely: primary education, secondary and continuing education, health, tourism, construction, transport. (see Part 2: Case Studies)

2.3.2 Overview

Same as the private sector the proportions in the public sector reflect both the ethnic and the religious structure of the society: 16 % non-ethnic Bulgarians 18 % non Christian Orthodox.

The number of foreign employees in the public sector is insignificant for various reasons and the lowest percentage is noted in the public sector, police, telecommunications and multinationals.

Still the number of minorities people employed in the public sector is increasing a great deal. Bulgaria's Ethnic Equality Act came at a time when the condition of minorities and especially Roma communities in Bulgaria and all over Europe has reached a crisis situation. Bulgaria made a significant step to adopt legislation that targets both direct and indirect discrimination in the areas of employment, education, social protection, healthcare and other aspects of public life, and a lot has been done recently these people to play a full and equal part in society and to eradicate discrimination against them. The Bulgarian Constitution incorporates the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in Bulgarian law, and accords the Convention supremacy over domestic legislation.

Co-operation between Romani groups and the government has generally improved since 1999, following agreement on the government Framework Programme for Social Integration of Roma. Roma Expert Committees (for Discrimination, Media, Social Policy, Housing, Education, Health, Culture and Economy) consist of Roma representatives appointed by the various Romani NGOs, who work with their counterpart ministries of the government to implement the Framework Programme. Experts of Roma origin have been appointed in 24 out of the 28 regions. Two Romani became Members of Parliament during 1999. There was an increased political participation by Roma in the general elections of June 2001. The "Euro-Roma" Party, a mainly ethnic Roma political group, was an electoral partner of the MRF (Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms) and is thus technically a member of the governing coalition, although it has no representatives in the Cabinet or Parliament. The National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues is developing a programme to combat Roma youth unemployment, which includes the recruitment of 50 Roma into the Bulgarian police. The Interior Ministry has also identified the integration of various ethnic groups into its structures as step towards further observing human rights and eliminating police violence. As of May 2002, 158 Roma worked in police structures. With donor support, a police-training centre has been created in the Roma Stolipinovo district of Plovdiv. 60 policemen of Roma

and Bulgarian origin were trained in working in a multi-ethnic environment. Further police departments in Vidin and Sofia are also recruiting Roma.

The other big ethnic and cultural group is the Turks. Since the fall of Communism, there has been an improvement in the situation for Bulgaria's Turks, who have made significant strides in the areas of cultural expression and identity. This includes elected representation at national and local levels. The ethnic Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms party is part of the current ruling coalition in the National Assembly. The 2001 cabinet includes two members of this party. The European Commission considers that the Turkish minority is integrated into political life through elected representation at local and national levels and increasing representation in public administration.

The government funds Turkish language classes in public schools and has introduced assistant teachers as well, and there are no longer any restrictions on speaking Turkish in public or the use of non-Slavic names. Efforts are being made to address the serious under-representation of ethnic Turks in the ranks of the police agencies through the reservation of 20-30 places within the police academy for minority candidates. The Turkish Community is represented in all of the public sector and there is no evidence of anti-Turkish sentiment or policy associated with the government of Bulgaria and there are no reports of any harassment or persecution of ethnic Turks in the workplace. There is no evidence to suggest any discrimination suffered by other ethnic or religious groups.

The rest of the minorities in Bulgaria – Russians /15 595/, Armenians /10 832/, Vlachs /10 566/, Greeks /3 408/, Ukrainians /2 489/, Jews /1 363/, Romanians /1 088/ has established their ethnic organizations, but without political aims. They have their representatives at different levels of Bulgarian government not as a result of political mobilization of their ethnic groups, but as individual efforts.

At present every ethnic or religious community in Bulgaria has its own public institutions such as cultural and educational associations, church or mosque boards of trustees along with their own printing publications (newspapers, etc.). In compliance with the Constitution of Bulgaria they are guaranteed all rights and freedom for protection of their cultural identity. The Republic of Bulgaria has ratified all basic international Conventions concerning minority rights including UN Convention for Abolishment of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Council of Europe Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities.

The most recent legislative changes have encouraged the dialogue between public authorities and the civil sector by regulating the right to consultative participation of NGOs in the work of various public bodies at the three levels of governance—national, regional and local.

NGOs have played an important role in the monitoring and advocacy of human and minority rights. They have made particular efforts in raising awareness, sensitising and informing both the wider public and the specialised public administration about the rights of persons belonging to various minorities. Their activities contribute to the mobilization of the civil resources of ethnic communities and their more active representation in the public sector.

Most public authorities at the national, regional and local levels face a challenge of managing heterogeneous ethnic communities. Such regional and local communities are typical for the entire territory of Bulgaria therefore representation of all groups in the public sector seems to be of vital importance. The biggest number of foreigners employed in the public sector includes the urbanized minority populations of Jewish, Armenian, Russian and Greek communities. This is due to the fact that broader opportunities for development and self-fulfilment in Bulgaria's economic, public, cultural and scientific life are available within urban centres. A high level of education and qualification facilitates their equal and full participation in Bulgarian society. As a whole, they can be said to be well integrated. Generally, the Turkish and Pomak ethnic communities enjoy functional integration in Bulgarian society. They participate in the political, economic, public, cultural and intellectual life of the country. They also maintain good relations with the majority. The hardships of the structural economic reform process have resulted in the reinforcement of prejudices against ethno-cultural 'others' and the intensification of ethnocentrism. Regardless of this economic tension, regulatory, institutional and civil initiatives have been undertaken in order to facilitate the harmonisation of ethnic relations.

Within Bulgaria's 28 regional administrations, experts on ethnic issues who belong to minority groups themselves have been appointed, many of them from the Roma community. Regional Councils on Ethnic and Demographic Issues have been established comprised of the decentralised authorities of centralised power, regional administration, municipal institutions and the civil sector. Each of the regional councils drafts and adopts its own

Working Rules and its own programme for the integration of ethnic minorities in the respective region.

At the local level, in some municipalities with a mixed population, experts on ethnic issues are being appointed in the municipal administration. In a number of cities where there are compact Roma communities, Roma deputy mayors are being appointed by mayors for the respective quarters. The major function of these officers is to consult with and inform the authorities on the problems of the community in order to co-ordinate the policy of the municipality with the interests of minorities.

A good example is the Project PARDES: public administration in the regions with different ethnic and religious societies.

The problems related to the education and qualification of vulnerable minority groups are directly related to the high rates of unemployment among them. There is a definite discriminatory attitude against the Roma in the labour market.

Local unemployment offices are the major vehicles for a number of national programmes aimed at the enhancement of employment opportunities for minority representatives. Among these programmes are: Beautiful Bulgaria; From Social Benefits to Employment; Attaining Literacy, Qualification and Employment; etc. Effective partnership routines are established between local unemployment offices and minority NGOs for the participation of minority representatives in the programmes. Such programmes, however, are not very productive because minority members gain only temporary employment at low salaries that are inadequate to support their families.

A number of municipalities have created and dispatched Public Councils on Unemployment which function on the basis of the 'tripartite' principle (they include representatives of the decentralised state and municipal offices, employers' organizations and employees' organisations) and involve minority representatives as their members.

According to the varying potential of local economies, the councils have been exploring possibilities for the creation of new jobs. One of the measures that could prove effective is the elaboration of programmes for qualification training and employment that take into account local labour market demand and the specific labour patterns of some Roma groups (especially in regions dominated by seasonal employment).

2.3.3 Employment and discrimination: facts and figures

Racial discrimination played a specific role in isolating the Roma community from access to employment during the first wave of job cuts in 1990–1993, when the economy was still mostly state-owned. Local and international human rights monitors documented flagrant cases of dismissals based on ethnicity.

However, the Government does not collect data on unemployment by ethnicity, and no case of discrimination on any ground has been sanctioned by the courts since the promulgation of the Labour Code. A recent survey indicated that some 71 percent of working-age Roma are unemployed. While unemployment correlates with the lower levels of education among Roma (also the result of discrimination, in part), there is evidence that direct discrimination in dismissals from and hiring for jobs also plays an important role.

For some discrimination in unemployment is the most frequent form of discrimination experienced by Roma. 96 Roma have expressed concerns about employment discrimination at public forums and before media. At a rally against discrimination in Sofia's biggest Roma neighbourhood, "Fakulteta," speakers reported that, "when employers understand that some candidate is of Roma origin, they don't accept him." (Interview with Simeon Blagoev, Roma expert in the Ministry of Culture, 8 March 2002).

According to another Rom from Sofia interviewed by a Sofia daily: "There are lots of ads in the newspapers for work. When I go there however and they see that I am a Gypsy, they wouldn't offer anything. For a Bulgarian however they would." ("Gypsy time," *Dnevnik*, 8 March 2001.)

Bulgarian Turks also complain of ethnic discrimination. In an interview for one of the daily newspapers, an MP stated that, "Our voters often complain that when they apply for jobs, directors would tell them: 'Change your name and you will get the job.'" ("There is discrimination towards the Turkish population," *Monitor*, 7 August 2001.)

The Integration of Minorities Programme is more general in its approach to employment and proposes different measures to decrease unemployment among minorities. There is no explicit recognition of the existence discrimination in employment (or in other areas). In the longterm perspective the Integration of Minorities Programme proposes the adoption of a

strategy for the development of underdeveloped regions with compactly settled minority populations (generally referring to ethnic Turks and Bulgarian-speaking Muslims).

A total of 47,835 Roma in Bulgaria are covered by various measures implementing the National Employment Action Plan for 2006 and the Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. Jobs were opened for 21,093 Roma by their inclusion in employment various programmes and measures, says a report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) presented at the Ninth Meeting of the International Steering Committee of the Decade of Roma Inclusion which took place in Sofia on November 16 and 17.

More than 300 Roma were included in programmes promoting entrepreneurship. A total of 290 meetings, roundtables, seminars and discussions were organized to encourage the social dialogue in support of the Roma's realization on the labour market. The structures of the Employment Agency in regions with prevailing Roma population hired 14 representatives of the Roma community.

Ten specialized labour exchanges in areas with compact Roma population were organized since the start of the year whose aim was to facilitate Roma's access to information about job vacancies and help them establish direct contacts with employers. A total of 164 employers participated in such exchanges where a total of 2,445 job vacancies were announced. As at September, 910 people have been hired at such jobs.

Various projects worth in total 2.9 million euros are being implemented for the social and economic integration of Roma people in the Bulgarian society. The expected results from the projects include that 1,000 people from minorities to be provided with business training and consultancies for business start-up support; 2,000 long-term unemployed from minority groups provided with vocational training in marketable craft skills and/or agricultural skills; 300 beneficiaries from minority groups, provided with vocational training, become self-employed or find permanent employment in the private sector. At least five Agricultural Support Centres are to be established and as many Crafts Support Centres.

A National Programme for initial literacy and qualification of Roma people started at the beginning of May whose implementation will absorb 1.4 million leva. By enrolling in different courses the Roma will acquire skills for tailoring, garden design, herb gathering, plant growing, fish breeding, among others.

Twelve jobs were opened in projects of six municipal administrations for healthcare mediators to work with minority communities while 33 per cent of the hired workers under the Beautiful Bulgaria project were Roma.

Roma with secondary education are being hired as assistant teachers for out-of-school work with Roma children under a project YTeachers for Out-of-School Activities and Holiday.

Two business centres were build and opened in the Roma housing estates in Bourgas, Southeastern Bulgaria, and Pazardjik, Southern Bulgaria, under a pilot initiative Employment for Roma funded through the Swiss Agency for International Development.

While some of the regional programmes highlighted in the Progress Report will undoubtedly benefit Roma because they are over-represented among the unemployed, they do not target Roma specifically. For example, the two-tier training programme “From Education to Employment” of the District of Pernik, envisages a training scheme and subsequent employment placement for unemployed persons in general; it does not target Roma specifically. The programme “Socially Useful Activities” in Omurtag municipality, proposes general training and temporary employment through public works; neither it nor a similar programme in the municipality of Antonovo specifically targets Roma. The programme “Improvement of Living Conditions in the Municipality of Turgovishte” offers temporary employment for the long-term unemployed. Another project cited in the Progress Report, “job placement of Roma people in gathering and processing plastic waste products,” allegedly “financed with priority” was cancelled by the Regional Initiative Fund in the autumn of 2001 because of financial irregularities.

Employment discrimination has long been a concern for Roma and other minority and human rights organisations, Roma leaders and activists, and ordinary Roma. Roma NGOs report that qualified Roma are not hired for jobs as soon as prospective employers see an address indicating a Roma neighbourhood. In March 2000 the regional coordinator of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms in Lovech stated that employers refuse to hire minorities, which has compelled some people to change their Muslim names to Bulgarian ones. (Open Society Institute, 2002)

It has been noted there are some common situations causing problems mainly due to the lack of intercultural skills:

- looking at everything from one's own definition of what is "rational," "logical" and "scientific";
- pressuring the other party with a point that he/she is not readily prepared to accept;
- looking at issues from the narrow perspective of self-interest;
- asking for concessions or compromises which are politically or culturally sensitive;
- adhering to one's own agenda when the other party appears to have a different set of priorities;
- speaking in jargon, which can either confuse the other party or even create a feeling of mistrust.

The interview conducted with public sector officials re employment of relatively small number of foreigners in the sector has outlined the following obstacles related to intercultural communication and understanding:

- Language: vocabulary, syntax, idioms, slang and dialects all cause difficulty
- Non-verbal communication: Some non-verbal signs and symbols such as gestures, postures and vocalizations can be learned once they are perceived in much the same way as a verbal language is acquired, but other signs and symbols, such as time and spatial relations, or forms of respect, status and formality, however, are more difficult to grasp because they are further way from awareness.
- Preconceptions and stereotypes: cultural prejudice, already-existing beliefs, selective perceptions and portions of information interfering with objectivity

2.4 Cultural Diversity in the Education Sector

2.4.1. Important notice

There is no relevant data re multiculturalism and cultural diversity in the different sectors and branches which posed a serious problem to this research to follow the requested format and review the various sector. This is for two main reasons:

Providing statistical information on minorities, their employment and workplace problems is a quite sensitive issue and may lead to ethnic and religious tensions given their disadvantaged position on the labour market.

With regard to migrants the situation is merely the same and we would quote a UN report *International Migration and Related Problems in the Statistical System Of Bulgaria* (Geneva, 13-15 June 2005) reading: During recent years, the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria was not able to provide trustworthy and reliable data on international migration in Bulgaria. This was due to the fact that there was no information system available to the different institutions at the time to aggregate those data. It was necessary to create a relevant mechanism to receive these data from all possible sources and to improve the primary information on the statistical coverage of international migration according to the international requirements and recommendations.

One of the biggest problems in the scope of the migrants is the lack of precise statistical data. Because of the world-changing situation - economic stagnation, political instability, social violation, yet existing armed conflicts; and at the same time development of the global net, possibility to travel unrestricted and existing of diaspora-community in the rich countries - it is very difficult to define the board between this people who are asylum seekers, feared of their life and their freedom and those people, who run away of misery in their country.

Nevertheless we have managed to review 6 sectors in Part II: Case Studies and namely: primary education, secondary and continuing education, health, tourism, construction, police. (see Part II: Case Studies)

2.4.2 Overview

In Bulgaria, rights to the development of ethnic cultures, education, the study of one's mother tongue and access to the media are all guaranteed by the Constitution. In practice, however, the attitude often persists that the protection of minority rights represents a threat to national interests and national security.

Education is a very sensitive aspect of inter-ethnic relations. Schools are a socializing and cultural institution that do not merely transfer knowledge but also play a crucial role in shaping attitudes about one's 'own' and 'other' ethnic groups. The Bulgarian government has

made significant steps in recent years in developing policies related to multi-cultural and intercultural education.

The decentralisation process allows for the development of special programmes for intercultural dialogue and leaves open the possibility of greater co-operation between the four major players in the education system: teachers, parents, public authorities (state and local) and students. Appropriate policy decision-making for the schools and the supervision of the results will require the more active participation of parents and civil organisations. The introduction of multi- and inter-ethnic education sensitive to the specific needs of various ethnic groups, the use of adequate pedagogical strategies, flexible teaching programmes and diverse educational forms are all necessary conditions for the improvement of minority education, and represent a challenge which local public authorities must face.

2.4.3 Foreigners and minorities in education

The educational integration of vulnerable ethnic minorities is one of the main prerequisites for their complete social inclusion. The Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities approved by the Minister of Education and Science in 2004 defines two major priorities: complete integration of Roma children and students through desegregation of kindergartens and schools in detached Roma neighbourhoods and creating conditions for equal access to quality education out of them; optimization of the school network in municipalities with small and dispersed settlements, including provision of support to schools for guarantee a quality education.

As a result of the measures undertaken for the implementation of the first priority of the Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities during 2005/2006 school year 3 500 students living in detached Roma neighbourhoods have been integrated in mainstream schools out of the Roma neighbourhoods; 106 teaching assistants assist the educational integration of Roma children in mainstream schools; 150 teaching assistants have been trained in higher educational institutions; 360 primary school teachers were trained to work in multiethnic environment.

The Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from the Ethnic Minorities established in 2005 provides conditions for joint education and training of children and students of different ethnic origin in state and municipal kindergartens, schools and

subsidiary units; provision of additional pedagogical work with lagging behind students; measures for bringing dropped-out students back to school and improving their educational results; development and implementation of educational and training programmes conformable with the cultures of different ethnic minorities in kindergartens and schools; teachers qualification activities; research related to interethnic integration of children and students of the ethnic minorities through education; preparation of parents for the implementation of children and students educational integration. Funding to the amount of BGN 165 000 was provided to support celebration of traditional holidays and events related to different ethnic cultures in Bulgaria, minorities organizations and development of ethnic minorities' culture. Measures have been envisaged in the National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion for meeting the 4 basic priorities of the decade: education, healthcare, employment, and better housing conditions. Being specific for Bulgaria the following priorities have also been included: culture, protection against discrimination and ensuring of equal opportunities.

According to the National Report on refugees and asylum seekers and their language learning needs since 1998/1999, the figures of asylum applications, registered by the Bulgarian authorities, have been growing.

Nevertheless the immigration in Bulgaria remains limited. Even with the liberalised visa and frontier regime, following the beginning of systematic changes, Bulgaria does not meet the problems of other countries that are recipients of immigration up to now.

The survey conducted by the Market Economy Institute in 1999 confirmed the observations of the Agency for Refugees. Among the registered unemployed refugees the percentage of persons with secondary and higher school education is approximately 40 % and they are mainly women.

Primary and Secondary Education in public schools are free in Bulgaria. In the field of education and training the children of asylum seekers and refugees are entitled to free-of-charge primary and secondary education in public schools. Recognised refugees are supposed to pay only the amount, which Bulgarian students would pay, not the higher fee for ordinary foreigners, though the academic institutions do often not know this. Those refugees who came to Bulgaria as university students before 1989 and only later applied for refugee status and were recognised as refugees sur place due to a deteriorating political situation in

their country of origin (in particular, refugees from Afghanistan) were partly allowed to finish their education, free of charge or with minimal fees, in order to graduate.

The Ministry of Education and Science in accordance with Article 22 of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and Article 25, item 5 of the Refugee Law, developed a Regulation on the Order of Admittance of Refugees to the State and Municipal Schools in the Republic of Bulgaria, which was approved of by the Minister of Education at the end of July 2000. This Regulation specifies the order for admittance of refugees to State and Municipal Schools in Bulgaria.

According to the meaning of the Regulation of MES, a refugee is a person for whom a procedure for granting refugee status is pending, or a person who has been granted refugee status. A Commission at the Education Inspectorate of MES in the respective region is directing and accepting refugees in the schools. At the beginning of the school year the Commissions jointly with the Agency for Refugees at the Council of Ministers consider the filed applications by the candidates.

The activities of the Commission include:

1. To conduct interviews with the refugees;
2. To find out what their level of knowledge is and how it compares to the comprehensive minimum for the respective grade;
3. To direct the refugees to a school depending on their place of accommodation, preferences, age and health condition and to give compulsory instructions to the Headmaster of the receiving school as to organising individual work with the refugees in certain subjects, depending on their level of knowledge.

The Commission starts operating after it receives applications from the candidates accompanied by certificates for completed Bulgarian language course.

In spite of the limited financial resources and the economic difficulties faced by our country, by the end of last year, the Ministry of Education and Science submitted to the Agency for Refugees textbooks, which are suitable for initial learning of Bulgarian language and for training in vocations that are of interest to refugees. Further on, organisational prerequisites are being created for individual resolving the refugees' issues at schools, where they study. Headmasters of these schools are acquainted in detail with the possible ways for resolving

such problems. In this aspect the contacts constantly maintained with the Agency for Refugees are especially useful.

Concrete results of the good interaction between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Agency for Refugees are: the experience accumulated in the initial learning of the language, the published learning aids, the setting up of teachers teams, the organisation of vocational training, the creating of suitable atmosphere for adaptation of refugees to the learning environment, their completion of educational degrees, and last, but not least, admission of refugees to Bulgarian universities.

With the adoption of the Vocational Education and Training Act by Decree No. 236 of 30.07.1999, opportunity is given to the refugees-students to acquire a profession preferred by them and at the end of the training to obtain a licensing document allowing them to work in this profession. The law provides an opportunity for all other refugees, who want to acquire a certain profession, to start attending training in the Vocational Training Centres under the Ministry of Education and Science and, after an intensive training course, to receive a licensed certificate allowing them to work in the area of the acquired profession.

Forthcoming work: improvement of the professional orientation and vocational training of asylum seekers, devising study curricula suitable for the age and skills of refugees as well as labour market oriented programs that will facilitate job finding.

2.4.4 Practical aspects of the education of aliens who seek or have been granted protection

The access and active involvement of refugees in the variety of forms and degrees of education is a guarantee for their successful adaptation and integration in the host country. While in most cases education is perceived as related to children, in the case of refugees the access to education – basic, secondary, vocational or higher – concerns, to the same extent, both refugee children and refugee adults.

The legal framework, which regulates the training and education of aliens who seek or have been granted protection, is in line with the international legal acts and requirements.

The right of refugee children to education is regulated in Article 26 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees and in Ordinance No 3 of 27 July 2000 of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Refugee children aged up to 18 are entitled to full access, training and education at state and municipal schools in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Pursuant to Article 53, para 3 of the Bulgarian Constitution, the basic and secondary education at state and municipal schools is free-of-charge.

Pending the status determination procedure and after being granted refugee or humanitarian status, refugee children do not pay tuition fees and have the same rights as Bulgarian nationals in respect of training at state and municipal schools in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The regulation of the procedure for the referral of refugees to schools and their enrolment takes into account some specific aspects of their education related to:

- The differences between the Bulgarian educational system and the one in the country of origin;
- The lack of knowledge or insufficient knowledge of Bulgarian language;
- The lack of documents certifying the educational degree completed.

Upon completion of the Bulgarian language training and the examination at the Integration Centre for Refugees with the State Agency for Refugees, refugee children sit for an examination at the Regional Education Inspectorate, which is aimed at determining their level of knowledge and referring them to enrolment in Bulgarian schools.

Commissions of experts, representatives of the Pedagogical Consultation Offices and the State Agency for Refugees are set up with the Regional Education Inspectorates of the Ministry of Education and Science for the purpose of certifying the level of the knowledge acquired by refugee children.

These commissions hold interviews with the refugees; determine the conformity of refugee children's competence to the educational minimum for the relevant school year; refer them to a certain school taking into account the district of residence, their wish, capacity, age and health status.

The commission issues compulsory instructions to the headmaster of the relevant school in relation to arrangements to be made for individual work with refugee children on specific subject areas depending on the knowledge level.

There is an option regulated for refugee children from socially disadvantaged families to receive free-of-charge the textbooks needed for classes II-VIII under the conditions and procedure applicable to Bulgarian nationals.

The Refugee-and-Migration Service of the Bulgarian Red Cross (RMS with BRC) renders financial support and assistance to refugee children and their parents for the provision of the necessary textbooks, training aids and materials. In addition, the following have been secured within the framework of the projects implemented by RMS with BRC:

- Tuition for subject areas where the children have difficulties;
- Monthly food allowances for refugee children attending Bulgarian schools;
- Summer children camps with intensive Bulgarian language learning;
- Preparation for the admission exams for Bulgarian higher schools, and other services.

After graduating from secondary schools, refugees have the right to continue their education at higher educational establishments under the same conditions and procedure as Bulgarian nationals.

The Ordinance Laying down the State Requirements for the Enrolment and Training of Doctoral Students regulates the possibility for refugees to apply for Ph.D. programs under the same conditions and procedure as Bulgarian nationals.

2.4.5 Practical aspects of Bulgarian language training of aliens who seek or have been granted protection

Linguistic competence is an important condition for the more effective and efficient integration of refugees in society.

In view of ensuring the necessary conditions for Bulgarian language learning, the State Agency for Refugees organizes and conducts Bulgarian language courses and vocational training for aliens who seek or have been granted protection.

Bulgarian language training is one of the main activities at the Refugee Integration Centre with the State Agency for Refugees.

Language training is organized in two groups for adults and an afternoon study-room for refugee children attending Bulgarian schools.

For the purpose of the language training, a textbook “Bulgarian for Refugee Children” is used; it has been produced by the State Agency for Refugees under a project financed by UNHCR with funds from a German Charity Foundation.

An aid to the Bulgarian language textbook for refugee children is being drafted; it will facilitate the more efficient learning of Bulgarian grammar and vocabulary.

The goals of Bulgarian language training are:

- Literacy;
- Creating learning skills and habits;
- Learning spoken Bulgarian;
- Learning written Bulgarian;
- Developing comprehension and communication skills.

Refugee children and adults attending the Bulgarian language courses at the Refugee Integration Centre participate in various forms of Bulgarian language practice: preparation of artistic and musical programs, study tours, summer schools for intensive learning of colloquial Bulgarian, cultural and sports events, etc.

With a view to improving the conditions for the integration of aliens who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status in the Bulgarian society, the Refugee-and-Migration Service of the Bulgarian Red Cross has been organizing and conducting Bulgarian language courses for adults, as a part of the Program for Social Counselling and Integration of Refugees in Bulgaria implemented by the Service.

2.4.6 Problems in the area of education and Bulgarian language training of aliens who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status in Bulgaria

Regardless of the well-developed legal framework and the regulated procedure for the enrolment in the Bulgarian state and municipal schools, there are a number of difficulties in the process of training refugee children.

The reason for the above relates to the difference in terms of the subject areas included in the curricula of Bulgaria and those of the countries of origin. Such problems emerge in relation to History, Geography, Biology, and other subjects. The provision of additional

training for improving Bulgarian language skills and the knowledge in other subject areas is not a common practice at schools.

A part of adult refugees who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status in Bulgaria are illiterate or with a low educational background. Their access to Bulgarian schools is not regulated. The insufficient education and the scarce knowledge of Bulgarian are the main reasons for these refugees to be unable to find a job and integrate in Bulgarian society.

Practice shows that most of the refugees, when fleeing their country of origin, do not take with themselves the necessary documents certifying their educational background.

Pursuant to Article 2 of the Ordinance on the Recognition of Higher Education Acquired and Training Periods Completed at Foreign Higher Schools “The right to the recognition of higher education acquired or training periods completed at foreign higher schools belongs to any Bulgarian nationals, aliens and recognized refugees who have attended higher schools established and functioning in compliance with the legal requirements in the country where the higher education has been acquired or the training periods have been completed.”

There are serious issues with regard to the implementation of this right, as the ordinance does not regulate the procedure for the recognition of higher education acquired by refugees.

The lack of documents certifying the completion of secondary education in the country of origin is an obstacle to those who wish to enrol in a university or seek employment on the basis of their professional qualifications.

The legislation does not contain provisions requiring Bulgarian language training for aliens who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status. During the initial months after the receipt of the decision granting refugee or humanitarian status, refugees have no incentive for attending Bulgarian language courses, as they have to rent a dwelling and pay the rent by themselves, seek a job and ensure their income.

There are specific problems in relation to the possibility for refugee girls and women to continue their education, which are determined by social, cultural and other reasons.

In some refugee families, parents are often reluctant to let their daughters attend school and continue their education. This problem has a long-term negative impact on the process of integration for this group of refugees.

2.4.7 Proposals for improving the legal framework and practice

1. Conduct an analysis of the existing legal framework and practice in the area of the education and Bulgarian language training of refugees in Bulgaria.

The development of the legislation and practice of the European Union in the area of asylum and refugees sets new requirements with regard to the education and training of refugees.

Pursuant to Article 10 of the Council Directive 2003/9/EO of 27 January 2003 Laying down Minimum Standards for the Reception of Asylum-Seekers, the access to the educational system for the children of asylum-seekers should not be delayed by more than three months after the date of filing the asylum application by the minor or his/her parents. This period may be extended by one year, where specific education is to be provided in order to facilitate the access to the educational system.

The above provisions require further harmonization of our national legislation and the relevant amendment to the effective Ordinance No 3 of 27 July 2000 Laying down the Procedure for the Enrolment of Refugees in State and Municipal Schools in the Republic of Bulgaria.

2. Improve the legal regulation of the additional training provided to refugee children for Bulgarian language and other subjects on the curricula.

3. Introduce compulsory Bulgarian language training for aliens who have been granted protection in view of improving the integration of refugees in Bulgarian society; it will be part of the Program for the Integration of Newly Recognized Refugees in the Republic of Bulgaria. Attending a Bulgarian language course should be a condition for receiving housing assistance, social assistance, health insurance assistance within a one-year period after the receipt of the decision granting the status.

4. Introduce compulsory courses for social and cultural counselling as a part of refugee integration activities.

5. Organize and conduct, jointly with the Ministry of Education and Science, seminars for teachers with a view to improving their knowledge and skills for working with refugee children.

6. Ensure that a training module for providing pupils and teachers at Bulgarian schools with some information and knowledge about the life, rights and obligations of refugees in Bulgaria is developed by the Ministry of Education and Science, jointly with the State Agency for Refugees.
7. Propose that the Ministry of Education and Science, jointly with the State Agency for Refugees ensure the regulation of the procedure for the recognition of educational degrees acquired and professional qualifications of aliens who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status in Bulgaria.
8. Ensure the regulation of the possibility for aliens who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status and are aged above 18 to have access to the Bulgarian state and municipal schools.
9. Ensure that the Refugee Integration Centre with the State Agency for Refugees and the non-governmental organizations working with refugees facilitate organizing training courses for refugee children in their mother tongue with a view to preserving the national culture and customs. Representatives of the refugee communities in Bulgaria who have teaching experience and skills need to be involved in this process.

The Ethnic Equality Act calls for the desegregation of Bulgaria's schools and establishes the framework for oversight bodies, or Ethnic Equality Commissions. These bodies have the power to investigate cases of discrimination and to impose sanctions on those whose actions violate anti-discrimination principles.

2.4.8 Educational needs

Below is an overview of the need as seen by Dr. Antonina Zhelyazkova, Chair of the Governing Board, IMIR

One of the Government's most dangerous omissions is related to the education of Roma children. This predetermines grim forecasts for the future. The chasm that splits society in two is deepening – on one side are the young Bulgarians, Turks, Pomaks and youths from the other ethnic groups with comparatively adequate for the early 21st century education and culture complying with the majority of European and global requirements and criteria; on the

other are the children of the Roma community, where illiteracy rates are growing every year, and young people without basic cultural and socially beneficial habits.

Under pressure from Roma and certain human rights nongovernmental organizations, an attempt to desegregate the education system is under way in Bulgaria. This complex and delicate project is implemented by well-intended enthusiasts, without specialized support from national experts and with limited funding from external donors.

The Ministry of Education is not assuming the responsibility to develop a comprehensive policy and philosophy of desegregation, and is allowing the implementation of not very competent and random projects which sometimes do more harm than good. In some cases they even have the very opposite effect, generating rivalry and hostility between Bulgarian and Roma children, as well as between their parents. Foreign experience is grafted automatically – even though this experience is often inadequate to the specific features of Bulgaria's society and educational system, as well as incompatible with the economic crisis and low living standards in the country.

The public institutions entrusted with decision-making on this issue are not even making an effort to formulate and analyze the fact that there are Roma schools in Bulgaria, or to identify the framework of the problem: is there segregation, what has caused the existence of hundreds of schools where the majority of students are Roma – is that due to racial reasons, geographic and administrative distribution or demographic factors. With the assistance of international donor institutions, NGOs have acquired considerable knowledge on the subject, but this knowledge is not used by the competent authorities to elaborate a general philosophy and policy on education and integration.

It is obvious to all of society that children from all ethnic communities should study together and have equal opportunities. This does not shock the public because it is in line with the Bulgarian school tradition. Ever since Bulgaria's 1878 Liberation, the children of Roma, dispersed among the local communities, have studied in the same schools and classes with the children of their neighbours from other ethnic communities – just as their parents have worked together, and neighbourly relations and mutual help have prevailed in everyday life. Today's concentration of Roma in large urban ghettos, village neighbourhoods or all-Roma settlements, has found the members of the different ethnic communities unprepared to cope with the complex problems caused by segregation and alienation.

For entirely objective demographic reasons and intensive and uneven migration in the past 10 to 12 years – and not because of segregative dispositions and practices – in 2002 Bulgaria has schools where 50% to 100% of the students are Roma living in mostly or all-Roma villages, neighbourhoods and ghettos in towns. There are 60 elementary, almost 350 primary and nine secondary schools of this kind in Bulgaria. The government is obliged to find funds or close down those schools and provide transport for Roma students to other schools with better conditions (this variant has been suggested by part of the Roma leaders and human rights activists) as a process of real desegregation; or to make sure that Roma schools have equal and better conditions, facilities and level for teaching as all other schools in Bulgaria (this variant has been suggested by experts who are realistic and aware of the levels of poverty in Bulgaria and of the helpless national budget).

The first variant requires a competently devised philosophy and strategy, commitment of significant state and public resources, participation of high-skilled children's psychologists and pedagogues, work with parents and teachers, etc. The second variant requires significantly less resources – for school repair, modern teaching aids, facilities and equipment, and incentives for high-skilled teachers and principals.

In fact, if there was a well-designed philosophy and policy on equal education for Roma children, the government would have probably applied both approaches on a parallel basis. Where possible, Roma children could attend the same pre-school classes as their Bulgarian peers, with funds subsequently provided for them to continue their primary education together, without the problems stemming from the different level of background knowledge, etc. Where this is impossible – in remote villages or neighbourhoods with compact and large Roma communities – the second approach could be applied, improving facilities and tuition in schools.

An A.S.A. 2002 survey studies Roma attitudes to the experimental desegregation of schools and, in general, their favoured approach to their children's education. Asked about the ways to equalize educational opportunities, the majority of respondents – 63% – say they prefer to have their children attend school together with Bulgarians on an equal footing and without special programmes for the purpose; as well as to have extra Bulgarian language classes if they attend school with Bulgarian students – 60%. Specialized support at school through extra Bulgarian language classes is favoured mainly by parents from remote areas, 74%, the

capital city, 80%, and in the middle income groups, 62%. Sixty-six per cent think that desegregation projects are wrong to send Roma to the same central schools attended by Bulgarian and Turkish children, but in special classes. It is especially interesting that Roma are against the variant of having their children taught by Roma teachers in the Roma language – 60%.

The Roma respondents qualify – entirely correctly – Roma children's future opportunities compared with those of the majority of children in Bulgaria as lower in the following spheres: to find a job, to provide education for their children, to emigrated to a more advanced country, to be healthy and to have happy families.

What is most humiliating for the 12 years of democratic changes in Bulgaria is that the Roma promptly assess their children's opportunities in life compared to their own childhood prospects as *much lower*.

According to the sociological survey, conducted in end 2001 and early 2002, it must be noted that the problems of Roma children's education are seen as a priority not only by members of the majority, but are also of paramount importance for the Roma themselves. The Roma respondents were asked to grade on a scale of 1 to 3 the 11 most serious problems facing their households. *"Lack of opportunities for education" is rated by the Roma fourth by priority* after "unemployment, economic weights, and discrimination in employment".

The same survey also shows the consequences of the educational institutions' complete helplessness with regard to the Roma in the past 12 years: according to Roma respondents' self-assessments, the proportion of illiterate Roma is now 18.1%; of Roma with incomplete primary education, 24.2%; with primary education, 41.4%; with incomplete secondary education, 2.7%; with secondary education, 12.2%; and with higher education, 0.7% (results of the survey conducted by A.S.A. – Sofia).

This suggests the conclusion that the Roma, just as the members of the majority, recognize the threat to the future posed by the unequal education of Roma children, and are ready to make the requisite sacrifices if the policy on the issue is explained to them. They are also ready to make a bilateral compromise and to support the desegregative measures if they are conducted properly, and not amateurishly by incompetent and mercenary people. The Roma

are ready to sacrifice some of their newly acquired democratic rights – such as the right to study the Roma language – in the name of intensifying integration processes and securing a better future for their children.

The second conclusion is that public institutions are not adequate to Bulgarian society's educational needs, that they are behaving in an incompetent, lazy and, in many cases, timorous manner, and demonstrating to the monitoring European and other donor institutions servile and chaotic actions in this direction.

Roma's life prospects, unemployment and the emergence of an underclass versus the political promises of Roma integration into Bulgarian society

It should be noted that economic hardships affect foremost those Roma who are without primary education, as well as those living in remote areas, who have large households and who are destitute.

3. Conclusions

The Government of the Republic of Bulgaria brings the employment policy in a short and medium-term plan in line with the EC guidelines on employment, as well as with the four pillars of the European employment strategy – employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities. The basic aim in this field is to create conditions for a well-working labour market, guaranteeing higher level of employment of the active population and less unemployment.

Still the country's severe economic crisis has impacted unevenly different groups of the population. Among those most affected are the Roma and the Turkish minorities, whose educational and social and economic status is below the average for the country. This places them in an unequal position. The Turkish minority has suffered from the general economic recession in mountainous and semi-mountainous areas. The Roma communities were among the first to become unemployed following the restructuring of various enterprises. Both communities were adversely affected by the land reform whereby former cooperative land was restituted to its former owners.

The main priorities in the employment policy, found in the Government Programme have been as follows:

- increase the level of employment by applying active measures on the labour market, directed towards socio-economic integration of risk groups, development of vocational training and entrepreneurship;
- build a uniform information index of persons, for the purposes of social security and social assistance;
- reform in social services with insufficient institutional capacity;
- carry out a new policy of incomes;
- complete the reforms in the field of social security;
- have a constructive dialogue between management and labour.

In the past fifteen years, the democratic development of Bulgaria and the adoption of measures for the harmonisation of inter-ethnic relations have resulted in the preservation of the Bulgarian pattern of ethnic co-habitation. The issue of inter-ethnic co-operation is more widely voiced in the public sphere than it was ten years ago. Progress has been made in the rendering of national legislation and practices in compliance with international standards for the protection of human and minority rights. There is a growing understanding that targeted measures must be adopted to address the problems of the most vulnerable minority group—the Roma. A government consultative body on ethnic issues has been established which has divisions at the regional level. A persistent tendency is the creation of partnerships between public authorities at all government levels and NGOs.

The transition to a market economy affected most unfavourably the socio-economic status of Roma, Turks and Bulgarian Muslims. Uneven development during the transition has resulted in increased ethnocentrism and the manifestation of open discriminatory attitudes, particularly against the Roma community.

The obvious progress that has been made in the field of inter-ethnic relations must be complemented by the adoption of further democratic measures for the preservation of ethnicity and the future integration of minorities.

There is a manifest need for intercultural education and training at all levels and in all sectors.

Minorities and their organisations must become active participants in the public sphere by putting forth their problems and decision-making processes for addressing them. This will help in the establishment of programmes for integrated and sustainable development to respond to the specific nature and needs of the local community.

The active stand of minorities in the public administrative government at all levels (national, regional, and local) is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of such programmes.

The growing responsibility of public authorities for the democratic and effective management of multi-cultural communities requires more than just a traditional proficiency in the major principles of public administration.

Political dedication and mutual co-operation between authorities is needed to solve problems at all government levels and to ensure the provision of adequate services to the population.

It is necessary to know and understand the cultural peculiarities of the various ethnic communities that exist together. Administrative decisions should be made within the broader context of respect for the cultures of all ethnic groups.

Improvement is needed in the organisational systems, procedures and practices of all levels of public administration in order to ensure that they are as flexible, open, accessible, accountable and democratic as possible in their interactions with minority groups and individuals.

It is important to establish a clear division of roles, prerogatives, and responsibilities among the various actors involved in community development. This should have a positive impact on efficiency, equity, and economic, political and civil participation at the local level.

It is of key importance that to possess the conflict-management and mediation skills necessary to act as 'honest brokers' in the case of inter-ethnic conflicts of interest. These skills should be acquired at all levels and in all sectors by:

- Special courses/training on ethnic conflict management/resolution;
- Specific training courses focusing on issues of multi-ethnic community management;
- Compilation of a database of 'good practices' in managing multi-ethnic communities, that should be easily accessible;

- Encouragement of networking among key players in order to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences on these issues.

Generally the changing society and intercultural workplace in Bulgaria have faced the following challenges:

- Social and economic integration
- Intercultural awareness
- Intercultural education
- Understanding the nature of cross-cultural differences and intercultural contacts, as well as different language codes and other forms of human communication and interaction.
- Intercultural conflict resolution. The context of social encounters taking place between members of different cultures.
- Intercultural workplace relations
- Intercultural differences
- Effectiveness in the intercultural environment
- Culture shock and cultural acclimatisation
- Intercultural business/workplace etiquette

The major requirements of the modern world and the workplace place a challenge in the management of multi-ethnic communities.

The world is a multi-cultural place and this calls for the implementation of a managerial policy, which combines multi-ethnicity and inter-ethnicity. Therefore, there is a great need to be ethnically sensitive in order to be aware of the differences in the intercultural society and workplace. This approach will lead to proactive practices of inter-ethnic collaboration, partnership and co-operation for the joint improvement of each individual local community. The diversity of cultures and languages must not split the community but enrich it.

The processes of globalisation and localisation are deepening. They can be experienced even at a local level where people act locally even when they think 'globally'. Public

authorities must skillfully combine the strategies for global macro-development of the community and individual strategies for human development, which are enacted at a personal level and depend on local conditions for their successful operation.

PART 2: CASE STUDIES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims and objectives

The aim of the case studies as presented below is to review multicultural workplaces in different sectors of Bulgarian economy.

The objective of the case studies is to ascertain the challenges re intercultural communication at the workplace, review good practice examples and offer recommendations for tackling the issues, as well as identifying relevant needs for intercultural communication training.

1.2 Sectors and list of specific case studies

The sectoral research covers 6 sectors and namely:

- Primary education
- Secondary and continuing education
- Construction
- Health
- Tourism
- Transport

List of specific case studies:

- **Primary education:** Specialised Roma schools vs integrated schools; The problem with drop-outs; Teacher-assistants; Minority languages; Practical aspects of the education of aliens who seek or have been granted protection; Extracurricular activities at the Integration Centre for Refugees
- **Secondary and continuing education:** minorities, refugee and immigrant children, response to new challenges of migration and intercultural issues.

- **Construction:** construction sites as intercultural workplaces; programmes and measures for social and economic integration of minorities and examples in managing multiethnic communities
- **Health:** The introduction of the Roma health mediators (RHMs), Health Integration policy implementation and interculturality in the health sector
- **Tourism:** The hotels, hotel bars and restaurants as intercultural workplaces
- **Transport:** The sector as intercultural workplaces

1.3 Methodology

The Case studies have been done by the use of:

1. Questionnaires
2. Interviews
3. 6 focus groups (host managers, foreign managers, host employees, foreign employees, host clients, foreign clients).
4. Review of publications on the relevant sector

The general approach in identifying targeted respondents has been as follows:

	Managers		Employees		Customers	
	Host	Foreign	Host	Foreign	Host	Foreign
Questionnaires	10	10	10	10	10	10
Focus Groups	5	5	5	5	5	5
Interviews	5	5	5	5	5	5

Proportions sought in executing the research:

- Ethnic and cultural division host-foreign (incl. minorities): 50-50
- Managers-employees-customers: equal numbers
- Questionnaires-Focus Groups-Interviews: 2-1-1

- Foreign subdivision to reflect real-life proportions: Turkish-Roma-Armenian-Jew-other: 30%-30%-10%-10%-20% depending on the sector. Same with gender.

This was not applicable in all cases as there were not members of some particular groups in all targeted organisations.

N.B. The term 'foreign' includes both ethnic and religious minorities given the specificity of the Bulgarian society

Special attention has been paid to the following challenges in the workplace:

1. Language issues
2. Communication
3. Cultural codes and practices
4. Relationship between co-workers
5. Discrimination
6. Other

Organisation of the study:

1. Introduction
2. Challenges/Issues
3. Response and Practices, including examples
4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Sectors and participants:

1. Primary Education: Ministry of Education and Science (MES), 5 Regional Inspectorates of Education under MES , 5 Local Councils of Education; 20 schools, pupils, parents; Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC), Roma assistant-teachers; Integration Centre for Refugees.
2. Secondary Education: Ministry of Education and Science (MES), 5 Regional Inspectorates of Education under MES , 5 Local Councils of Education; 20 schools, students, parents

3. Health: Ministry of Health, Bulgarian Medical Doctors Union, Bulgarian Medical Nurses Association, hospitals, policlinics and health centres, Roma health mediators
4. Construction: District Building and Construction Enterprises, BulgarStroy, B&C Consortium; Local Chambers of Commerce and Industry
5. Tourism: Bulgarian Association of Tourist Agencies (BATA), Bulgarian Hotel and Restaurants Association (BHRA), hotels and tourist organisations
6. Transport: Ministry of Transport; BulTransAvto, Sofia City Transport, Taxi Drivers Union, Willy Betz Co

2. CASE STUDY: PRIMARY EDUCATION

2.1 Introduction

This case study will review the situation in the primary education with special focus on minorities, dropouts, refugees and intercultural issues

The issue of Roma and other minorities' education has the most profound direct effect on every other aspect of integration – poverty, health, employment, crime, discrimination and so on. Nonetheless, there are people who still seem reluctant to face the fact that the key to effective integration is in the education of Roma children.

Figures from mid 2006 show that currently in Bulgaria more than 13 % of Roma children over the age of 15 have no education. Those with just primary education add up to less than 80 %. Only 10 % have secondary education and of them, just 0.2 % have a university degree. These frightening statistics are a direct consequence of the fact that 70 % of Roma children are educated in segregated ghetto schools. There are 106 such schools around the country in which the student body is 100 % Roma. Moreover, a great number of children are still put in schools for children with learning difficulties when the students are actually fully mentally and physically fit. The quality of education and the conditions in such segregated schools is gravely sub-standard. As a result, most students end up dropping out, often barely able to read. As this makes such young people highly unemployable, they remain in the ghetto where they grow up living day to day – mostly off social benefits, one-off jobs, or crime. This explains why their integration is so difficult as well as why, since 2000, desegregation of Roma schools has been one of the primary tasks for the Bulgarian society.

The following aspects have been reviewed throughout this case study:

- Specialised Roma schools vs integrated schools
- The problem with drop-outs
- Teacher-assistants
- Minority languages
- Practical aspects of the education of aliens who seek or have been granted protection
- Extracurricular activities at the Integration Centre for Refugees

The Case Studies have been done by the use of personal interviews, focus groups and questionnaires with representatives of the targeted groups in Sofia, Shumen, Sliven, Varna, Burgas, Kiurdjali, Stara Zagora, Yambol, Lom.

Relevant publications were also examined.

Participants: representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), 5 Regional Inspectorates of Education under MES, 5 Local Councils of Education; 20 schools, pupils, parents; Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC), Roma assistant-teachers; Integration Centre for Refugees.

	Officials		Teachers/trainers		Pupils/Parents	
	Host	Foreign	Host	Foreign	Host	Foreign
Questionnaires	10	10	10	10	10	10
Interviews	10	10	10	10	10	10
Focus Groups	-	-	10	10	10	10

N.B. The term 'foreign' includes both ethnic and religious minorities given the specificity of the Bulgarian society

2.2 Challenges/Issues

Children from ethnic minorities dominate the group, who are not attending school. According to a World Bank Survey from 1995 only 5% of the ethnic Bulgarian children are not attending

school, 10% of the ethnic Turk children and more than half of all Roma children, 51% did not attend school. (UNICEF report 2001 pg. 29).

Roma families are using their own language, and children in the “Roma-ghettos” do not necessarily know the Bulgarian language. Very few Roma children, 12%, go to kindergarten or preschool, mainly because their families can not afford the fee, so when starting school, the Roma children very quickly falls behind, simply because of not understanding, what is going on in the classroom.

Roma people are traditionally not well liked by the broad community, so when the Roma children who do start going to school feel unaccepted and discriminated towards, this is another incentive for them to drop out of school.

There is no official segregation policy in Bulgaria, but in some areas with high concentration of Roma people there are schools only for Roma children. The educational level and quality in these schools is very low.

A high percentage of the Roma children who do go to school are for economical reasons attending the so-called Helping Schools, schools originally intended for children with mental disabilities. In these schools the books and teaching material is free, and the children are provided with a daily free lunch. There are possibilities of becoming weekly boarders, staying in the school through Monday to Friday, or for longer periods. The curricula in the helping schools are developed for mentally disabled children, which mean that the intellectually normal children attending the Helping schools are getting an extremely poor school education.

Roma schools: To Have or to Have Not?

In Central and Eastern Europe today, segregated education is the largest obstacle for Roma in their access to fundamental rights. In itself, segregated education represents illegal discrimination. Inherently unjust, its impact on human dignity and identity is destructive. Its devastating effects on rights enjoyment and participation are overarching. The stamp of segregated education put on young individuals at the very threshold of their initiation as members of society engraves upon their tender identities inequality, marginality and isolation

Challenges at specialised Roma schools:

- Lack of knowledge of Bulgarian language upon entrance in school;

- Around 50 % leave school after the 4th grade.
- Many teachers do not attend classes regularly; others are past retirement age and use old-fashioned methods and materials.
- The major problem is low motivation to study. Class attendance is low and the core knowledge requirements are not fulfilled.

The big debate that remains is: specialised Roma schools vs integrated schools.

Another great challenge is how to reduce the number of drop-outs and change parents' attitudes. The biggest challenge still remains the parents' attitudes.

In 40 % of dropout cases, the parents rarely showed interest in their children's progress in school, and 30 % of parents never showed such interest. 12 % of the parents of school dropouts say it does not matter what education their children will receive. The view is shared by nearly half of the children themselves. Some 19 % of parents believe it is important for their children to finish primary school (8th grade), and 30 % would like their children to finish secondary school (11th or 12th grade). Some 19 % of dropouts say they definitely want to resume their school studies, but 46 % are positive that they do not want to go back to school. Among the reasons for wanting to return to school, respondents listed better career opportunities, social advantages, and the will of their parents. Children and parents believe that the best incentives for dropouts to continue their school studies are to provide them with free textbooks, to offer a wider range of extracurricular activities, and to have the semi-residential school system cover more children.

Challenges re work with refugee children:

- Adaptation and overcoming the stress from changing the cultural environment;
- Developing children's creative abilities;
- Acquainting with the way of life, culture and folklore of our country;
- Improving the hygiene habits and health culture of children refugees.

2.3 Response and practices

2.3.1 Integration of minorities in education

The integration of minorities in education is scheduled to be complete by the year 2009 and Roma schools will be closed down by 2009. This is provided in a Ministry of Education strategy for children from other than Bulgarian ethnic groups.

The primary goal of the strategy will be the gradual closure of 105 Roma kindergartens and schools. Roma children will be enrolled in day-care centres attended by ethnic Bulgarian children. All-Roma schools will continue to exist up to the 4th grade, after which the children will be moved to mixed classes. The schools in the Roma neighbourhoods of Stolipinovo (Plovdiv) and Faculteta (Sofia) will continue to exist, but the children will be integrated by means of extracurricular activities.

Parents of Roma and non-Roma children must also be convinced that desegregation is of benefit to all of society and is the key to integration which everyone – Roma or non-Roma – claim they want to happen. Many Roma parents worry that if their child goes to a "white" school, he or she will be bullied and discriminated against. On the other hand, Bulgarian parents are often seized by prejudice and do not want their child to study in the same class with Roma children. Such worries are acknowledged by the Decade of Roma inclusion and its plan envisages a number of seminars and talks with parents to overcome stereotypical negative attitudes. The most important part is to convince both sides that successful desegregation is possible. It has already happened in a number of towns around Bulgaria. The Open Society Institute and European Roma Rights Centre sponsored desegregation initiatives in Sliven, Shoumen, Vidin, Stara Zagora and Haskovo. Money was provided for shoes and clothes for the poorest, pick up buses, free books and breakfast.

What are Roma attitudes to the experimental desegregation of schools and, in general, their favoured approach to their children's education?

Asked about the ways to equalize educational opportunities, the majority of respondents 63% say they prefer to have their children attend school together with Bulgarians on an equal footing and without special programmes for the purpose; as well as to have extra Bulgarian language classes if they attend school with Bulgarian students – 60%. Specialised support at school through extra Bulgarian language classes is favoured mainly by parents

from remote areas, 74%, the capital city, 80%, and in the middle income groups, 62%. 66 % think that desegregation projects are wrong to send Roma to the same central schools attended by Bulgarian and Turkish children, but in special classes. It is especially interesting that Roma are against the variant of having their children taught by Roma teachers in the Roma language – 60%.

The Roma respondents qualify – entirely correctly – Roma children's future opportunities compared with those of the majority of children in Bulgaria as lower in the following spheres: to find a job, to provide education for their children, to emigrated to a more advanced country, to be healthy and to have happy families.

Still most alarming is that the Roma promptly assess their children's opportunities in life compared to their own childhood prospects as much lower.

A survey conducted by the MBMD polling agency shows that 32 % of school dropouts in Bulgaria quit school before 4th grade, and 49 % do so before 8th grade. It is particularly alarming that such a large proportion of children stop attending school before 4th grade, because they remain practically illiterate and are more predisposed to criminal behaviour. Those who drop out before 8th grade are only able to find low-skilled jobs. According to the survey, 70 % of school dropouts are Roma, 15 % are ethnic Bulgarians, and 11 % are ethnic Turks. The boys-to-girls ratio is 53 to 47. 61 % of those with a low achievement record attribute their performance to difficulties which they experienced in their studies. Some 59 % of dropouts did not receive help with their homework.

Therefore as a solution to the problem the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science launched a program to employ teachers' assistants from ethnic minorities in the preparatory and first grades as a way of bringing minority children into the school.

2.3.2 Roma assistant-teachers

In recent years a new position called 'assistant-teacher' was introduced in Bulgarian primary school system with a view to facilitating the education of the Roma pupils system.

The assistant-teachers are chosen between Roma people and specially trained for the purpose. Having received their training they are appointed not only in the specialised Roma schools but also in the mixed schools their main task being help the main teacher and act as facilitators, or intermediary between the main teacher and the Roma children. This scheme

has been recognised as a very successful and stats show a reduction in dropouts, as well as increased interest both from Roma pupils and their parents to education. Therefore a growing number of assistant-teachers enter the system each year.

98.5 % of the respondents totally approved of the scheme, and 1.5 were of no special opinion.

2.3.3 Teaching Romani: an innovative programme in Bulgaria

In the 1990s, minorities were given the right to study their own languages in Bulgaria – but no support or materials were provided to make such teaching a reality. At one school with a high percentage of Roma pupils, a teacher decided to develop a programme to address this need. Lilyan Kovatcheva found that many Roma families were at first suspicious of the idea of their child studying Romani in school, afraid that this might lead to a ‘ghettoization’. Slowly she was able to bring together a group of 20 children to form a class. It was particularly important to develop the students’ writing and reading skills, but as they had no textbooks she had to develop teaching materials herself. The first year was a success and the next year there were enough pupils enrolled to form four classes. In cooperation with the Intercultural Dialogue Programme at Sofia University, she expanded the programme to develop and test methods of teaching cultural issues and literature within mixed groups of Roma, Bulgarian and Turkish pupils. These classes have also been successful. Her general conclusion is that ‘children are born without prejudices’ and therefore it is valuable for children to come together in a context in which they can learn to know each other as people and as members of different cultures.

As a result of the measures undertaken for the implementation of the first priority of the Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities during 2005/2006 school year 3 500 students living in detached Roma neighbourhoods have been integrated in mainstream schools out of the Roma neighbourhoods; 106 teaching assistants assist the educational integration of Roma children in mainstream schools; 150 teaching assistants have been trained in higher educational institutions; 360 primary school teachers were trained to work in multiethnic environment. Roma people with secondary education are employed as „assistants to the teacher” for additional work with children from the Roma community under the „Teachers for outdoor activities and vacation” Project. Other 50

unemployed Roma people registered by the labour offices will be trained as assistants in bringing up children.

2.3.4 Practical aspects of the education of aliens who seek or have been granted protection

The access and active involvement of refugees in the variety of forms and degrees of education is a guarantee for their successful adaptation and integration in the host country. While in most cases education is perceived as related to children, in the case of refugees the access to education – basic, secondary, vocational or higher – concerns, to the same extent, both refugee children and refugee adults. The right of refugee children to education is regulated in Article 26 of the Law on Asylum and Refugees and in Ordinance No 3 of 27 July 2000 of the Ministry of Education and Science. Refugee children aged up to 18 are entitled to full access, training and education at state and municipal schools in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Pursuant to Article 53, para 3 of the Bulgarian Constitution, the basic and secondary education at state and municipal schools is free-of-charge.

Pending the status determination procedure and after being granted refugee or humanitarian status, refugee children do not pay tuition fees and have the same rights as Bulgarian nationals in respect of training at state and municipal schools in the Republic of Bulgaria.

The regulation of the procedure for the referral of refugees to schools and their enrolment takes into account some specific aspects of their education related to:

- The differences between the Bulgarian educational system and the one in the country of origin;
- The lack of knowledge or insufficient knowledge of Bulgarian language;
- The lack of documents certifying the educational degree completed.

Upon completion of the Bulgarian language training and the examination at the Integration Centre for Refugees with the State Agency for Refugees, refugee children sit for an examination at the Regional Education Inspectorate, which is aimed at determining their level of knowledge and referring them to enrolment in Bulgarian schools.

A positive step is the recently-developed training module for providing pupils and teachers at Bulgarian schools with some information and knowledge about the life, rights and obligations of refugees in Bulgaria, implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science, jointly with the State Agency for Refugees.

2.3.5 Involvement of the NGO sector

The Refugee-and-Migration Service of the Bulgarian Red Cross (RMS with BRC) renders financial support and assistance to refugee children and their parents for the provision of the necessary textbooks, training aids and materials. In addition, the following have been secured within the framework of the projects implemented by RMS with BRC:

- Tuition for subject areas where the children have difficulties;
- Monthly food allowances for refugee children attending Bulgarian schools;
- Summer children camps with intensive Bulgarian language learning;
- Preparation for the admission exams for Bulgarian higher schools, and other services.

After graduating from secondary schools, refugees have the right to continue their education at higher educational establishments under the same conditions and procedure as Bulgarian nationals.

The Ordinance Laying down the State Requirements for the Enrolment and Training of Doctoral Students regulates the possibility for refugees to apply for Ph.D. programs under the same conditions and procedure as Bulgarian nationals.

Challenge: practice has shown additional training provided to refugee children for Bulgarian language and other subjects on the curricula, and the BRC have found a solution to the problem (see below).

2.3.6 Bulgaria's Red Cross language courses for refugee children

The children of refugees living in Bulgaria now have the opportunity to study Bulgarian language during the summer. The Bulgarian Red Cross organizes free summer school for children. The initiative is put through jointly with several community cultural centres in Sofia. The idea is to help the children of refugees in Bulgaria to master the language which most of

them will have to use later at school. The summer school is an addition to the curriculum the kids have followed in the course of the school year. Here the teacher attends to each child individually according to his personal level. The kids in the summer school are in the 7-12 age brackets. Parallel to studying, the children are taken on trips in nature, visits to Sofia Land Entertainment Park and Sofia sites.

Through the summer school the Refugee Service of the Bulgarian Red Cross are trying to fill in the gap that has existed for quite some time now with no alternative so far.

These children are in at a disadvantage as they are placed under different circumstances. Most often their parents do not speak the Bulgarian language and they do not dispose of the means necessary for the additional language education of their children. Yet it is very important for them to learn the language in order to receive a professional training. We are starting with a small group of children, but there is definitely a marked interest in the school we have organized. In the last two years the number of refugees to Bulgaria has considerably diminished as compared to previous years. They are mainly young men, while refugee families are much less. Only about 16% of the refugees in this country are children. The countries most refugees come from are Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria and even Armenia, but most of them have been refused a refugee statute. We have found out that for these kids the summer is the hardest period as the long vacation erases a great part of what they have learned during the school year. Our summer school takes two weeks only but we are trying to make the best of that time. After the end of these two weeks in Sofia, the children are leaving for another two weeks for a camp organized by the Red Cross. This provides the opportunity to communicate in Bulgarian language and sustain the knowledge they have acquired.

Some of the refugee children are born here, in Bulgaria, and will perhaps stay here for a long time, because migration further to the west becomes ever more difficult.

Here are two opinions of refugee children enrolled for the course and their expectations:

“At first the Bulgarian language was very difficult to me but now I am doing fine. I speak my native language and now, Bulgarian too. I can read children’s books in Bulgarian. I have many friends in Bulgaria. I hope during the summer school I will learn to read more smoothly

and write better.” (Songul, 11-year old, born in Afghanistan but has lived in Bulgaria for the last 10 years together with her family.)

“I think it is very good to have such a school because many children have nothing to do in summer,” Eva says. “In summer I like riding my bicycle and roller-skating, anyway, spending my time outside with my friends. I study alone. My parents do not help me with homework, as they are much too busy. I like it here very much. Bulgaria is very beautiful. Nature and the good people I like most of all.” (Eva, also from Afghanistan, and of the same age. She, too, has lived in Bulgaria with her family for quite some time now.)

2.3.7 Extracurricular activities at the Integration Centre for Refugees

The Integration Centre for Refugees is constantly increasing and expanding the social, training and cultural activities with children and puts an accent on them.

Children refugees, who are attending ICR, are organized in various clubs depending on their age, interests and individual abilities. Programmes for training at the **Children’s Social Club** are developed, which are directed to:

- Adaptation and overcoming the stress from changing the cultural environment;
- Developing children’s creative abilities;
- Acquainting with the way of life, culture and folklore of our country;
- Improving the hygiene habits and health culture of children refugees.

Training sessions, which are met with a great interest, are carried out every day at the **Club of Arts and Crafts** and at the **Atelier of Painting**. Children from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran painted the walls of the Children’s Social Club and named the huge painting Earth – a Home for Everybody.

The refugees painted the flags of the countries of their origin on cement plates in the yard of ICR and RPC and thus made an Alley of Peace.

Every week cultural and integration events with children refugees are organized, including outings, visits to cultural sites, botanical gardens, museums, the zoo, etc.

New Year, March 1, the Women's and Mothers' Day - March 8, the Day of Slav Letters and Culture – May 24, Children's Day, the World Day of Refugees are celebrated and children participate in exhibition of children's drawings and various concerts.

2.4 Conclusions and recommendations

Measures needed:

- To decrease the number of children dropping out of state and municipal schools between I and IV grade;
- To enhance the motivation of parents to send their children to school;
- To assist families in raising children and providing breakfast to the children

More assistant-teachers to be introduced into the primary school system, not just for the Roma people but also for other foreign students. Assistant-teachers to have a clear career path and to be encouraged to go on with their studies to become 'main' teachers.

The good practice of collaboration between institutions to continue and more benefits to be provided to foreign children.

Provision of conditions for joint education and training of children and students of different ethnic origin in State and municipal kindergartens, schools and subsidiary units; provision of additional pedagogical work with lagging behind students; measures for bringing dropped-out students back to school and improving their educational results; development and implementation of educational and training programmes conformable with the cultures of different ethnic minorities in kindergartens and schools; teachers qualification activities; research related to interethnic integration of children and students of the ethnic minorities through education; preparation of parents for the implementation of children and students educational integration.

Compulsory courses for social and cultural counselling as a part of foreigners' integration activities.

Training of teachers with a view to improving their knowledge and skills for working in a multicultural environment.

Recognition of educational degrees acquired and professional qualifications of foreigners.

Compulsory Bulgarian language training for foreign children whose families have been granted protection.

More focus on social, training and cultural activities with children.

3. CASE STUDY: SECONDARY AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

3.1 Introduction

This case study will review the situation in the secondary and continuing education with special focus on minorities, refugee and immigrant children, response to new challenges of migration and intercultural issues.

We will review several key issues such as: response to new challenges of migration; bringing education closer to potential beneficiaries; teaching human rights and other minorities education issues; Bulgarian language training of aliens who seek or have been granted protection; Education and Training at the Integration Centre for Refugees.

The Case Studies have been done by the use of personal interviews, focus groups and questionnaires with representatives of the targeted groups in Sofia, Shumen, Sliven, Varna, Burgas, Kiurdjali, Stara Zagora, Yambol, Lom.

Relevant publications were also examined.

Participants: representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), 5 Regional Inspectorates of Education under MES, 5 Local Councils of Education; 20 schools, pupils, parents; Integration Centre for Refugees and the State Agency for Refugees; Pedagogical Consultation Offices; Refugee-and-Migration Service of the Bulgarian Red Cross (RMS with BRC).

	Officials		Teachers/trainers		Students/Parents	
	Host	Foreign	Host	Foreign	Host	Foreign
Questionnaires	10	10	10	10	10	10
Interviews	10	10	10	10	10	10
Focus Groups	-	-	10	10	10	10

N.B. The term 'foreign' includes both ethnic and religious minorities given the specificity of the Bulgarian society

3.2 Challenges/Issues

As already stated in the previous chapter the issue of Roma and other minorities' education has the most profound direct effect on every other aspect of integration – poverty, health, employment, crime, discrimination and so on. Nonetheless, there are people who still seem reluctant to face the fact that the key to effective integration is in the education of Roma children. Figures from mid 2006 show that currently in Bulgaria more than 13 % of Roma children over the age of 15 have no education. Only 10 % have secondary education and of them, just 0.2 % have a university degree.

New challenges of migration appear due to the growing number of refugees bringing the issue of dealing with refugee and immigrant children. Main problems in the educational sector are seen as:

The differences between the Bulgarian educational system and the one in the country of origin;

The lack of knowledge or insufficient knowledge of Bulgarian language;

The lack of documents certifying the educational degree completed.

Another challenge is the ability to manage tense and stressful situations and deal with intercultural misunderstandings and negative attitudes, as well as the ability to express oneself clearly so that everybody can fully understand your point

Training needed is seen mainly in the following areas:

- Enhancing tolerance toward differences
- Teaching tolerance
- Understanding the difference

Another key issue is the vocational education and training as a prerequisite for finding a job after vulnerable groups leave school and enter the labour market.

The demographic structure and changes in recent years present another challenge re bringing education closer to potential beneficiaries and the human resources in the education sector.

3.3 Response and practices

3.3.1 Response to new challenges of migration

The Bulgarian government has set up Commissions of experts, including representatives of the Pedagogical Consultation Offices and the State Agency for Refugees with the Regional Education Inspectorates of the Ministry of Education and Science for the purpose of certifying the level of the knowledge acquired by refugee children.

These commissions hold interviews with the refugees; determine the conformity of refugee children's competence to the educational minimum for the relevant school year; refer them to a certain school taking into account the district of residence, their wish, capacity, age and health status.

The commission issues compulsory instructions to the headmaster of the relevant school in relation to arrangements to be made for individual work with refugee children on specific subject areas depending on the knowledge level.

There is an option regulated for refugee children from socially disadvantaged families to receive free-of-charge the textbooks needed for classes II-VIII under the conditions and procedure applicable to Bulgarian nationals.

The Refugee-and-Migration Service of the Bulgarian Red Cross (RMS with BRC) renders financial support and assistance to refugee children and their parents for the provision of the necessary textbooks, training aids and materials. In addition, the following have been secured within the framework of the projects implemented by RMS with BRC:

Tuition for subject areas where the children have difficulties;

Monthly food allowances for refugee children attending Bulgarian schools;

Summer children camps with intensive Bulgarian language learning;

Preparation for the admission exams for Bulgarian higher schools, and other services.

After graduating from secondary schools, refugees have the right to continue their education at higher educational establishments under the same conditions and procedure as Bulgarian nationals.

The Ordinance Laying down the State Requirements for the Enrolment and Training of Doctoral Students regulates the possibility for refugees to apply for Ph.D. programs under the same conditions and procedure as Bulgarian nationals.

Since the beginning of 2003 the Ministry of Education and Science has been supporting by funding and expertise the “Ethnic Folklore in Bulgaria /Roma Folklore/” Project implemented by Amalipe Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance in elective classes in schools. By 2005 the results of this project were the following: every year students attending those classes receive the developed “Roma Folklore and Culture” Programme and school appliances for free; 220 teachers were trained to teach “Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore” in elective classes; 5 000 students in 172 schools in the country studied “Ethnic Folklore – Roma Folklore” in elective classes in 2005/2006 school year. The “Youth Club for Roma Songs and Dances” Project was financially supported. 20 Roma youths participated in it. The “Civil Education – Road to Europe” Project was also financially supported. 35 youths – Bulgarians, Turks and Roma - took part in it.

3.3.2 Tackling the growing number of refugees

In spite of the limited financial resources and the economic difficulties faced by our country, each year, the Ministry of Education and Science submits to the Agency for Refugees textbooks, which are suitable for initial learning of Bulgarian language and for training in vocations that are of interest to refugees. Further on, organisational prerequisites are being created for individual resolving the refugees' issues at schools, where they study. Headmasters of these schools are acquainted in detail with the possible ways for resolving such problems. In this aspect the contacts constantly maintained with the Agency for Refugees are especially useful. Concrete results of the good interaction between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Agency for Refugees are: the experience accumulated in the initial learning of the language, the published learning aids, the setting up of teachers teams, the organisation of vocational training, the creating of suitable

atmosphere for adaptation of refugees to the learning environment, their completion of educational degrees, and last, but not least, admission of refugees to Bulgarian universities.

The referral of refugees to schools and their enrolment takes into account some specific aspects of their education related to:

The differences between the Bulgarian educational system and the one in the country of origin;

The lack of knowledge or insufficient knowledge of Bulgarian language;

The lack of documents certifying the educational degree completed.

Upon completion of the Bulgarian language training and the examination at the Integration Centre for Refugees with the State Agency for Refugees, refugee children sit for an examination at the Regional Education Inspectorate, which is aimed at determining their level of knowledge and referring them to enrolment in Bulgarian schools.

A training module for providing pupils and teachers at Bulgarian schools with some information and knowledge about the life, rights and obligations of refugees in Bulgaria, was developed by the Ministry of Education and Science, jointly with the State Agency for Refugees.

3.3.3 Bringing education closer to potential beneficiaries

The opening of Shoumen University and the Kurdjali Pedagogical College, both of which are located in areas with compact Turkish population can be regarded as good practice of bringing education closer to potential beneficiaries and drawing their attention to the opportunity for higher education and better employment perspectives. The closeness of the two educational institutions makes them very suitable for education pursuit by ethnic Turks, who can conveniently stay in their native places while enrolled at university. This might be also a good example of cost effectiveness. On the other hand, both establishments have departments of Turkish philology, and Turkish/Russian or Turkish/Bulgarian philology, a major both preferred and accessible to young ethnic Turks. Such combinations lead to a better multicultural awareness. Since both the Shoumen University and the Kurdjali Pedagogical College offer primarily pedagogical programs, the vast majority of university/college-degree holders among ethnic Turks are with pedagogic education. Thus,

considering the situation of general profusion of pedagogic cadres in the three districts – Shoumen, Razgrad, and Kurdjali, on the whole, and among the Turkish minority members themselves many ethnic Turks now have Bachelor’s and/or Master’s degrees in pedagogy/philology.

One other big advantage is the opportunity of using mother tongue (Turkish) facilitating the training delivery in all subjects, including BSL, and foreign languages.

Such people also are exemplary for the educational opportunities minority representatives have. The practice has shown increase in interest towards learning with these groups both in primary and secondary education.

Another example to be noted is the intercultural workplace model in these schools (management and teaching staff) seen not just by pupils and students, but also by their parents and relatives. As a teacher noted it is not just about living together, but working together, i.e. to be together in everything.

3.3.4 Teaching Human Rights and other minorities education issues

Teaching human rights and intercultural education at school is a guarantee for the future of social and ethnic peace in Bulgaria, says Yossif Nunev, expert at the “Education and Cultural Integration” in the Ministry of Education and Science.

The introduction in Bulgarian schools of a thematic course on human rights was one of the major subjects of the National Conference on the European Year of Democratic Citizenship through Education-2005 proclaimed by the Council of Europe.

A package of education materials on human rights designed for the primary level – grades 1-4 and the secondary level – grades 5-8, as well as the supplements for the high school grades is prepared to be introduced in schools. The aim is through acquiring knowledge on human rights and their observance and practices at school, to form an attitude and behaviour keeping account of differences and the rights of those around us so that every school student can feel valuable and respected. Teaching human rights and intercultural education as part of it is a continuation of the strategy for education integration of children and students from ethnic minorities. It is targeted at all ethnic groups in Bulgaria, but accentuates on the most needy, such as the Roma community where children are 10% of all school-goers in Bulgaria.

In Bulgaria there are now Roma who are very well integrated in society. The reason is that their children are going to Bulgarian schools and not to Roma schools. But still a considerable part of the Roma community in Bulgaria lives in separate quarters in the largest towns and cities across the country. In this way their children are segregated. Instead of going to school together with Bulgarian kids and learn to live together, they are kept in the Roma School of their Roma quarters. And thus fail to go beyond the Roma level. And with the end of the 8th grade, if a Roma child goes as far as that at all, education is completed. Very few young people from the Roma minority manage to graduate from high school or university. They remain marked for life by the imprint of their marginal medium. A priority of the Ministry of Education is the along the Decade for Roma Inclusion /2005-2015/ is to work out the necessary documents and conduct the respective policy so that the process of integration and adaptation of Roma children among ban ones becomes a lasting and irreversible one. This process concern 30 thousand children who have studied last year in segregated Roma schools. Bulgarian universities do not prepare ban teachers well enough in that direction. Yet there are very good projects along that line, like those of the Intra-ethnic initiative and human rights Foundation having prepared the school textbooks on "Human Rights at School". Along its "RAMO" programme over 4 thousand teachers have been trained in all regions of Bulgaria. Bulgarian universities have created masters' and bachelors' degrees for training teacher-students in intercultural studies. Besides various desegregation projects put through in different places across Bulgaria have encompassed over 2000 Roma children who have been studying among Bulgarian kids for the last 4-5 years. It turned out that children studying in a Roma school are leaving it after the 6th or 7th grade upon entering puberty. On the other hand, almost 100% of Roma children integrated among Bulgarian ones continue their education and they will be the nucleus of the new quality Roma intelligentia. Part of it would go back to their community but this time with the will to attract children to the better alternative.

3.3.5 Decade of Roma Inclusion: Practical steps

Currently Bulgaria is presiding the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, from 1 July 2006 till 30 June 2007. The measures for support to employment, qualification and re-qualification through different forms of training, employment and entrepreneurship are rooted in the

successful social and economic integration not only of Roma people but also of all minority groups. Assistance was provided for:

the establishment of 12 Roma information centres,

the provision of initial literacy to Roma minorities,

the extension of the mediation services,

the extension of the information services,

trainings for raising the awareness on Roma related problems,

the creation of jobs for Roma people,

the stimulation of entrepreneurship amongst the ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups,

the elaboration and implementation of a program for training with the aim to develop entrepreneur skills.

Just in one year

More than 1372 unemployed Roma people were trained for initial literacy under programs specially developed for the Roma minority

Temporary employment was provided to more than 1353 unemployed persons

More than 1093 long-term unemployed participated in vocational training

More than 2944 persons were consulted

By virtue of the National Employment Action Plan 2006 and the Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 15 666 people were involved in activities to enhance their employability and qualification. Of them 2994 people were included in motivation training for active job seeking, 7643 Roma people passed vocational guidance training, 2327 Roma people were included in courses for vocational qualification, 2655 people were involved in initial literacy courses and 76 – in a program for raising the qualification level.

3.3.6 Practical aspects of Bulgarian language training of aliens who seek or have been granted protection

Linguistic competence is an important condition for the more effective and efficient integration of refugees in society.

In view of ensuring the necessary conditions for Bulgarian language learning, the State Agency for Refugees organizes and conducts Bulgarian language courses and vocational training for aliens who seek or have been granted protection.

Bulgarian language training is one of the main activities at the Refugee Integration Centre with the State Agency for Refugees.

Language training is organized in two groups for adults and an afternoon study-room for refugee children attending Bulgarian schools.

For the purpose of the language training, a textbook “Bulgarian for Refugee Children” is used; it has been produced by the State Agency for Refugees under a project financed by UNHCR with funds from a German Charity Foundation.

An aid to the Bulgarian language textbook for refugee children is being drafted; it will facilitate the more efficient learning of Bulgarian grammar and vocabulary.

The goals of Bulgarian language training are:

- Literacy;
- Creating learning skills and habits;
- Learning spoken Bulgarian;
- Learning written Bulgarian;
- Developing comprehension and communication skills.

Refugee children and adults attending the Bulgarian language courses at the Refugee Integration Centre participate in various forms of Bulgarian language practice: preparation of artistic and musical programs, study tours, summer schools for intensive learning of colloquial Bulgarian, cultural and sports events, etc.

With a view to improving the conditions for the integration of aliens who have been granted refugee of humanitarian status in the Bulgarian society, the Refugee-and-Migration Service

of the Bulgarian Red Cross has been organizing and conducting Bulgarian language courses for adults, as a part of the Program for Social Counselling and Integration of Refugees in Bulgaria implemented by the Service.

Problems in the area of education and Bulgarian language training of aliens who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status in Bulgaria

Regardless of the well-developed legal framework and the regulated procedure for the enrolment in the Bulgarian state and municipal schools, there are a number of difficulties in the process of training refugee children.

The reason for the above relates to the difference in terms of the subject areas included in the curricula of Bulgaria and those of the countries of origin. Such problems emerge in relation to History, Geography, Biology, and other subjects. The provision of additional training for improving Bulgarian language skills and the knowledge in other subject areas is not a common practice at schools.

A part of adult refugees who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status in Bulgaria are illiterate or with a low educational background. Their access to Bulgarian schools is not regulated. The insufficient education and the scarce knowledge of Bulgarian are the main reasons for these refugees to be unable to find a job and integrate in Bulgarian society.

Practice shows that most of the refugees, when fleeing their country of origin, do not take with themselves the necessary documents certifying their educational background.

Pursuant to Article 2 of the Ordinance on the Recognition of Higher Education Acquired and Training Periods Completed at Foreign Higher Schools “The right to the recognition of higher education acquired or training periods completed at foreign higher schools belongs to any Bulgarian nationals, aliens and recognized refugees who have attended higher schools established and functioning in compliance with the legal requirements in the country where the higher education has been acquired or the training periods have been completed.”

There are serious issues with regard to the implementation of this right, as the ordinance does not regulate the procedure for the recognition of higher education acquired by refugees.

The lack of documents certifying the completion of secondary education in the country of origin is an obstacle to those who wish to enrol in a university or seek employment on the basis of their professional qualifications.

The legislation does not contain provisions requiring Bulgarian language training for aliens who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status. During the initial months after the receipt of the decision granting refugee or humanitarian status, refugees have no incentive for attending Bulgarian language courses, as they have to rent a dwelling and pay the rent by themselves, seek a job and ensure their income.

There are specific problems in relation to the possibility for refugee girls and women to continue their education, which are determined by social, cultural and other reasons.

In some refugee families, parents are often reluctant to let their daughters attend school and continue their education. This problem has a long-term negative impact on the process of integration for this group of refugees.

3.3.7 Vocational Qualification and Re-qualification at the Integration Centre for Refugees

The vocational training at ICR takes into consideration the specific needs of the foreigners who are seeking or have received asylum on the one hand, and the current status of the labour market in Bulgaria, on the other hand. The professions of hairdressers and cosmeticians are offered, as well as computer literacy, for which ICR has a licence, issued by the National Agency of Vocational Education and Training (NAVET). After graduation the course participants receive certificates for acquired professions.

Vocational training outside ICR premises is carried out via the labour offices.

ICR takes part in the development (and its implementation in 2005) of a pilot programme for literacy, qualifying and employing foreigners who are seeking or have received asylum.

3.3.8 Education and Training in Bulgarian at the Integration Centre for Refugees

An important prerequisite for the foreigners who are seeking or have received asylum in Bulgaria is the mastering of Bulgarian language. ICR has developed a programme and has organized courses in language training for both adults and children. The training is carried out by part-time lecturers who have written a specialised *Textbook in Bulgarian for Children*

Refugees. In 2005, the training set was completed by preparing a *Training Aid in Bulgarian for Children Refugees* and a *Language Course for Refugees*, which include fundamentals about Bulgaria.

After graduating from the Bulgarian language club, the children refugees sit for a test at the Regional Inspectorate for specifying the level of their knowledge and after that they continue their education at Bulgarian schools.

Pupils–refugees receive a specialised support in the preparation of lessons in different disciplines and their relatives receive consultations on all issues related to their education in Bulgaria.

3.3.9 Hebrew in Sofia

A successful model of mother-tongue education (Hebrew) implemented in a school in Sofia (Hebrew and English Language Elementary School) which is also attended by Bulgarian children.

The issue: Mother-tongue education in a school with broad Jewish attendance aimed at the preservation of the cultural identity of the ethnic group.

The actors involved: 1) The Ministry of Education and Science, 2) Local authorities; 3) The School Supervisory Board, the School Board and the teaching staff; 4) The Jewish Shalom Organisation in Bulgaria; 5) The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, New York, USA.

The issue proceedings: The state school is of mixed attendance, with both Jewish and Bulgarian pupils. From the 1998 school year, two curricula are being implemented in the school. In the first one, Hebrew is taught as a mother tongue twice per week as an optional choice. More than one-third of the attendees study Hebrew as their mother tongue. Some Bulgarians also attend this programme. The groups are formed after determining the language proficiency of the children. In the second curriculum, Hebrew is taught as the first foreign language within the regular classes of the school (from the first year onwards). From the third year on the study of the second foreign language (English) is introduced. Books in Hebrew have been approved by the Ministry of Education and Science. The curriculum in Hebrew is uniform for a total of fifteen schools from CEE, that participate in an educational network under the auspices of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation. The curriculum, the know-how, the preparation of teachers and the various teaching tools such as audio and video

recordings, newspapers, magazines, etc., were provided by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, New York, USA. Mother-tongue classes are aided by computers where pupils have access to the Internet.

The strategy addressed: The collaboration between the various international, national, local and civil institutions and organisations provide for all necessary means for mother-tongue education.

This hones the interest of Bulgarian children who wish to share in the classes of Hebrew groups and thus gain an acquaintance with the language and the culture of the other ethnic group.

The results: The children from the Jewish community in Sofia are able to preserve and develop their ethnic culture through the study of their mother tongue, the Jewish cycle of life and Jewish Festivals. In parallel, the participation of Bulgarian pupils in the Hebrew classes helps to break down social barriers between the different ethnic groups at the school. Steps are being taken for the transformation of the elementary school into a secondary school.

3.4 Conclusions and recommendations

Compulsory courses for social and cultural counselling as a part of foreigners integration activities needed.

Training of teachers with a view to improving their knowledge and skills for working in a multicultural environment.

Recognition of educational degrees acquired and professional qualifications of foreigners.

The training module for providing pupils and teachers at Bulgarian schools with some information and knowledge about the life, rights and obligations of refugees in Bulgaria, developed by the Ministry of Education and Science, jointly with the State Agency for Refugees, to be introduced in all relevant parts of the country, as well as to be regularly updated.

More focus on social, training and cultural activities with school-children.

Pursuant to Article 10 of the Council Directive 2003/9/EO of 27 January 2003 the access to the educational system for the children of asylum-seekers should not be delayed by more than three months after the date of filing the asylum application by the minor or his/her

parents. This period may be extended by one year, where specific education is to be provided in order to facilitate the access to the educational system.

Introduction of compulsory Bulgarian language training for aliens who have been granted protection in view of improving the integration of refugees in Bulgarian society. Attending a Bulgarian language course should be a condition for receiving housing assistance, social assistance, health insurance assistance within a one-year period after the receipt of the decision granting the status.

Introduction of compulsory courses for social and cultural counselling as a part of refugee integration activities.

Organization and conduct of seminars for teachers with a view to improving their knowledge and skills for working with refugee children.

Development of a training module for providing pupils and teachers at Bulgarian schools with some information and knowledge about the life, rights and obligations of refugees in Bulgaria.

Facilitation of the procedure for the recognition of educational degrees acquired and professional qualifications of aliens who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status in Bulgaria.

Regulation of the possibility for aliens who have been granted refugee or humanitarian status and are aged above 18 to have access to the Bulgarian state and municipal schools.

The Refugee Integration Centre, the State Agency for Refugees and the non-governmental organizations working with refugees to facilitate organising training courses for refugee children in their mother tongue with a view to preserving the national culture and customs. Representatives of the refugee communities in Bulgaria who have teaching experience and skills need to be involved in this process.

4. CASE STUDY: HEALTH

4.1 Introduction

A Research on the objective health status in the Roma quarters of the towns of Sofia, Vratsa and Targovishte found out an ill person in about 80% of the visited Roma households. In

one-third of the households, the number of persons with health problems is 3 or more, while in 7-8% of the households, 5 or more persons suffer from health problems.

The present case study will review two aspects and practices in the Bulgarian health sector which will appear of vital importance for improving

- a) the health situation of the vulnerable ethnic groups, and
- b) the intercultural relationship in this sector

The two aspects reviewed are as follows:

- a) The introduction of the Roma health mediators (RHMs), and
- b) Health Integration policy and interculturality in the health sector

The Case studies have been done by the use of personal interviews and questionnaires with representatives of the targeted groups in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Bourgas, Pleven, Gabrovo, Dobrich, Pazardjik, Dupnitsa, Shoumen, Lom, Haskovo, and Silistra.

Relevant publications on the issue were also examined, and especially, *Ensuring Minorities Access to Health Care in Bulgaria*, Ivailo Tournev, Ethnic Minorities Health Problems Foundation, Sofia, Bulgaria, and Cveta Petkova, the Sofia Open Society Institute, Bulgaria, 2004.

Participants: representatives of the Ministry of Health, Bulgarian Medical Doctors Union, Bulgarian Medical Nurses Association, hospitals, policlinics and health centres, Roma health mediators.

Aspect A: Interviewed: Doctors: 23; Nurses: 36; Health personnel, including RHMs: 24

Aspect B: Employers: foreigners/investors and local doctors, mostly of Bulgarian ethnic origin, though beside the Roma, other ethnic minorities are almost equally represented: Turkish, Armenian, Jewish, Arab Muslim. Nurses: of Bulgarian ethnic origin, other ethnic minorities almost equally represented; Paramedics/Sanitary lower staff: ethnic minorities almost equal in numbers; Cleaners: mostly of ethnic minorities, Roma and Turkish. Total of 47.

Special thanks to: Ms Maria Lozanova, Dr Nikolay Balgaranov, and Dr Georgi Nkolov.

4.2 Challenges/Issues

In April 2001, the Government of Bulgaria adopted a National Health Strategy and an Action Plan for the period 2001-2006. The health assessment of the population contained in the National Health Strategy indicates a particularly negative trend in the health of the Roma with this group having considerably higher than average risk of poor health and early death. One of the groups most exposed to the identified risk factors are ethnic minorities and particularly the Roma. Thus the Strategy concludes that “special attention should be attached to the health problems and special needs of the Roma ethnic community in the first place (on account of its numbers and aggravated economic and social status)”.

The following social determinants of health have been identified:

- Poor housing
- Poor access to food
- Unequal access to education and employment
- Perceptions of relative poverty
- Lack of control
- Discrimination
- Social Exclusion
- Political disenfranchisement
- Unequal gender norms

There has been a disturbing increase in the mortality rate and a general deterioration of the health indicators in the Roma population. Just an example: according to the NSI the child mortality with ethnic Bulgarians is 9.9/1000, 17/000 with ethnic Turks and 28/1000 with Roma.

Two major issues are the qualification of medical staff to work in multicultural environment, support to preventive health care services and health promotion and education for vulnerable minorities groups

4.3 Response and practices

4.3.1 Roma Health Mediators

The introduction of the Roma health mediators was initiated by the Ministry of Health Bulgarian NGOs and in the period 2001-2004 the Phare Programme funded the training of 57 RHMs, 30 nurses, and 30 GPs in 15 towns.

The research took place in the regions of Plovdiv, Pazardjik, Dupnitsa, Shoumen, Lom, Haskovo, Silistra.

The position of health mediator is new for Bulgaria but it has been successfully introduced and has proven its effectiveness in other countries. The role of the health mediator is to facilitate the access of minorities, and in particular, the Roma minority, to health and social services, but also to help overcome discriminatory attitudes. Health mediators are in fact social workers who help those not familiar with the health system and the social assistance system gain better access to health and social services.

The guaranteed and open access to healthcare is of utmost importance for all Bulgarian citizens. This is one of the issues in the government policy towards improving the access of minorities to healthcare, as well as one of the priorities in the strategy of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015.

The mediator is a member of the Roma community who helps illiterate Roma or Roma who are not familiar with the healthcare or social assistance systems get better access to healthcare and social services. The mediator performs the following activities:

- Accompany Roma to healthcare and social assistance institutions in order to help them solve a specific health or social problem.

The basic challenge here for the mediators expressed refers to the target group education and training, language proficiency and communication skills, especially the Roma who have only primary education or none at all, as well as those with more serious health or social problems. It appears they are totally helpless when they have to visit a healthcare or social assistance institution. They are not familiar with medical terminology, they have a difficulty communicating with the medical staff, and they sometimes do not understand how to

conduct the treatment that has been prescribed to them. Therefore one of the tasks of Roma mediators is to accompany such persons to healthcare institutions in order to:

- Explain to both parties (medical staff and Roma) their respective expectations and facilitate communication during consultations.
- Provide social assistance and patronage to families at risk (families of chronically ill people or people with disabilities, socially disadvantaged and poor families, families of drug users and people suffering from tuberculosis or hepatitis). The task of the mediator will be to get to know the healthcare and social problems of the family. An important activity will be to register medical cases and work with these families.
- Lobby healthcare institutions and social services. Protect patients' rights. Report violations and acts of discrimination. Mediators are supposed to lobby local institutions, as well as national institutions, if necessary, to solve specific problems and address specific cases.
- Help Roma fill in different types of documents and cope with bureaucratic procedures.

Practice has shown most Roma have serious difficulties to cope with the medical documentation, scheduling medical examinations and consultations. Mediators help such people organize all the documentation they need, and work to ensure that all Roma are covered by the health insurance system. They

- Explain to Roma what rights they have and how the healthcare and social assistance systems work.
- Explain to medical staff and social workers what are the needs and the status of Roma.
- Participate in various health prevention programs: vaccinations, prophylactic measures against tuberculosis, hepatitis, and socially significant diseases.

An important task of Roma mediators is to optimize immunization. To achieve this, they have to cooperate closely with general practitioners working in Roma neighborhoods. The goal is to ensure that all Roma subject to vaccination are immunized in due time, as well as to benefit from the confidence that the members of the community have in Roma mediators in order to facilitate the immunization process.

One of the biggest challenges here are some negative attitudes among Roma community towards such procedures stating they are 'immunized by birth' and showing considerable neglect in this respect.

Another attitude towards the mediators is the distrust expressed in a negative way by their own community people: 'What do you know about this?'; 'When did you become a doctor?'; 'Do you have children and who are you to tell me what to do?'

It turns out the Roma mediators must establish bridges and build trust in two directions:

- with the medical staff of Bulgarian and Turkish origin, as the latter are reported to be more inclined to discriminate the Roma, than the Bulgarians, and
- within their own Roma community

Another essential task of the mediators will be to communicate on a regular basis with the medical staff in health institutions in order to:

- Provide health education and disseminate health-related information.
- The mediators will promote a healthy way of life among the members of the Roma community by organizing public lectures and distributing information materials to improve the health education of Roma.
- Train and provide patronage to young mothers.
- Roma women traditionally become mothers at an early age. Many of them are unprepared to raise their children and this often frustrates them and leads to many medical and/or psychological problems.
- Mediators will visit young mothers and train them how to raise their children. They will also help them solve any problems that they may face.
- Communicate with institutions: local authorities, general practitioners, regional hospitals, regional offices of the National Health Insurance Fund, and inform them on the health status of Roma.

The mediators synchronize and coordinate the efforts of different institutions to ensure equal access of Roma to healthcare. They should work in close collaboration with general practitioners. On one hand, they participate in and support the prophylactic activities

conducted by general practitioners, and on the other, they rely on the doctors' involvement to solve specific medical problems, such as:

- Conduct family planning and reproductive health activities; support the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.
- Assist the local sanitary and hygiene inspections in maintaining adequate hygiene in the Roma neighborhoods.
- To support the sanitation of Roma neighborhoods, the mediators have to communicate and possibly collaborate with the local sanitary and hygiene inspections.

Roma mediators are supposed to work out of the existing Health Centres and Information and Advisory Centres in the Roma neighborhoods.

The mediators are differentiated as follows: community-based mediators, mediators who work in healthcare institutions, and mediators who work in social assistance institutions.

What are the requirements for prospective mediators:

- Candidates should belong to the Roma community.
- They should have completed secondary education.
- They should have worked at least two years for the Roma community.

Preference is given to candidates who have obtained or are currently pursuing a medical degree or a degree in social sciences: obstetricians, nurses, laboratory assistants, social workers, etc. If no such candidates are available, priority is given to active members of Roma NGOs who have experience in social work.

The good practice example here is how a consortium of four organizations: the Open Society Institute – Sofia, the Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association, the Ethnic Minorities Health Problems Foundation, and the Diversity Balkan Foundation for Intercultural Education and Understanding, worked on the component involving development of training packages and provision of a series of training seminars for health mediators, general practitioners, and medical nurses from 15 towns under the project “Ensuring Minorities Access to Health Care in Bulgaria”. (*Ensuring Minorities Access to Health Care in Bulgaria*,

Ivailo Tournev, Ethnic Minorities Health Problems Foundation, Sofia, Bulgaria, and Cveta Petkova, the Sofia Open Society Institute, Bulgaria, 2004)

The training of the three major groups: mediators, general practitioners, and medical nurses included a module focusing on how to work together, how to be tolerant to the Roma community, how to cultivate positive attitudes, how to build teams, how to overcome cultural variations, and how to develop the necessary skills for working in a multiethnic environment.

Besides the medically specific issues, training is provided focusing on intercultural and other topics re the target group, such as:

- Roma groups, religion, culture, and history;
- Health status of and health services for Roma in Bulgaria and socially significant diseases;
- Communication skills, teambuilding, interactive techniques, partnership with institutions and NGOs;
- Health insurance system and legislation, patients' rights and responsibilities;
- The role of the health mediator.
- Overcoming cultural barriers and communicating with the Roma community, rites and customs in the context of modern medicine, Roma traditional medicine;
- Social and psychological support for people with disabilities and chronic diseases;

General practitioners and medical nurses receive training in:

- Working in multiethnic communities with a special focus on the Roma community;
- Dealing with the specific health problems typical for the Roma community (socially significant diseases, tuberculosis, hepatitis, sexually transmitted diseases, reproductive health, physical and mental disabilities)
- Interactive health promotion techniques with a special focus on the Roma community;

86 % of the interviewed general practitioners (GPs) and medical nurses stated they are happy to have training seminars giving participants an insight into Roma culture, history, and traditions, to identify and overcome cultural barriers to communication, and to provide

information on typical Roma health problems and problems in the provision of healthcare. Another important goal of such training is to optimize existing health prevention programs by improving participants' communication skills and teach them how to work in a team and how to collaborate with Roma mediators.

12 % stated they already know enough and this is a waste of time.

2 % were indifferent.

Roma health mediators receive training in:

- Basic public health principles; short review of key health-related legislation;
- Special communication techniques and improving the capacity of mediators to help bridge cultural distinctions.
- Methods for building mutual trust between medical staff and members of the Roma community;
- Working with multiethnic communities with a special focus on the Roma community.

100 % of the interviewed mediators consider such training as very important and crucial for their job.

4.3.2 Health Integration policy and interculturality in the health sector

The research on the Health Integration policy implementation and the interculturality in the health sector proved that the Health Integration policy has led to some important steps in the last few years as follows:

Curriculum development

A curriculum for medical specialties at 5 Universities (Sofia, Stara Zagora, Plovdiv, Plevan and Varna) and 14 nursing colleges (Blagoevgrad, Burgas, Varna, Velyko Turnovo, Vratza, Dobrich, Plevan, Plovdiv, Ruse, Sliven, Stara Zagora, Haskovo, Sofia and Shumen) to equip students to better work with the Roma community.

A curriculum for the training of mediators between the health care system and the Roma community developed

Capacity building

A training programme for 30 University lecturers and 28 nursing colleges lecturers to teach students in working with the Roma community implemented

A training programme for 150 mediators between the health care system and the Roma community implemented

Support to the Outreached Preventive Healthcare System

5 preventive health care mobile units procured to promote improved preventative health practices in Roma communities

2 preventive care units equipped with mobile digital X-ray devices procured to ensure earlier detection of preventable/controllable medical threats in Roma communities

Provision of preventive healthcare services and health promotion and education

Preventive health care services programme implemented in 5 pilot regions directed at increasing the proportion of Roma population having access to such programmes

Health promotion and education programme implemented in the same regions to improve prevalence of preventative health practices in Roma communities

The study and the interviews re the intercultural relations in the health sector showed the following results:

Language: misunderstandings occur for 2 reasons: national language and use of professional jargon. 56 % of nurses of minority origin and 24 % of Bulgarian complain it is sometimes very difficult for them to understand written prescriptions and instructions for two main reasons: professional jargon (Latin) and/or unreadability of handwriting, which may lead to intercultural tension.

Food: 97 % of the minority staff complained food is typically Bulgarian and does not take into consideration both patients and staff. The canteen opposed the argument, stating it is impossible to cook all kinds of food Turkish, Armenian, Jewish, Muslim.

An interesting point raised was whether it is possible to find 'neutral' food pleasing all tastes.

Dress code: 84 % of Muslim women still prefer to wear veils. 46 % consider the ban as discrimination, and 11 think this is on purpose.

Hygiene/Concept of cleanness: employers and doctors complain especially with the ethnic minorities and Roma in particular concept for cleanness. Some of them also pointed out the problem with the personal hygiene (e.g. length of finger nails, clean hands, clean hair, etc.), and consider also both issues (personal and institutional hygiene as interrelated).

Other:

- Concept of time
- Dominance male–female, hierarchical

One other problem addressed was having Roma and other minority medical mediators as good practice facilitating: the intercultural mediation, addressing ethical issues, health education of the population, especially minorities and immigrants.

4.4 Conclusions and recommendations

4.4.1 Positive effects of RHMs

Facilitating patient vs doctor/nurse communication

Navigating bureaucratic procedures

Communicating with the Romany community

Improved Roma access to public health services, as well as the health condition of Roma community's members

Improved communication between the medical authorities and the Roma community

The professional qualification of physicians and nurses in specific health Roma problems is improved by implementation of curricula for health education of medical universities and nursing colleges. Integration is promoted through better institutional know how of Roma health problems;

Communication between the Roma community and medical specialists is improved by training of mediators, which leads to better prophylactics and diagnosis;

Opportunity for training women with moderate level of education in the field of health mediation.

Roma health mediators contribute to improving social conditions, providing Roma community members with the opportunity to improve their health condition.

The mediator plays the role of “linking bridge” between the community and local authorities as they cultivate mutual trust of persons from different worlds.

Improved health mediation work in the Roma communities

Improving the socio-health condition of Roma in Bulgaria

Jobs for Roma women in their community

Opportunity to change (negative) attitudes and fight discrimination

4.4.2 Issues causing problems and that need to be addressed

Language and cultural barriers.

Racial, ethnic and religious prejudice. GPs and other medical staff lack of awareness or disregard of the cultural differences and traditions of the Roma and the Turkish minority groups, practically resulting in broken communication and self-treatment, especially with the poorer and lowly-educated Roma and Turks. Passive discrimination still continues to exist.

Minorities access to health care positions and jobs. Job finding by minorities in this sector continues to be a problem, especially for Roma. Employers justify such discrimination on the basis that most Roma have relatively low training and education. Supervisory jobs are generally given to ethnic Bulgarian employees, with ethnic Turks, Bulgarian Muslims, and Roma among the first to be laid off.

Negative attitudes towards education and health culture mainly among Roma but also among the Turks resulting in lower educational levels. Health education: early marriages of Roma; lack of sexual culture with many mostly Roma communities; early age births with Roma as health risk factors.

The confidentiality of the personal medical information to which mediators will have access is an important issue to be addressed.

Objective ethno-cultural differences: the Turkish tend to complain more rarely re health problems if they do not cause any immediate pain, thus ignoring chronic diseases; Roma and Turks tend to neglect and underestimate periodic medical check-ups compared to

Bulgarians. The higher mobility among Roma (traveling throughout the country from place to place as part of their culture) practically restricts their access to medical and health care services.

Introduction of the system of Roma and other minority mediators – a model for the improvement of the minorities access to health and social services.

Improving the hygiene habits and health culture of refugees and Roma. Having minority mediators will help solving problems.

The health mediators are perceived incorrectly by some Roma community members (thinking they bring humanitarian aid). Selection procedure perceived as non-democratic (or not transparent) as applicants are suggested not by the whole community but by the Roma community leaders or Roma NGOs. Some Roma leaders are not satisfied with the health mediators' activity, as they refuse to get involved in the political process, other express the opinion that the health mediator does not contribute effectively to the improvement of Roma situation. The mediators are on the opinion that the RHMs' role is underestimated, and express their concern re the lack of career path, and also lack of enough respect for the Roma culture and traditions from other ethnic communities.

4.4.3 Recommendations

Training needs to be addressed.

Involving minority and foreigners into the health system and having more minority mediators. Need to identify different possibilities for ensuring permanent employment to health mediators.

Roma mediators to be respected members of the community, preferably women /and also mothers/. Need for conflict prevention skills in order to accomplish a satisfactory level of health condition for Roma people; it is also necessary to intensify the programmes for health education and stimulate the active involvement of Roma in them;

Health education and provision of health information to minorities, the medical personnel working in the minorities quarters and to various medical experts in the hospitals and health care centres.

Vocational and language training for foreign and minority nurses, hospital attendants, receptionists, health officers, etc. jobs.

5. CASE STUDY: CONSTRUCTION

5.1 Introduction

Similar to sectors like tourism and transport the present building and construction industry is a multicultural and intercultural place and this calls for the implementation of a managerial policy which combines multi-ethnicity and inter-ethnicity where people need to be ethnically and culturally sensitive in order to be aware of the differences on the intercultural workplace.

The present case study will review construction sites as intercultural workplaces and quote some good practices re the Bulgarian tourism sector development.

Examples will be provided such as:

- Programmes and measures for social and economic integration of unemployed Roma
- The Roma housing programme
- The Beautiful Bulgaria (BB) Project
- Example in Managing Multiethnic Communities

The Case Studies have been done by the use of personal interviews and questionnaires with representatives of the targeted groups in Sofia, Plovdiv, Ruse, Pleven, Varna, Bourgas, and Yambol. Relevant publications were also examined.

Participants: representatives from District Building and Construction Enterprises, BulgarStroy, B&C Consortium; Local Chambers of Commerce and Industry

Respondents:

	Managers		Employees		Participants in projects	
	Host	Foreign	Host	Foreign	Host	Foreign
Questionnaires	10	5	10	5	10	5
Interviews	5	5	5	5	5	5

N.B. The term 'foreign' includes both ethnic and religious minorities given the specificity of the Bulgarian society

5.2 Challenges/Issues

Language barriers in the country.

Foreign languages for employment abroad.

Racial, ethnic and religious prejudice.

Vocational training needs to be addressed.

Workplace discrimination against minorities continues to be a problem, especially for Roma. Employers justify such discrimination on the basis that most Roma have relatively low training and education. Supervisory jobs are generally given to ethnic Bulgarian employees, with ethnic Turks, Bulgarian Muslims, and Roma among the first to be laid off.

Food is an issue in canteens, esp. when there is no other meat offered than pork. Vegetarian food is no problem. Halal food is not usually available, though the cuisine has a lot of oriental influence and many meals are found proper for Muslims (baklava, dolmas, etc.). Chicken, lamb and veal are very popular and liked by everybody. It is a common practice people to have sandwiches at lunch, brought from home, therefore food at work is not a big issue.

5.3 Response/Good Practice

5.3.1 Programmes and measures for social and economic integration of unemployed Roma

Various programmes and measures for social and economic integration of unemployed Roma are being currently implemented on the labour market. They are aimed at providing adequate job opportunities and professional qualification for the Roma community.

Programmes for Temporary Employment in Public Works: National Programme for Temporary Employment, Programme for Temporary Employment during the Winter Months and Specialised Programmes (as stipulated by art. 54 from the Labour Encouragement Act) - their objective is through inclusion in employment to provide minimum income to unemployed that are reliant upon social assistance. Priority is given to unemployed that are being assisted or are entitled to social assistance by the Municipal Services for Social

Assistance. The programmes are being implemented in all the regions of the country. On a monthly average, 9 288 individuals have worked for the period between January and July 2002 and 6 198 302 BGN have been spent.

Beautiful Bulgaria is a project of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) for employment generation and vocational training in construction and tourism-related skills. It has been implemented since 1998 following the success of the pilot Beautiful Sofia Project carried out in 1997. The current (third) phase of the project is funded by the Bulgarian Government, the participating municipalities and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The previous two phases were primarily funded by the European Union (EU), but also by several European governments, UNDP and a British NGO. Beautiful Bulgaria is executed by the MLSP with the support of UNDP. The Beautiful Bulgaria project aims to alleviate unemployment, while improving the living environment of the target cities, raising the tourism attractiveness of the country and strengthening small and medium enterprises. Since its inception in Sofia, the Beautiful Bulgaria Programme has gradually grown to encompass 100 municipalities all over the country. 40,185 unemployed have benefited from the project, of which 12,258 have consequently found permanent jobs. Under the project 10,448 unemployed have received vocational training. A total of 1,527 have been refurbished, out of which 421 are monuments of culture. Project "Beautiful Bulgaria - 3" - its main objective being the creation of temporary jobs in construction while renovating tourist sites and buildings, situated in or around the selected municipal centres and thus creating conditions for sustainable employment in tourism. 733 individuals have been employed during the period between January - July 2002, the new recruits outnumbered 1 654 and 2 636 were trained for the amount of 4 691 395 BGN.

A number of activities have been carried out by now under the "Urbanization and Social Development of Regions with Predominantly Minority Population" Project managed by the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues with the administrative support of Ethnic and Demographic Issues Directorate in the Council of Ministers. Some of the most important results are as follows:

- The total of 1 122 unemployed (766 men and 356 women) of ethnic minorities took part in the professional qualification courses for construction workers. 1 108 of them

passed successfully the exams and were given qualification certificates. The target groups demonstrated a strong will for training and finding a job.

- Contracts for construction and construction control for the building of the water supply system of Omurtag were signed. The construction works started on 15 June 2005. Construction works in Pazardzhik (infrastructure works in 540 quarter, Iztok region) and Dulovo (a kindergarten in the village of Poroino) were completed. The other sites are as follows: sewage system and pavements, Roma Social and Cultural Centre in Stara Zagora; technical infrastructure in Lom; water supply systems in the village of Baikovo and the village of Boyan; and a water supply system in Omurtag. As a whole construction works are being performed according timetables.
- 271 unemployed of ethnic minorities have been employed through the Labour Offices for the construction works under the Project.

5.3.2 Roma housing programme: Roma build homes for themselves

The initial study of the Roma community living conditions prior to the implementation of the Urbanisation and Social Development of Regions with Dominating Minority Communities Project (PHARE 2002 National Programme) indicated that the gross housing area per resident as reported in the Roma neighbourhoods data was below the country average. The number of residents and number of housings data from 81 of the studied towns show that 82 023 Roma neighbourhood housings are occupied by 376 817 minority inhabitants. The Roma neighbourhoods data of the same study indicate that 21 073 housings of a total of 79 206 have no construction permit. The non-permitted construction share in big city ghettos reaches 80%, like for example the Stolipinovo dwelling area in Plovdiv. This rate grows with the inflow of Roma people from the villages. There is a stable and even strong correlation in some places between the belonging to the Roma community and the low housing status.

The National Programme for Improving the Housing Conditions of the Roma People in the Republic of Bulgaria by 2015 is in compliance with the 2004 National Housing Strategy. It was developed by experts of the Ethnic and Demographic Issues Directorate of the Council of Ministers, the ministries of regional development and public works, finance, labour and social policy, the National Association of Municipalities, UNDP, the municipal administrations and Roma NGOs. 30 065 new housings for the Roma will be constructed in the coming

decade while another 47 245 will be reconstructed. The National Programme implementation period coincides with the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. The programme performance will yield better housing conditions to 412 500 people (about 85 900 households) in 100 dwelling areas in 88 towns. The existing infrastructure will be improved and new infrastructure will be built in the Roma neighbourhoods: water-supply and sewage systems, power supply, gas supply, streetlights and etc. The houses which will be built under the national programme for improving the housing conditions of Roma until 2015, approved by the cabinet in 2005, will take into account the specific features of the Roma lifestyle.

The homes will not be large in size to make the rent affordable to Roma, and the architecture of the houses envisages separate outdoor space for animal breeding, and also a fireplace, which is yet not decided whether to be inside or outside the house. Part of the homes will be rented while for others an opportunity will be provided to purchase them via mortgage loans. Funding to the tune of 11 million BGN is ensured for the construction of 204 homes. The construction sites are yet to be determined. The criteria for placement in the new homes will be elaborated together with the local authorities. The buildings will be within the respective population centres but whether or not the Roma will live in separate neighbourhoods is subject to further discussions. The budget of the programme for 2006 is 14 million BGN.

The first steps in its implementation will be the rehabilitation of the sewerage system in the Roma quarters, removal of unregulated abodes, and legalisation of homes where this is possible by amending the respective development plans.

It is expected many Roma and other minority people to be given employment in all the envisaged construction and other activities. They will also have the chance to acquire new qualifications in the sector, learning by doing. In any case this is a big step forward in thinking and tackling the unemployment and other problems (health) of minorities in Bulgaria.

In 2006 the Sofia municipality decided to give several municipality-owned plots for the construction of temporary houses for the Roma population registered in the Batalova Vodenica district before 1996.

The house construction started in Sofia following an agreement between Sofia Mayor Boiko Borissov and Labour and Social Policy Minister Emilia Maslarova calling for long-term solution to the problem with illegal Roma houses in Bulgaria's capital.

The Regional Development Ministry provides finance the house construction project with 300 000 leva. The Finance Ministry might provide additional funds.

The Employment Agency will provide work to Roma who fled to Sofia because of low employment in their home towns. According to Sofia municipality programmes, the Roma to be accommodated in the temporary houses will participate in their construction.

The government planned the construction of houses for over 85 000 Roma by 2015. At present nearly 27 000 people were in need of state apartments, but so far (untill 2006) Sofia municipality has provided only 122 apartments.

5.3.3 The Beautiful Bulgaria (BB) Project

The Beautiful Bulgaria (BB) Project was launched in 1997 by UNDP and now in its third phase the project targets the problem of long-term urban unemployment. Under this initiative unemployed people are provided with vocational training in construction skills and then given temporary jobs in companies contracted to refurbish selected buildings, squares and parks.

Since the beginning of the project, 38,095 workers have been given temporary employment, of which approximately 11,904 from minority populations.

Overall, BB has trained a total of 11,235 unemployed people in construction skills, 20% out of which from minority groups. Additionally, numerous Roma construction companies have been contracted to work on BB sites. Since 1998, people from the Roma community have put a total of more than 18,502 man months of labour. Overall, minorities' integration into the workforce has helped to change attitudes among contractors, other employers, and even the people in the local communities.

33% of people employed under the Beautiful Bulgaria Project of the MLSP were Roma people.

Overall, minorities' integration into the workforce has helped to change attitudes among contractors, other employers, and even the people in the local communities.

Beautiful Bulgaria III targets the problem of long-term urban unemployment. It operates essentially in multiethnic and multicultural urban centres characterized by high absolute levels of unemployment and a decayed urban infrastructure. The project provides vocational training in construction skills to the long-term unemployed registered in the Labour Offices of the beneficiary cities. These unemployed are subsequently provided with temporary jobs in firms which are contracted by Beautiful Bulgaria to refurbish selected buildings, parks and squares in the respective cities. In this way, Beautiful Bulgaria III:

- Provides new skills and qualifications to the long-term unemployed thus increasing their chances to find employment;
- Provides temporary employment and incomes to the long-term unemployed reintegrating them among the economically active work force;
- Strengthens the small and medium construction enterprises which are contracted under the project;
- Improves the living environment of the citizens of the target cities;

5.3.4 Managing Multiethnic Communities

Improvements to the drainage system of the village of Vodolei: an initiative to promote the ecological balance of the village and to engage its Roma population in voluntary labour for the benefit of their own health and residential area (2000–2001)

The good practice in this case concerns involving the Roma population of the village of Vodolei, Veliko Tarnovo region, in carrying out voluntary work to clean up the drainage system of the village and to contribute positively to the ecological balance of their surroundings. The village drainage system had long caused ecological problems in the area, as it was of out-of-date and badly maintained. The project aimed to make the drainage system more hygienic and to further improve the ecology of the village by planting trees and creating green spaces in appropriate places in the village. It was intended that the project be accomplished by providing an opportunity for the majority Roma population of the village to carry out most of the work involved, thus both improving the living and sanitary conditions in their own village and being given a chance to participate more widely in the social life of their village community.

The project in question is a good example of co-operation between the Ministry of Environment and Water, the Roma organisation 'Kupate' and the local government of the village of Vodolei. The Ministry of Environment and Water had announced an open competition for funding of projects on cleaning up polluted living areas and laying out green spaces and planting trees in regions with concentrated Roma populations. The Roma organisation Kupate responded to this competition, coming up with this project proposal. They have done so with the support of the local government of the village of Vodolei. Thus, the project serves to implement the government's policy of working towards the improvement of the living and health standards of the disadvantaged minority groups in the country, of which Roma people are one. The initiative for the project is, however, rooted in the local government and the minority organisation's concern for the inhabitants of the village of Vodolei.

In response to an open competition announced by the Ministry of Ecology and Water, Kupate – a Roma organisation from the Region of Veliko Tarnovo – with the full support of the local government of the village of Vodolei, put up a project aiming to resolve the long-standing problems of the drainage system running through the village of Vodolei in the Region of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria. The competition's objective was to identify the project which would prove to be most economical in cleaning up pollution from household garbage in living areas or regions in Bulgaria with concentrated Roma populations. The competition was part of a larger national campaign for a 'clean environment'.

Apart from being organised with the co-operation and support of the local government of the village of Vodolei, Kupate's project proposal was also supported by the regional government administration of the region of Veliko Tarnovo and personally endorsed by the expert on ethnic issues at the same administrative authority, Mr Sasho Angelov. In his reference to the Ministry of Ecology and Water, Mr Sasho Angelov expressed his belief that the realisation of the proposed project would be in full accordance with the current policy of the state government to successfully integrate minority groups into the social activities of the country, as well as really solving community problems. The project was indeed on a modest scale an example of good practice in relation to the Roma, as its intention was to give Roma people themselves the opportunity to participate in an initiative to improve the living conditions and health standards in the village of Vodolei in which Roma account for 80 per cent of the

residents. Thus the project would secure the funding and organisation required to realise the initiative, while the Roma people would themselves contribute to providing better and healthier living conditions in their own residential areas.

Fifty Roma people responded to the call for voluntary participation in the realisation of the project. The funding was due to be transferred to the applicants' bank account by the end of October 2000. Preparation to secure work materials, tools and machines commenced straight away. The project was designed to be accomplished within one month. The actual work on carrying out the project was set to begin as soon as the weather conditions permitted (the first half, namely the cleaning up, would most likely be accomplished in November 2000 and the second half – involving the creation of areas of grass –in March 2001).

The project itself became possible because of the state government's attempts to implement their policy of promoting the participation of ethnic minorities in the wider social, cultural, ecological and other communal activities in Bulgaria. As part of the national campaign for a 'clean environment', the state government has considered it appropriate to pay special attention to and to invest more money in regions with concentrated Roma populations, as there is a great need for improving the living conditions in these regions. Previous governments have shown little concern for these issues and the Roma minority's living problems have thus received scant attention. The Roma organisation Kupate has shown a long-standing concern for many Roma communities in the region. It promptly identified an area in need of urgent action and contacted the local government of the village of Vodolei to discuss the application of a potential project for state governmental funding. The local government was in favour of Kupate's initiative and agreed to participate in the necessary organisational work.

The project is linked to several of the priorities set out by the state government in the context of its policy to further the integration of Roma people in Bulgarian society at the same time as addressing the socioeconomic problems faced by this ethnic minority. Among the seven top priorities in this respect, the following relate directly to the present project:

- Attracting Roma organisations into partnerships to manage Roma social problems.

- Achieving a satisfactory level of health for the Roma population (including hygienic sanitary conditions).

The first point has been achieved by providing a forum for the Roma organisation Kupate to come up with an initiative and a project on health and ecological issues. The second priority, meanwhile, is achieved – at a micro-level – by means of the actual cleaning-up and improvements to the drainage system running throughout the village of Vodolei. The improved hygiene of the drainage system will potentially prevent the spread of infectious diseases. In addition, the creation of grassed-over areas and the planting of trees in the region will also serve to promote the ‘clean’ and ‘healthy’ lifestyle of the residents of the village. The local government of Vodolei has promised to maintain the newly-planted areas in good order.

There is no evidence of opposition of any kind to the project either from the local or the regional government. As mentioned above, the project has also met with the approval and support of the administrative authorities of the region of Veliko Tarnovo. The authorities gave their assurance that they would seek to establish larger-scale projects involving the co-operation of regional government and minority organisations. This would ideally be the implementation of the government’s programme for Roma integration in the full spectrum of societal life that was provided for with legislation passed on 24 April 1999.

All in all, Kupate’s project on cleaning up the drainage system of the village of Vodolei and generating green spaces in the village is an initiative that involves multi-organisational efforts to improve different aspects of the every-day life of the Roma community. Such efforts, however, are still at an early stage of development, and skilful and deliberate management of national level legislation at the local level will be required to guarantee real and continuing positive results for Roma communities in Bulgaria.

5.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

The sector offers good opportunities for employing both minorities, asylum seekers, immigrants, refugees and other foreign nationals. Public-private partnerships and programs are the key to create jobs and intercultural workplace, when addressing local needs.

Support needed to people who would like to work as self-employed.

Extending the initiative of the Integration Centre for Refugees for professional and vocational qualification of foreigners, who are seeking or have received asylum, with special focus on jobs in the Building and Construction Sector via labour offices and through training at the centre's professional and vocational offices.

Programme for literacy, qualifying and employing foreigners who are seeking or have received asylum.

Education and training in Bulgarian for adults.

Language Course for Refugees, also vocationally-oriented.

Vocational qualification and re-qualification.

Assisting the foreigners with provided status of refugees or humanitarian status to find work via labour offices.

Organizing and carrying out activities for cultural adaptation of foreigners.

Recognition of skills and certificates of foreigners.

Publication of information materials on the rights and obligations of foreigners.

Consultations on social support issues and directing to municipal services for social support.

Special training how to relieve stress with foreigners needed.

Involvement of all key players in the field with a view to ensuring wider:

- Participation
- Co-operation
- Partnership
- Integration
- Support

6. CASE STUDY: TOURISM

6.1 Introduction

The sector of tourism has undergone many changes in recent years due to the economic reforms in Bulgaria: transition to market economy, privatisation, a slump due to the drastic reduce in number of foreign tourists visiting Bulgaria in the first 10 years after 1989, followed by big increase in recent years and changing the profile of the foreign tourist.

The practice has shown that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the main generator of employment. New hotels were built, both bigger and small family-owned, following the trend for diversification of economic activities and creating possibilities for different activities and alternative income such as rural and eco-tourism.

Today's tourism industry is a multicultural and intercultural place and this calls for the implementation of a managerial policy which combines multi-ethnicity and inter-ethnicity where people need to be ethnically and culturally sensitive in order to be aware of the differences on the intercultural workplace.

The present case study will review hotels, hotel bars and restaurants as intercultural workplaces and quote some good practices re the Bulgarian tourism sector development.

The Case Studies have been done by the use of personal interviews and questionnaires with representatives of the targeted groups in Sofia, Pleven, districts of Varna and Bourgas Black Sea resorts, and the Rila and the Rhodopes mountain resorts.

Relevant publications were also examined.

Participants: representatives of the Bulgarian Association of Tourist Agencies (BATA), Bulgarian Hotel and Restaurants Association (BHRA), hotels and tourist organizations personnel. Relevant municipalities were also contacted.

Special thanks to: Ms Maya Rousimova, Ms Tania Dimitrova, and Mr Stefan Marinov.

Respondents:

	Managers		Employees		Customers	
	Host	Foreign	Host	Foreign	Host	Foreign
Questionnaires	10	5	10	5	10	5
Interviews	5	5	5	5	5	5

N.B. The term 'foreign' includes both ethnic and religious minorities given the specificity of the Bulgarian society

3 groups were targeted including host and foreign, and namely:

- Managers
- Employees
- Customers

In 2 hospitality services sub-sectors:

- Hotels
- Hotel bars and restaurants

We have interviewed reps from 2 types of hotels:

- Big Hotels
- Private small family-owned hotels

The interviewees by job position from hotels were:

- Hotel managers
- Receptionists
- Chambermaids
- Porters/Piccolos
- Guards/Security

The interviewees by job position from hotel bars and restaurants were:

- Managers
- Bartenders
- Waiters
- Cleaners
- Cooks

6.2 Challenges/Issues

Tourism is a priority sector that has great potential for development in Bulgaria. The weaknesses of the sector are related mainly to the limited diversity of tourist products and the additional services related to it; the low quality of tourist infrastructure and its unbalanced distribution throughout the country; low qualification of staff; and the high seasonality of tourism. Recently, there have been some favorable developments in the sector: increase of tourist flow to mountain resorts in summer and more touring visits in Bulgaria's countryside. Revenues from specialized tourism (rural, religious, medical and ecological) have been growing.

The challenges identified were as follows:

The main challenge following the interviews and the meetings held with the target groups' representatives is that within the tourism sector in Bulgaria, different to other sectors, the intercultural issues and differences are stronger when it comes to the opposition foreign tourists – personnel than among the personnel themselves.

Language issues:

52 % of the foreign visitors complained that the personnel are generally lacking proficiency in foreign languages which is a barrier to successful communication with the foreign visitors. The only exceptions were the hotel receptionists and waiters.

The most spoken language is English which does not reflect the ethnicity/nationality of the tourists/visitors/customers. 74 % of them (non-native English speakers) considered it is good to know even some basic phrases of their languages as a show of politeness or respect.

Most of the personnel who are in direct contact with foreigners (84 %) were aware of the language training needs they have, but the managers stated this is not usually the policy of the owners who prefer to employ people with sufficient language skills.

Vocational and intercultural training:

Same situation as with the language training needs and lack of provision of on-the-job training, though the managers (53%) stated the training in practice is 'learning by doing'. There was no clear vision among different staff categories re intercultural training both as needs and as an opportunity for developing a better intercultural workplace. 88 % of the respondents said this might be good to have but were not very sure how exactly this will improve their communication skills.

A very big part of the receptionists and front desk officers (98 %) whose main job is both to deal with foreign customers (reservations, accommodation, enquiries, advice, complaints) on one hand, and a big part of the hotel staff on the other hand seemed convinced of the necessity to know and understand the cultural peculiarities of the various ethnic communities.

The elderly personnel over 45 yrs of age think they are 'too old to go to school' (73 %).

The catering services personnel and especially the bartenders and waiters (81 %) stated that knowing some language to take the order, good service and politeness are enough to manage an intercultural situation.

Most of the staff (78 %) do not think they have had any intercultural problems with their fellow colleagues that are due to ethnic or cultural differences. One of them even made the following comparison: 'We are like in the Noah's Arch here: Bulgarians, Turks, Gipsies, Russian, English, German, French, Greek.... Hotchpotch... Like in the Tower of Babel... all languages spoken... sign languages...body languages... all in the same boat...much work and no time for problems...'

Still 23 % of the foreign customers said they have encountered problems on several occasions due to cultural issues: nodding of the head in the opposite way to express 'yes' or 'no'; Bulgarians staying too close to them or touching them even in a friendly way; slow or too 'relaxed' service, etc.

Other remarked that Bulgarians, Roma and other Bulgarian minorities tend to speak too loud though they not quarrel, which is often embarrassing to North Europeans. The dress code seem also embarrassing to foreigners, and esp. short skirts worn at work by waitresses.

Hidden discrimination:

The employees of ethnic minority origin occupy low-level positions and 21 % think this is on purpose. Workplace discrimination against minorities seem to continue to be a problem, especially for Roma. Employers justify such discrimination on the basis that most Roma have relatively low training and education. Supervisory jobs are generally given to ethnic Bulgarian employees, with ethnic Turks, Bulgarian Muslims, and Roma among the first to be laid off. 3 Roma and 1 Muslim chambermaids, as well as 2 Roma lady cleaners complained they were given either more work compared to Bulgarians or the work they had to do was 'dirtier'.

All managers refused the above stating that their decisions had been entirely dependent on the qualifications and skills of the applicants including the ones for promotion. Two immigrants – one from Iraq and one from Russia declared they have been overruled as their diplomas/certificates issued in their home countries and the relevant qualifications were not recognized by the management.

6.3 Response/Good Practice

Entrepreneurs and investors from abroad entered the Bulgarian market and contributed to a great deal for the revival of the tourism industry. Many local players benefited from the available investment funds. Only in 2006 contracts were signed with 27 municipalities, project beneficiaries, under the "Development of Bulgarian Ecotourism" Project within the SAPARD Programme.

A lot has been done under the Phare Programme to train people in skill for various tourism-related vocations, such as cook, cook assistant, waiter, bartender, guide, tourism and sports instructor, animator, receptionist, tourist agent, massager, accountant, security guard, chambermaid, marketer, mountain guide, local heating systems technician, porter, piccolo.

6.3.1 The Beautiful Bulgaria III Project: Tourism, Infrastructure, Employment

High unemployment among Roma is one of the most serious factors leading to their social isolation. There have been a number of national employment and training programmes. For example, in 2005, 5500 people, including 1800 Roma, were employed to work on the Beautiful Bulgaria programme.

Beautiful Bulgaria III targets the tourism attractiveness of Bulgarian cities and the problem of long-term urban unemployment. It operates essentially in multiethnic and multicultural urban centres characterized by high absolute levels of unemployment and a decayed urban infrastructure. The project provides vocational training in construction skills to the long-term unemployed registered in the Labour Offices of the beneficiary cities. These unemployed are subsequently provided with temporary jobs in firms which are contracted by Beautiful Bulgaria to refurbish selected buildings, parks and squares in the respective cities. In this way, Beautiful Bulgaria III:

- Provides new skills and qualifications to the long-term unemployed thus increasing their chances to find employment;
- Provides temporary employment and incomes to the long-term unemployed reintegrating them among the economically active work force;
- Strengthens the small and medium construction enterprises which are contracted under the project;
- Improves the living environment of the citizens of the target cities;
- Raises the tourism attractiveness of Bulgarian cities thus creating the conditions for sustainable employment in the tourism sector.

Last but not least, Beautiful Bulgaria III builds local capacities to implement employment promotion policies and strengthens partnership between central and local government institutions in the implementation of such policies.

6.3.2 Alternative tourism prospects

Here is an example of a good practice re Eco-tourism in Kotel Mountain, a region with a very high percentage of minorities. The project “ Ecotourism in the Kotel Mountain ” is directed to the achievement of sustainable growth of the tourism sector in the Kotel region,

improvement of its international market positions by creation and promotion of the integrated tourist product based on the natural resources in the Kotel Mountain that have not been exploited to their full potential. The achievement of sustainable growth in the tourism sector of Kotel regional economy by expanding the package of tourist services and improving their quality, as well as the extension of tourist stay in the Municipality of Kotel and the increase of revenues from tourist services are among the main project aims. The unique environment resources, including water resources, caves, flora and fauna, as well as the extensive cultural and historic heritage of the Kotel Mountain area will be used for expanding the package of tourist services in the area by creating an integrated tourist product. It will be based on the unique interaction between man and environment, which responds to the ecotourism guidelines and the National Ecotourism Plan of Bulgaria.

The project envisages sensitive and responsible use of the Bulgarian natural environment, which is to be achieved through investments covering improvements in the infrastructure. These improvements include reconstruction of a municipal building and its transformation into a Tourist Information and Training Centre, provided with modern equipment, as well as renovation and rearrangement of the Museum of Natural History in Kotel. The three eco-paths planned under the project will be equipped with modern tourist facilities.

The development of a sustainable tourist product stimulating the demand of the tourist sector in the region will guarantee the respect and promotion of conservation of the Bulgarian natural environment. The product is based on the newly established Tourist Information and Training Centre. The unique environment resources of Kotel Mountain, the opportunities for various types of ecotourism such as rock climbing, speleology tourism, rural tourism, cycling tourism and other, as well as to the extensive training of the local population including minorities in the region.

6.3.3 Kavarna Municipality project for development of the tourism sector, training and employment of minorities (2005)

The Kavarna region is characterized by big minority groups, distant and underdeveloped municipalities with potential for development of tourism activities for particular complex training in tourism entrepreneurship on the basis of a survey. The region of Kavarna has a great potential for developing tourism activities. Still, the distant location, the lack of proper

promotion and good marketing, as well as the lack of proper vocational training of the people working in the local tourism sector has not allowed the region to develop its full potential yet. There is a great number of tourism organizations, whose employees could take a great advantage from well-oriented and delivered complex training in tourism.

The project adapted and elaborated training modules in English and Bulgarian with the following contents:

Module 1: Main business skills

Good business skills are the core of every successful business. Most of the start-up enterprises fail because of bad management, not because of the lack of good ideas. The realization of good ideas and gaining of profits for the business requires minimum two conditions:

- the necessary prerequisites of the business environment to be present;
- the skills of the managerial, administrative and technical staff for the realization of the corporate goals and tasks to be well developed.

The main objective of this module is to present the basic business skills, necessary for the people, working at the tourist sector, as well as to give them the opportunity to assess their own skills and guidelines how to improve their work. Module contents :

1. Skills for interpersonal communication
2. Marketing skills
3. Management skills

Module 2: Rural tourism

Comprising of the following two sub-modules:

Sub-module 2.1: Eco-tourism

Putting eco-tourism on a truly sustainable path is a major challenge, requiring partnerships and collaboration between the tourism industry, the governments, the local people and the tourists themselves.

This sub-module provides a short introduction to eco-tourism, providing a look at the progress it has made during the last two decades and what will be needed to make it sustainable in the future.

Module contents :

1. Eco-tourism – basics and local resources
2. Knowledge and skills for conducting eco-tourism business activities
3. Eco-tourism animation

Sub-module 2.2: Agro-tourism

The trend of rapid changes in the agricultural landscape and the sector of agriculture started in the 1980s and are still going strong in the 21 st century. Land is being converted to housing and other uses at an alarming rate. Some agricultural sectors are moving into what some people call an industrialization stage, which represents the very large and concentrated production of food and fiber. Many farmers do not wish to expand their operations. For those who decide to stay small exists an opportunity to make a transition to alternative enterprises and agro-tourism.

This sub-module is designed to help local administration staff, rural leaders and local farmers work together for the purpose of identifying and developing alternative enterprises and agro-tourism opportunities. It is usually difficult for a farm family to initiate this first step alone. Upgrading to a new enterprise involves different production techniques, processing methods, and marketing activities, which can be stressful for the traditional farmers.

This module will help you make an inventory and reach an understanding of your farm resources, think openly, creatively, think of the unusual, but most importantly, and explore your options for alternative enterprises and agro-tourism.

Module contents :

1. General knowledge of local agriculture - evaluating your resources
2. Knowledge and skills for conducting environmentally friendly and safe agro-tourist activities
3. Agro tourism animation.

Module 3: Alternative tourism

Comprising of the following two sub-modules :

Sub-module 3.1: Cultural tourism

Tourism should be considered as one of the main reasons for conserving the cultural and historical heritage. In fact, experience shows that heritage sites that remain closed to tourism and visits from the general public tend to fall in decay. They suffer abandonment, looting and spoilage; climatic conditions and other natural phenomena act destructively upon them; the absence of any economic returns from their existence does not allow providing funds even for a minimum level of maintenance and upkeep.

As travel and tourism becomes even more competitive worldwide, industry officials are seeking any advantage to differentiate their product from thousands of other choices tourists now have, and cultural heritage tourism certainly provides some communities with that edge. Any town can build an outlet mall, and they will likely all look the same, but every town's history is different from its neighbors, and difference is becoming increasingly important in the competitive tourism market.

Module contents :

1. General knowledge of the local cultural heritage

2. Festival tourism:

2.1 Specific skills for developing activities connected with festival tourism (concerts, exhibitions, festivals, etc .)

2.2 Tourism animation – festival tourism

3. Tourism connected with historical heritage:

3.1 Specific skills for developing activities connected with historical heritage tourism

3.2 Tourism animation – Tourism connected with historical heritage

Sub-module 3.2: Sport tourism

Sports tourism opportunities, and especially the tourism benefits, are sometimes lost or not maximized because the linkages between the sports and tourism sectors are not well established. Sporting activities, especially events, have historically been organized by

sporting organizations for purely sporting purposes. Maximizing the tourism potential of the events has often not been a major consideration for the organizer. Further, many sporting organizations rely on volunteers, and may not have well developed business or organizational skills or experience. Both of these factors can lead to lost tourism opportunities.

Sports tourism is a niche market which can be broadly described as a tourism activity generated by participation in sporting activity. That activity can be a sporting event or competition or a training camp. Participation might involve being a competitor/participant, official, or spectator. Sports tourism creates new revenue streams for local event organizers, sports friendly businesses and sport in general.

Module contents :

1. General knowledge about local sports and their relation to tourism
2. Selection of sports, which will be used for developing sport tourism
3. Tourism animation – sport tourism

6.4 Recommendations

As already pointed out the tourism industry is a multicultural and intercultural place and this calls for the implementation of a policy which combines multi-ethnicity and inter-ethnicity where people need to be ethnically and culturally sensitive in order to be aware of the differences on the intercultural workplace.

Similar to Construction and Transport the sector offers good opportunities for employing both minorities, asylum seekers, immigrants, refugees and other foreign nationals.

Public-private partnerships and programs are the key to create jobs and intercultural workplace.

There is declared a need to:

Support to people who would like to develop local and rural tourism, family-owned hotels, entrepreneurship skills development.

Extending the initiative of the Integration Centre for Refugees for professional and vocational qualification of foreigners, who are seeking or have received asylum, with special focus on

jobs in the Tourism Sector (receptionist, chambermaid, porter, piccolo) via labour offices and through training at the centre's professional and vocational offices.

Programme for literacy, qualifying and employing foreigners who are seeking or have received asylum.

Foreign language learning.

Vocational and intercultural training needs to be addressed with a focus on fighting racial, ethnic and religious prejudice.

Vocational qualification and re-qualification. Education and training in Bulgarian for adults. Language Course for Refugees, also vocationally-oriented.

Assisting the foreigners with provided status of refugees or humanitarian status to find work via labour offices.

Organizing and carrying out activities for cultural adaptation of foreigners.

Recognition of skills and certificates of foreigners.

Publication of information materials on the rights and obligations of foreigners.

Consultations on social support issues and directing to municipal services for social support.

Special training how to relieve stress with foreigners needed.

Involvement of all key players in the field with a view to ensuring wider:

- Participation
- Co-operation
- Partnership
- Integration
- Support

7. CASE STUDY: TRANSPORT

7.1 Introduction

Similar to sectors like tourism and construction transport is a multicultural and intercultural place and this calls for the implementation of a managerial policy which combines multi-ethnicity and inter-ethnicity where people need to be ethnically and culturally sensitive in order to be aware of the differences on the intercultural workplace.

The present case study will review the sector as intercultural workplaces and quote some good practices re the sector development.

The Case Studies have been done by the use of personal interviews and questionnaires with representatives of the targeted groups in Sofia, Plovdiv, Ruse, Pleven, Varna, Bourgas, and Shumen. Relevant publications were also examined.

Participants: representatives from Ministry of Transport; BulTransAvto, Sofia City Transport, Taxi Drivers Union, Willy Betz Co., self-employed taxi and mini-bus drivers.

Respondents:

	Managers or self-employed		Employees		Customers	
	Host	Foreign	Host	Foreign	Host	Foreign
Questionnaires	10	10	10	10	10	10
Interviews	5	5	5	5	5	5

N.B. The term 'foreign' includes both ethnic and religious minorities given the specificity of the Bulgarian society

7.2 Challenges/Issues

Language barriers in the country with foreigners are encountered especially by taxi drivers.

Foreign languages are required for employment abroad or as TIR truck-drivers.

Language (accents, fluency, writing styles, discussion and argumentation styles) is subject to mostly unconscious evaluation (favourable or unfavourable) as are appearance and

behaviour. A lot of misunderstandings occur as a result of insufficient knowledge of Bulgarian (minorities, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees having work permit); dialects and use of idioms. A special case is the language of work or the work jargon making it difficult to express oneself appropriately/effectively.

East Bulgarian dialects are an object of ridiculing.

Other dialects that are leading to misunderstanding and being an object of ridiculing: Shop dialect

Idioms and idiomatic expressions have always been a problem for the non-native speakers both managers and employees.

Idioms and idiomatic expressions also lead to misunderstanding or not-understanding at all.

When used idioms are also sometimes misinterpreted as

- negative attitude instead of a joke for instance
- an attempt to make fun of the person not understanding what it is all about
- foreign managers sometimes tend to think employees use dialects or idioms in order to say something foreign managers should not understand

Vocational training needs to be addressed especially with migrants.

Bulgarian Christians are too direct speaking about personal issues according to Muslim standards, asking personal issues, for example. Some Bulgarians address their Roma colleagues as 'gypsies' which is offensive. Bulgarians are found rather talkative and also a bit over-passionate by foreign managers and customer who find taxi drivers too informal.

The sense of self and space; language and communication; food and feeding habits; time and time consciousness; values and norms; beliefs and attitudes; work habits and practices; etc., may all lead to tension at work.

The concept of 'being on time' has always been an issue even in a mono-cultural workplace depending of the managers own perceptions what it means. Being on time is not favoured by Bulgarians, though they stick to the rules. A delay for a meeting of 10-15 minutes is considered normal – and though perhaps typical for the South of Europe, it is considered and called 'orientalism' in Bulgaria (a term of many other but also quite negative

connotations), which is on the other hand offensive for Muslim and other people of such origin.

It is a common practice people to have sandwiches at lunch, brought from home, therefore food at work is not a big issue.

Racial, ethnic and religious prejudice is still existent.

A big issue here is foreigners and minorities insist they do NOT have the same opportunities for promotion compared to native Bulgarian employees, in organisations managed by native Bulgarians.

On the other side native Bulgarians in organisations managed by non-native Bulgarians (esp. Turkish, Greek, Roma) insist on the same.

Workplace discrimination against minorities continues to be a problem, especially for Roma. Employers justify such discrimination on the basis that most Roma have relatively low training and education. Supervisory jobs are generally given to ethnic Bulgarian employees, with ethnic Turks, Bulgarian Muslims, and Roma among the first to be laid off.

7.3 Response and Practices

Bulgaria made a big step forward re infrastructure directly affecting minorities who live in the remote parts facilitation contacts and integration with other groups. Among these are:

Development of inter-village public transport is extremely important for providing access of people living in remotely located settlements to goods and services. In 2005 123 municipalities were subsidized for inter-village public transport in low-density populated and border areas. In 2005 BGN 3 million from the State budget were transferred to cover the transportation expenditures for supplying population with bread and foodstuffs: BGN 1 300 000 for bread and baker's goods and BGN 1 700 000 for most needed foodstuffs. The measure included the inhabitants of about 3 900 settlements.

Implementing the National Programme for Better Inclusion of Pupils of Mandatory School Age (the module "Optimisation of school network through providing transportation to primary school pupils to State and municipal schools") the Ministry of Education and Science signed delivery contracts and purchased 219 buses for the needs of the Programme. The buses were distributed among municipalities in the country in accordance with the number of

commuting pupils and the dispersion of the school network. Later ownership of buses was transferred to municipalities on the grounds of order signed by the Minister of Education and Science.

Conflicts in the intercultural workplace of transport are dealt in various ways:

- Between the conflicting parties themselves
- Between the conflicting parties after interference or mediation of other colleague(s)
- By the management
- In court (rarely)
- By the so called 'comrades court' where they still have it. This is when colleagues elected by the team get together to decide on various issues.

People experiencing difficulties in communication usually look for help from:

- A well-disposed colleague (fellow-worker, foreign manager)
- The supervisor
- The manager

Still a great issue is the lack of intercultural training.

7.3.1 Ministry of Transport opens hot lines

The Ministry of Transport opened hot lines for signals concerning corruption and incorrectness when attending citizens. The lines are opened on every workday from 9 am to 5 pm. Then on 29 November 2005 in Executive Agency Automobile Administration was opened a hot line for citizens' warnings concerning irregularities of the regulated mini-bus taxi services. The Executive Agency Railway Administration also opened a hot phone line for signals concerning complains and irregularities in the railway transport. Both railway companies BDJ LTD and NK "Railway Infrastructure" also published phone numbers. People now can send information by filling in a special e-form about corruption or malpractice to the Ministry of Transport. Reports of malpractice by officials of the ministry or its agencies will be investigated by the specialised Inspectorate unit. Reports related to corrupt practices in commercial enterprises are investigated by the Concessions and Control Over the Activity of Commercial Enterprises Directorate. People are encouraged to enclose evidence of the

violations identified by them as this would increase the possibility to take effective action in the investigation of their reports.

Here are the results so far:

Railroad transport: 161 items

Air transport: 28 items

Road transport: 133 items

Marine transport: 10 items

Bulgarian Post Office: 24 items

7.3.2 Training & Qualification: Auto-Motor Centre Project

The Training & Qualification Auto-Motor Centre Project was initiated by the Auto Prestige Association. It was developed under the SMAEP Programme (Phare) in 2002, reaching the following objectives:

- Establishment of Training & Qualification Auto-Motor Centre
- Vocational training in transport-related professions (60 people)
- Permanent and temporary employment of the trainees
- Local infrastructure improvement

60 people received vocational training in transport-related professions:

- Trolley-bus drivers
- Vehicles electrical equipment engineers
- Road-building machines drivers
- Auto-Mechanics

7.3.3 An avant-garde idea for using the available transportation vehicles

An avant-garde idea for using the available transportation vehicles for the cleaning and garbage transportation in Stolipinovo, the biggest Roma suburb in the country, was presented by the Plovdiv public utility company Eco-Global.

The cleaning and garbage transportation in Stolipinovo is outsourced to 20 horse cart 'drivers'. Their monthly salary is 200 BGN plus 150 BGN rent for the horse. They have to drive out a minimum of 5 cubic metres of garbage daily. They are also registered in the Labour Offices and receive additional work clothes.

The suburb of Stolipinovo has been the dirtiest part of Plovdiv for many years. Now with the help of the cart-drivers a temporary local depot for domestic (home) garbage is being developed. The garbage is then transported from the depot to the waste area in Tsalapitsa by the Plovdiv public utility company Eco-Global trucks.

The experiment attracted interest and its success will lead to multiplication effect, i.e. this practice will be applied to other Roma ghettos of Plovdiv. The new mayor of the East Municipality Mr Krassimir Kouzmanov already said that in order to receive social benefits more Roma people from Stolipinovo will be directed to activities related to hygienisation of the ghetto.

7.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

The sector offers good opportunities for employing both minorities, asylum seekers, immigrants, refugees and other foreign nationals.

Needs:

Support to people who would like to work as self-employed taxi-drivers, van-drivers, and mechanics.

Support to people who would like to develop garages of their own.

Extending the initiative of the Integration Centre for Refugees for professional and vocational qualification of foreigners, who are seeking or have received asylum, with special focus on jobs in the Transportation Sector (driver, mechanic) via labour offices and through training at the centre's professional and vocational offices.

Programme for literacy, qualifying and employing foreigners who are seeking or have received asylum.

Education and training in Bulgarian for adults.

Language Courses for refugees, also vocationally-oriented.

Vocational qualification and re-qualification.

Assisting the foreigners with provided status of refugees or humanitarian status to find work via labour offices.

Organizing and carrying out activities for cultural adaptation of foreigners.

Recognition of skills and certificates of foreigners.

Publication of information materials on the rights and obligations of foreigners.

Consultations on social support issues and directing to municipal services for social support.

Special training how to relieve stress with foreigners needed.

Involvement of all key players in the field with a view to ensuring wider:

- Participation
- Co-operation
- Partnership
- Integration
- Support

GENERAL SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Generally difficulties refer to 4 areas:

- Language proficiency
- Communication
- Cultural codes and practices
- Relationship between co-workers

1.1 Language issues

Language is a real challenge!

One should be aware that language (accents, fluency, writing styles, discussion and argumentation styles) are subject to mostly unconscious evaluation (favourable or unfavourable) as are appearance and behaviour.

Difficulties in understanding:

accent: not at all (when at work people tend to speak the standard language)

fluency: might be a problem depending on the hierarchy level

misunderstandings occur as a result of:

- insufficient knowledge of Bulgarian (minorities, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees having work permit)
- different dialects
- Use of idioms

East Bulgarian dialects are an object of ridiculing.

Other dialects that are leading to misunderstanding and being an object of ridiculing: e.g. Shop (vicinity of Sofia) dialect, Eastern dialect (using mild vowels), etc.

Idioms and idiomatic expressions have always been a problem for the non-native speakers both managers and employees

Idioms and idiomatic expressions also lead to misunderstanding or not-understanding at all.

When used idioms are also sometimes misinterpreted as

- negative attitude instead of a joke for instance
- an attempt to make fun of the person not understanding what it is all about
- foreign managers sometimes tend to think employees use dialects or idioms in order to say something foreign managers should not understand

A special case is the language of work or the work jargon making it difficult to express oneself appropriately/effectively.

1.2 Humour

Humour is also difficult to interpret properly on both sides. Sometimes it is accepted as someone trying to imply something not proper. Telling jokes related to politics and nation differences might be quite offending.

Another case would be telling jokes re appearances and specific features such as baldness, height, etc. which are taken too personal by more sensitive people.

Some other topics in humour also seem unacceptable depending on ethnicity and religion: free-thinking women, animals that might be important/respected in a religion or country (elephant for Indians).

1.3 Communication styles

Cultural communication styles are definitely an issue.

Western Europeans are too direct according to Bulgarian standards, asking personal issues such as family relations, for example.

Bulgarian Christians are too direct speaking about personal issues according to Muslim standards, asking personal issues, for example.

Some Bulgarians address their Roma colleagues as 'gypsies' which is offensive.

Bulgarians are found rather talkative and also a bit over-passionate by foreign managers.

Older Bulgarians do not like to speak openly in their workplace, which is due to the ex-communist 'ethics' not to discuss working conditions, payment, etc. just have to be happy instead.

Conflicts are dealt in various ways:

- Between the conflicting parties themselves
- Between the conflicting parties after interference or mediation of other colleague(s)
- By the management
- In court (rarely)
- By the comrades court where they still have it

People experiencing difficulties in communication usually look for help from:

- A well-disposed colleague (fellow-worker, foreign manager)
- The supervisor
- The manager

When it comes to offence they address:

- The relevant civil association representing/protecting their rights (BHC, Roma and other foundations, Helsinki Watch)
- The relevant institution representing/protecting their rights (ombudsman, governmental institutions, the Presidency, the court, MPs, Movement for Rights and Freedom - DPS)
- International institution (The European court in Strasbourg)

People from different cultural, religious and ethnic background have different perception of politeness.

One of the issues noted earlier and confirmed throughout the EIW research is the employees avoiding looking their foreign managers in the eyes. Another big issue for issue for foreign managers is the opposite way of nodding, expressing 'yes' or 'no'.

When people from the Muslim community mainly encounter a problem they prefer to keep it to themselves, instead of openly expressing disagreement, for instance. This is a very typical

issue with women from the above-mentioned community (due to their status there) when even when asked by a well-disposed boss superior or a colleague trying to be of help, they keep things to themselves. It is a common practice if they share their problems at home (which can be also an issue) their husbands or other male relatives to take over.

Such cases of NOT expressing disagreement openly are also noted with higher education students from India for example, while, on the contrary, students from Greece do it all the time.

The issue with keeping the problem to oneself has also a clearly hierarchical aspect, due to the ex-communist workplace ethics and regulations. People daring to express their opinion re any problematic issues openly in public were considered NOT LOYAL to the system, and to the organisation they work for in particular, where the Party representatives and managers (the same), i.e. the Big Brothers were always right.

1.4 Cultural codes and practices

Besides the visible or physical characteristics of the intercultural workplace such as race, age, gender, clothing/ornamentation, and language there have been noted other non-verbal communication features that can be regarded as important both to understand and be aware of:

- Gestures: Bulgarians, Roma and other Bulgarian minorities gesticulate a lot when speaking
- Eye Contact is also to be aware of as it might be considered sexist or expressing suspicion.
- Touching: often embarrassing to North Europeans.
- Facial expression: some people tend to make grimaces that can be misinterpreted or just unacceptable at work.
- Posture: another important issue of perception
- Voice (volume, pitch, silence): Bulgarians, Roma and other Bulgarian minorities tend to speak too loud though they not quarrel - often embarrassing to North Europeans.
- Space: staying too close to the other is often embarrassing to North Europeans.

Time:

There are different concepts of time at the intercultural workplace. Being on time is not favoured by Bulgarians, though they stick to the rules. A delay for a meeting of 10-15 minutes is considered normal – and though perhaps typical for the South of Europe, it is considered and called ‘orientalism’ in Bulgaria (a term of many other but also quite negative connotations) which is on the other hand offensive for Muslim and other people of such origin.

The concept of ‘being on time’ has always been an issue even in a mono-cultural workplace depending of the managers own perceptions what it means. Speaking about time is often accompanied by a clarification e.g. ‘9 o’clock Bulgarian or English time?’

In practice the issue of ‘being on time’ concept is related to the type of institution opposition: private versus public.

Dealing with many things at the same time is another cultural aspect noticed especially by Western employers. Their own perception was things should be done one by one. A question was put to discussion and comparison was made to interpreting: which interpreter would do a better job – the simultaneous or the consecutive?

Other foreign employers (Italian, Greek, Turkish) consider it normal given the pressure of time that often exists in private business.

A point was made that ‘dealing with many things at the same time’ is often due to changing priorities (the boss wants some information, check, or report to be made urgently, without extending the time for the completion of your current task, which is often the case with the above mentioned foreign managers, but with Bulgarian employers as well). This happens both in the private and the public sector.

Nevertheless, most respondents do not see the ‘dealing with many things at the same time’ problem as a problem. Most say they have got accustomed to it, some younger people say the like working under pressure (this might be an age issue), of course not too much. Other people said time pressure helps them concentrate better or are just workaholics. Some

admitted they often see this as an opportunity to show their superiors their capabilities and advance in the career.

Managers agreed it would be better if this principle is not applied as doing things one by one will mean more concentration on and eventually a better completion of the task.

Food:

Bulgarian cuisine has always been very international due to historic factors and cultural influences.

It might be an issue with institutions having canteens, esp. when there is no other meat offered than pork. Vegetarian food is no problem. Halal food is not usually available, though the cuisine has a lot of oriental influence and many meals are found proper for Muslims (baklava, dolmas, etc.). Chicken, lamb and veal are very popular and liked by everybody. Nowadays Kebab shops and takeaways are found everywhere. There is also a huge number of Chinese restaurants and takeaways. Many restaurants, pubs and takeaways representing various international cuisines such as Italian, French, Greek, Irish, Indonesian, Russian, Serbian (Srpska Skara), etc. do also exist.

It is a common practice people to have sandwiches at lunch, brought from home, therefore food at work is not a big issue.

Religion:

There is no practice of having prayer rooms available at work. This is not considered as problem by Bulgarian Christian Orthodox people who are not very religious, or at least not to this extent to pray at work. The representatives of the Bulgarian Catholic Community considered it to be a good idea. The representatives of other Christian churches (Armenian-Gregorian, Protestant, Russian and Greek Orthodox) do not see it as an important issue. The Muslim Community respondents think they should be given the time esp. throughout their religious holidays to go to Mosques and pray, and esp. when their working hours coincide with the time for pray.

Clothing:

Formally people in Bulgaria are allowed to wear religious dress at the workplace. This is especially important for Muslim women who are supposed to wear veils not just at work, but every where outside their homes.

Muslim women hiding their faces (part of their religious dress code) can also cause communication problems. Such a case was reported by a manager not being able to conduct a proper job interview for obvious reasons.

1.5 Workplace relationship

Most respondents described the relationship with their colleagues, subordinates and managers as good and tolerant.

All respondents regard maintaining good relations with co-workers as vital both from their personal point of view as well as from organisational. Still this is not an easy task.

Getting the job done than having good relations at work seems to be more important for the managers, than the employees.

Gender-related issues arising are reported too often. Roma and Muslim subordinates find it rather difficult to take orders from female managers, while Bulgarians find it a normal practice.

Specific issues that may cause problems though not always related to the individual perception already mentioned:

- The sense of self and space (standing too close)
- Communication (touching the other)
- Language (codes and messages)
- Dress and appearance (colours, religious dress, formal v casual, strong perfumes)
- Food and feeding habits (munching while eating)
- time and time consciousness (late for work)
- relationships
- values and norms

- beliefs and attitudes (religion, gender, politics)
- mental processes and learning
- the work habits and practices (pay more attention to the context of the situation, who said it, and under what circumstances, than the words said)

1.6 Discrimination

A big issue here is foreigners and minorities insist they do NOT have the same opportunities for promotion compared to native Bulgarian employees, in organisations managed by native Bulgarians.

On the other side native Bulgarians in organisations managed by non-native Bulgarians (esp. Turkish, Greek, Roma) insist on the same.

People from socially disadvantaged groups and low-educated people still tend to make comments about others' culture, appearance and habits.

Everybody agreed there is a need for some training that would improve their work in a diverse workplace, though people are sceptical this might be too theoretical.

Generally, workplace discrimination against minorities continues to be a problem, especially for Roma. Employers justify such discrimination on the basis that most Roma have relatively low training and education. Supervisory jobs are generally given to ethnic Bulgarian employees, with ethnic Turks, Bulgarian Muslims, and Roma among the first to be laid off.

Examples of discrimination which takes place:

- During the job search and recruitment process;
- In the work place, for example equality between host and foreign employees in relation to the conditions of employment, the working environment, the working hours, the rates of pay; and also the types of employment that are available for foreigners; promotion prospects; equal opportunities for advancement or personal development;
- Discrimination or exclusionary practices, which prevent minority-owned businesses from tendering for work contracts, either private or public;
- Discriminatory practices applied by labour market gate-keepers (people with key roles in the employment and hiring process, such as officials in labour offices, staff in

private employment services and personnel managers to name a few) whose actions serve to deny minority individuals access to jobs vacancies and information about hiring firms.

- Need for comprehensive understanding among public administrators and employers of the nature of discriminatory treatment facing minorities in the field of employment.
- Need for anti-discrimination policies and positive action measures to equalise opportunities in various sectoral fields which are at present underdeveloped and sometimes strongly opposed by various actors in the public field.

Two types of action generally needed:

a) advocacy at national and international levels aimed at pressuring governments to proceed with in-depth analysis of exclusion from the labour market of all vulnerable ethnic minorities and implement policies to counteract these tendencies; and

b) training of public officials and employers focusing on implementation of mechanisms for monitoring and confronting patterns of exclusion and discrimination of ethnic minorities in employment.

2. OTHER OBSERVATIONS

2.1. Advantages and Disadvantages of the Intercultural Workplace

Intercultural Workplace Advantages:

- More suggestions, different angles and questioning of assumptions
- More options invented
- More solutions created
- Unconventional thinking (outside the box)
- Personal and professional cultural enrichment and intercultural awareness

Intercultural Workplace Disadvantages:

- Can be less cohesive especially at the beginning
- Problems to solve: attitudes, dislikes, prejudice, intolerance, routines, behaviours

- Difference in working styles, possible mistrust to overcome
- Communication problems: language barriers, inaccuracy, misunderstanding, inefficiency
- Need to manage/relieve stress due to diversity issues and difference

2.2. The intercultural dimension of today's business and negotiations

The current practice in the private sector has proved a manifest need for considering the important issue of intercultural workplace. Foreign investors, foreign managers and workers must learn how to effectively adapt culturally to the social environment of the host country. Whether a person is working or living abroad for personal or professional reasons, cultural transition requires intercultural competence. With this regards four major intercultural competencies have been noted so far, and namely:

1. Open mindedness and an open attitude: developing a sense of receptivity to cross-cultural learning.
2. Self-Awareness and other-awareness: identifying key differences between self and others.
3. Cultural Knowledge: establishing awareness in a solid base of cultural knowledge.
4. Cross-cultural skills: acquiring proficiencies that build on intercultural effectiveness.

Proficient intercultural negotiation involves learning from the experiences of others and avoiding major mistakes. Business negotiations, for example, particularly those involving investment decisions, require deep understanding of the socio-economic and political situation of the host country. There may also be considerations involving political or cultural sensitivity.

All cultures have their own preferred styles and strategies for dealing with and managing conflict. Yet it is quite difficult to be culture-specific when discussing how to deal effectively with cross-cultural conflicts. Nevertheless, there are some general skills involved in cross-cultural negotiation and conflict management that can be highlighted.

A basic requirement for effective conflict management and negotiation is to know as much as possible about the other culture(s). Although experiential knowledge is preferable, research of the culture, norms, values, history, society etc. can be very helpful.

The most significant feature of good cross-cultural relations, as most cross-cultural sources will indicate, involves avoiding stereotypes. Although certain generalizations may be fairly assessed in regard to how certain cultures deal with conflict, individual differences should always be considered as paramount. In fact, some cultural specialists suggest that all conflicts are intercultural to an extent, since each individual person has their own personal history and experience, their own set of beliefs, values and assumptions, and ultimately, their own set of “survival skills.”

Successful intercultural negotiators are always cognizant of the fact that people do, indeed, feel, think and behave differently, while at the same time, they are equally logical and rational. Stated differently, competent intercultural negotiators recognize the differences between people while simultaneously appreciating the intrinsic rationality behind such divergent feelings thoughts and behaviours. That is to say, individuals, groups, communities, organizations and even nation states possess diverse values, beliefs and assumptions that make sense from their own perspective. Thus, effective intercultural negotiators are sensitive to the fact that each person perceives, discovers, and constructs reality - the internal and external world – in varied yet meaningful ways. They understand that difference is not threatening; indeed, it is positive, so long as the differences are managed properly.

3. COMMON OBSERVATIONS

Challenges

The Bulgarian workplace is becoming global leading to domestic and international diversity; increasing amount of international teaming and outsourcing; increased need for intercultural skills and need for cultural sophistication.

Need for trained people who recognise socially and culturally desirable (or undesirable) attitudes not to act differently in reality (the so-called chameleonic learner).

Education and training is the key, and the common problems identified are:

- Lack of essential legal base as well as finance and material insufficiency.
- Lack of corresponding management standards and programmes;
- Insufficiency of qualified staff and lack of strategy in the field of education for qualification and pre-qualification of teachers and administrative staff, which to work in multiethnic environment and especially of such staff to work with bilingual children.
- Lack of proper specialised organisational-administrative mechanism for initiating, co-ordination and control on effective educational policy for equal integration of children and students from ethnic minorities.
- Lack of conditions necessary for obtaining of qualitative education in small village schools in municipalities with mixed ethnic and religious population.
- Minorities' history and culture are not presented to the sufficient level in school curriculum content. The fundamental elements of the cultural identity are most often brought to traditional folklore without taking into account the rest of the cultural achievements of the ethnic minorities, and even less their contribution to the national culture and development of the society.
- Lack of appropriate social-psychological attitude of the society, which to ensure educational rights of children and students from ethnic minorities for their equal integration and developing their cultural identity.
- Insufficient motivation of children and parents to study their mother tongue.
- Lack of organisational conditions for studying mother tongue in settlements, where the number of students is not sufficient for a group to be composed.
- Low living standard is an essential factor for irregular attendance at the school classes and unsatisfying participation in the educational process.

Other Challenges

Career path/promotion of minority groups and immigrants may lead to intercultural tension at the workplace and even outside

Rogoff was quoted who sees culture as dynamic and changing; people contribute to the creation of cultural processes and cultural processes contribute to the creation of people.

Learn people to look at it as interaction, not segregation and not as an attempt for assimilation which leads to marginalisation.

How to build a friendship at the workplace is a major issue.

Sensitivity to the cultural background of others is also of vital importance.

Amongst other challenges are the ability to adjust one's objectives and intentions in accordance with existing constraints and limitations.

Empathy or the ability to see the problems as other people see it.

Understanding: to understand the behaviour of others from their perspective.

Support: the ability not just to understand but to recognise the other's point of view, as well as to make the rest step into the other's shoes, and, if relevant, change their own viewpoint

Ability to manage tense and stressful situations and deal with intercultural misunderstandings and negative attitudes

Ability to express oneself clear so that everybody can fully understand your point

Other practices in business organisations:

- Cultural awareness activities (ethnic luncheons, entertainment, travelogues, talks on history, exhibits). The main purpose is to help people begin to recognize differences.
- Emphasis on things cultures have in common and what is positive in all cultures.
- Demonstrate how behaviour can be variously interpreted.
- Emphasis on what is common (commonalities) not different
- Comrades court (semi-formal discussion when something went wrong)

Observations of foreign managers and investors, which are to be taken into consideration, are:

- As a general rule, business behaviour in Bulgaria is similar to that in the rest of Europe: a handshake at the beginning and end of the meeting is an accepted custom. Care should be taken to shake hands with everyone present at the meeting.
- Immediately after a handshake at the start of the meeting, it is customary to exchange business cards. Make sure that you take sufficient business cards with you.

- In addressing new business acquaintances, it is not customary to use first names.
- The accepted dress for business meetings is a business suit for men and women are recommended to dress fashionably but not loudly.
- Most business people in Bulgaria have good command of English, However a few words in Bulgarian will easily break the ice and create a friendly atmosphere. The presence of a translator will help advance a business meeting.
- Acceptable gifts for business meetings are items for the office, quality pens (including pens with your company logo) as well as specially selected wines.
- A fairly long time is required to fix a meeting. Take account of the fact that senior executives often have a background from the Communist era. Make sure in advance by fax or letter, before the meeting, that it will in fact take place.
- You are recommended to avoid business meetings in the months of July and August or around the times of national holidays.
- It is important to note that in Bulgaria, a nod of the head indicates 'no' while a shake means 'yes'.

Recommendations

Training needed:

- Enhancing tolerance toward differences
- Teaching tolerance
- Understanding the difference
- Different but together instead of together but different
- Not just training but training collaborative activities in real life settings
- Collaborative learning in (peer) groups
- On- and off-the job training

General needs to be addressed:

- Social and economic integration

- Intercultural awareness
- Intercultural education
- Understanding the nature of cross-cultural differences and intercultural contacts, as well as different language codes and other forms of human communication and interaction.
- Intercultural conflict resolution. The context of social encounters taking place between members of different cultures.

Specific needs (re to the workplace) to be addressed:

- Intercultural workplace relations
- Intercultural differences
- Effectiveness in the intercultural environment
- Culture shock and cultural acclimatisation
- Intercultural business/workplace etiquette

Compulsory Bulgarian language training for foreigners who have been granted protection in view of improving the integration of refugees in Bulgarian society. Attending a Bulgarian language course should be a condition for receiving housing assistance, social assistance, health insurance assistance within a one-year period after the receipt of the decision granting the status.

Compulsory courses for social and cultural counselling as a part of foreigners integration activities.

Training of teachers with a view to improving their knowledge and skills for working in a multicultural environment

Recognition of educational degrees acquired and professional qualifications of foreigners.

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